

Cindy Milstein On Mending The World As Jewish Anarchists

Cindy Milstein & The Final Straw Radio

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TFSR: Could you introduce yourself for the listeners? Your name and pronouns and any other information that you'd like people to know about you?

Cindy Milstein: First, I really want to thank you for having me on the Final Straw and preparing so well ahead of time for this. My name is Cindy Milstein. And I use they or he for pronouns. And yeah... prior to the pandemic, I was doing a lot of anarchist organizing, including anarchist summer school, and was part of the Montreal Bookfair Collective. And I focus a lot on doing care, solidarity and grief projects. And I also do books! So I'm on the show today about the latest anthology I just did.

TFSR: Yeah, I was really excited about this book: "Nothing So Whole as a Broken Heart – Mending the World as a Jewish Anarchist" which is out with AK Press. Particularly for me as like a queer anarchist Jew to see all this writing that you put together by people who are navigating those things being queer, anarchist, and Jewish. And I think the book provides a really beautiful take on all the kinds of feelings that I've tried to work through for myself, and my relationship to Jewishness, and the book as a whole makes a case for how Jewishness fits into queerness and anarchism... As an ethical, political way of living in this world, which is also the way that I've heard you define anarchism before that I find really helpful. But before we dive into some of the stuff in the book, I want to just talk... mention, you know, the recent widespread attention given to Israel's violent occupation of Palestine. It always comes up now and again, in the mainstream media, but we know that this is an ongoing thing... the state's genocidal treatment of Palestinians. So I wanted to ask for your thoughts on how Jewish anarchist specifically can speak out and respond to the ongoing Palestinian struggle for liberation.

CM: Yeah, I also wanted to start off and saying that my heart is really heavy with all the Palestinians who are having to deal with... yet again, massive amounts of death and destruction. It's too bad this keeps happening. And I was thinking about how as Jewish anarchists, you know... maybe this plays into, in a way, why the anthology came out too... And why there's a resurgence of sort of Jewish anarchism... I was thinking about a lot of people that were anarchists or anarchistic who did something called the International Solidarity Movement. Was that like 20 years ago or something? Mostly? And people would go to the occupied territories and help with

olive harvests and be there as, you know, bodies in solidarity doing both contributing through to helping Palestinians with things they needed, also being bodies against the Israeli state.

Anarchists Against The Wall was another project. Again, not everyone was anarchists in it, but it was Israeli, including anarchist Jews. So there has been a tradition of Jewish anarchists engaging in really tangible direct action and solidarity in Palestine, and the State of Israel. And then you kind of flash forward and the past few years... I was thinking about this a lot. It's not, again, by at all anarchists but some Jewish anarchists have been really involved in groups like "If Not Now", and "Jewish voices for Peace" and other groups like that. And that have been doing a lot of work within Jewish institutional structures in larger Jewish communities on Turtle Island, and other places to try to switch away from this conflation of Judaism with Zionism and there's been a lot of groundwork.

So then we come to this moment. I don't know, it's just felt really powerful to watch! It's been really moving. The solidarity demonstrations are massive. They were instantaneous and in so many places. But just the one I went to, which wasn't huge, in Pittsburgh. I felt this even there with a few 100 people. It was, you know... Muslims, Jews, Palestinians, Christians, anarchists. And it felt so much a deeper form of solidarity, where it wasn't as unusual in a way for there to be people coming there with the fullness of who they were in a solidarity. It just felt really moving. And myself included in that I and a couple other queer Jewish anarchist decided to make some banners and one of them we made there was "Solidarity With Palestine. Abolish the State." We had lots of kind of debate about that. How do.. should we be bringing a perspective? I thought we should. But I was really struck ahead of time and when we brought it to the solidarity demo people were really receptive to having Jews there naming that they were Jews bringing their views. There were other signs that other Jews had brought there weren't anarchists that were... you know, "Judaism Does Not Equal Zionism" and all these things! But that would make it clear that they were Jews and I think and... as many people by listening have seen images of the solidarity demos, there's so many demonstrations in which Jewish anarchists and also radical Jews were being really clear about who they were at the solidarity demonstrations.

Now, why is that? It's not to be like "Hey, look! Here I am." But I think that's because Jews are told we should have an extra responsibility to that struggle. For us to be contesting the way the State of Israel is instrumentally using what we understand to be the beauty of Jewishness and Judaism to uphold the state and occupation and colonialism. I think it's really powerful to say "No". This is not this hegemony of a viewpoint. And I think the other thing a lot of Jewish anarchists have been doing is holding spaces for the grief of people being killed.

Again, I was part of a... I didn't organize this, but some Jewish anarchists in Pittsburgh organized a really beautiful Kaddish a mourning prayer for a half hour in the Jewish neighborhood on Shabbat. Which means a lot of Jews are walking around seeing us do this, and it was a half mile from the Tree of Life Synagogue. It was the same corner where they had done many different vigils, grief rituals, and other things around the white supremacist murders at the Tree of Life only a little over two years ago. So it just felt really powerful to be there and say that we understand because of our own traditions of mourning, why those traditions actually compel us to be in solidarity with other people and their pain. When they're sick, or dying or after death. And it actually... it isn't just those traditions don't just apply to us, they compel us to be here for other people. It was very beautiful.

So I want to say just to wrap this up with Jewish anarchists... because I've just been watching around I think it's like a lot of anarchists, but Jewish anarchists have been really throwing

themselves for Palestinian solidarity forms of direct mutual aid, and doing a lot of really beautiful speaking and writing and organizing. Again, very visibly. And I think that's a change. It's a real palpable change this time. Not just Jewish anarchists. But there's a sea change in the kind of incredible attachment to Zionism, among Jews, and I feel like Jewish anarchists... I'm proud in a way that we're at the forefront, because we're anti-statists. So I guess the last thing to say is... I think the difference of what Jewish anarchists bring to this moment is that we bring the things we're speaking like it isn't just the State of Israel, it's all states! It isn't just colonialism in this region, It's colonialism everywhere! It's not just occupation here, et cetera, et cetera.

And the last thing I want to say is a form of critical solidarity that said, "we will be in solidarity with the Palestinians to become liberated. And when people are liberated, we understand how liberation has often gets perverted into states and ends up doing exactly what people want it to liberate themselves from. And we will be in solidarity and when people liberate themselves, we will be in solidarity with those who are then looking for forms of autonomous self determination that are outside states."

TFSR: Yeah, that seems so important because in addition to the way that people talk about the responsibility of Jews to speak out against Israeli state violence against Palestinians, then you add the responsibility of anarchists to provide a take on these situations, that's also anti-state. That was solidarity... but not saying "well, we need to support anything that's going to be against that state." Some leftists or state communist type people will like just take whatever side is against the US or Israel. So it's a more nuanced approach. And I think that's... I'm really glad you brought that up. To think about those two things kind of overlapping and the Jewish anarchist response.

CM: You know, there's also anarchists who aren't Jewish, who are doing profoundly beautiful work right now. In terms of creating all sorts of actions, beautiful actions, direct actions and other forms of organizing. But I've really appreciated at this moment, where in a way maybe the responsibility... The mosque that was being targeted during Ramadan. I was breaking my heart for my Muslim anarchist friends and Muslims in general that were having to have the Ramadan hurt. But some of my friends were Muslim anarchists. I understood the meaning of them trying to do Ramadan in different ways that are outside often the normative ways that get done in Muslim communities. Doing it in anarchistic ways. And also the pain of that during a pandemic. And then to have that sacred space be turned into a war zone.

But I really... that mosque just really touched me as an anarchist. Because I'm like, "here is a space. That's a sacred site." It was a sacred site for all different peoples. Centuries and centuries ago. And it's because of a state and colonialism, it's been turned into this horrible battleground, right? So in a way as Jews, for us to say Jewish anarchists have a special relationship to say "could we envision a time when we could come to different forms of solidarity again?" Across our various understandings of our of who we are and stop essentializing it.

So I guess that's my last thing I think Jewish anarchists bring really to this moment is looking at people is deeply, fully human and messy and flawed. And instead of just going "The Palestinians" being like, "there's a range of viewpoints within the Palestinians!" There's a range of viewpoints... and there's no category that is some essential... pure... right? I feel like Jewish Anarchists have been helping against this sort of essentialist politics. Which leads more toward fascistic forms of thinking when you just flatten people out to one category, instead of seeing the fullness of people and being in solidarity with them through moments and then through other

moments being again, in critical solidarity. I think that's a much more respectful way to look at each other as full human beings and see the pain.

Even the solidarity demo I went to was just so beautiful because I was just watching... it was kind of... the people hosting it were more liberal... you know? I'm still glad we went. But they were so sweet about anyone that came up and wanted to talk and I was really struck by people just wanting to come tell their stories of their relationship to that place called Jerusalem. It was a very moving to listen to people's histories and personal stories of their connection. And then not wanting it to be both an occupation, a battleground, and a state. A place where the state and settlers are engaging in it... you know?! Human is a flawed term. But anyway, from a very experiential thing where it broke across these kind of barriers. Anarchists seem often good at doing that, in a way where we're able to see kind of the messy fullness. And Jews are definitely good at that. So combine Jewish anarchist and wrestling with all the complexities in the questions.

TFSR: Yeah, what you said really struck something in me to think about why it would be that Jewish people, specifically Jewish anarchists, who would be positioned in a good way to kind of take apart those essentializing identities. There's something particular about how the history of Jews in all these different places they've been let in and kicked out and harmed and I don't know... used for things, that allows them to think about identity... for us I guess... to think about identity differently than we get told to from our dominant culture. That that's really exciting idea. I don't know if you have any other thoughts about that, like why we're as Jews and Jewish anarchists in such a good place to kind of articulate identity not as flat or singular thing, a decentralized thing?

CM: Yeah, I mean the more I've come back to my own as part of what this Anthology, this sort of resurgence of Jewish anarchism, which just feels so beautiful and moving. I think we're all in this incredible "we're so glad to find each other! and we're so glad to all be like learning so much from each other and challenging!" I like feel so challenged, and in a good generative way, of myself. like "Wait! I never understood that. I understood this!" You know? And so some of it for me is a lot of: "Well, this is who I am" or "This is the culture I was raised in." And then the generosity of so many people right now who are Jewish anarchists, who ... it's a range of experiences.

But a lot of Jewish anarchists are really going back to Torah, and teaching it in ways often, almost all overwhelmingly, well, maybe it's the people I hang out with. They're trans and queer Jewish anarchists. And I think there's something to this, like when you go back and you start looking at the text. I'm no scholar in this yet, but I'm really enjoying going and scrutinizing. The whole structure is intended to be a communal, educational, ongoing investigation and you have all these things written down, but then it's this living... it's intended to be argued with and interpreted and debated and questions are elevated. It intends for you to question.

I keep going back to this word, but I think it's a really prominent within Judaism is "we wrestle", you know? We wrestle with everything. And even a friend of mine who does believe in God. I don't. At one point I said, "I don't believe in God" and they're like, "but there isn't that notion of belief in God." In Judaism. There's like a wrestling with what God is in what context, and where, and how that plays itself out because it's different depending on... there's a bunch of different names or time periods or context.

But it's also... "Do you do trust in it?" Like if you start translating some of the words that are originally connected? Do you trust and in some kind of thing that's greater than us? And I

go... “I don’t know?” It’s like all these, it just raises these different questions. There wasn’t, there wasn’t an answer. I don’t know. I just... somehow you combine things that we think are just our cultural things and you say, “well actually even if I’m not religious” let’s say or “I didn’t come through that training. I don’t believe in God, I’m a product of the culture of 1000’s of years of people that have used those tools to keep together.” So I don’t know, somehow that you bring that to anarchism, which is also about questioning everything and not believing in authority.

I think that the two together work really well because there are plenty of Jews that will still believe in authority and will wrestle with and debate and raise all these questions in order to solidify authority whether it’s justified or not. But there’s very conservative and hierarchal forms of Judaism. But then anarchism is questioning hierarchy, and you bring those two together, and it’... Yeah. I don’t know. I think there’s something. I still don’t even know what the answer is to it. But there’s so many stories within Judaism and the Jewish experience and Jews throughout history that have had to rebel and had to figure out ways, it’s just, it’s also just so prevalent.

So many Jews have had to become, or desire to become rebels or resist the dominant culture, because the dominant culture mostly did not, and still doesn’t in a lot of ways accept. Whatever the rationale for why you need the state is because we’ve been pushed out across the world, most Jews have never had citizenship or been parts of states or been protected by them, or before that empires! We’ve all we’ve been our own autonomous communities for most of our history until the very recent history. The State of Israel is so young. It’s such a baby, right? And it’s not the whole, it’s such a minor part of Jewish understanding of how you stay together. And in a very anarchistic way before that.

TFSR: The state is a relatively new invention anyway.

CM: I mean, I guess maybe for even for this idea that Jews connecting, I was saying protection. Okay. Yeah. So, I understand at some point most people that face enslavement and displacement, and genocide, and destruction of all their institutions, their languages, etc. At some point we’ll turn to trying to figure out ways to protect themselves. And Jews have engaged in a variety of ways to protect themselves. Some Jews thought that the state would protect them. Others of us like anarchist Jews understand that states do not protect us. But I get how...you know. I think one thing that gives us stuff specially positioned to understand that states don’t... we understand that almost nothing has protected us. And that we have to protect ourselves. And other communities have experienced that too, not specifically just Jewish. If you’re Black and Jewish. If you’re Black, other communities...indigenous, or indigenous and Jewish, a whole bunch of other categories of people have experienced that.

When you combine that again: Jewish with anarchism, there’s a special ... we’ve been pushed across all borders. We don’t really belong to any nation states. Whenever there’s been moments of mass antagonism toward us. It’s turned into violence. We’ve only pretty much... sometimes other people protect us, but they’ve been people, not states. Communities, not states. And that, in a way, is beautiful, too, right? It’s like we figured out how to protect our community. Self defense and community resilience. And now you have this moment. I think that our Jewish anarchists, feel such affinity with people who are like.... the Palestinians that are like... we were having to figure out how to protect ourselves, and we know how to protect ourselves, and we know how to resist and we’ve been doing this now for a while. And in a way, there’s this recognition of like “we get that that’s what you have to do to keep your community together.” Yeah, because most Palestinians are in diaspora now, too, right?

TFSR: Yeah. Yeah. That's a good point. And it's interesting because that main narrative of the necessity of the State of Israel to protect the people often blinds people to the fact of what's going on between Israel and the Palestinians, where it has such a reminiscence to the things that the Jews have experienced from violent states in the past. I really would like also, just to go back... One thing I heard and what you were saying was like the idea of... instead of belief in God, like wrestling with God made me think about, committing to wrestling with God and committing to the question. Its also like the way to enter just sort of commit to the struggle as, like not an endpoint that we're going to reach, but something that we have to keep doing and keep asking. So that we can always counter where power starts to collect and do its thing.

CM: Yeah, but you know in a way... I think why it's been really increasingly powerful to me as, a like, non binary, queer, Jew and an anarchist is to bring all these things together. But within anarchism, we do wrestle as anarchists with things all the time. Constantly! Like, okay, there's a pandemic, let's wrestle with what this means now and how the world's going to shift and what we should do to respond. But we don't really have places that bring us together to do that regularly. I know a lot of us are, myself included, are grappling with... this has been a hellish or one of the most hellish 13 or 14 months, a lot of us are... collective trauma. A lot of us are doing really badly. As anarchists, I know, all of us need to be talking about it, and thinking about it. And working through wrestling with what just happened to us. And we're not. There's no place to go to do that. And as a Jew, who's an anarchist, I know I have places to do that, because Judaism for 1000's of years, Jews have survived.

Jews have been around almost 6000 years or 1000's of years. Any diasporic peoples in a way that haven't been protected by states or empires or, you know, church hierarchies, have figured out how to create community without states. Yeah, and have kept their culture together without a state. And part of that within Judaism is a really intricate amount of ritual and holidays and time and creating time for things. And so I was especially struck by it this year, maybe because this year has been so hard, but during Passover, eight days, you don't necessarily celebrate every day, but that time period asks of us, and it has for 1000's of years, to get together and for hours wrestle with the story of what it meant to be enslaved, what it meant to engage in forms of resistance and direct action to get out of that. And then to leave and not know where you're going. To be liberated, but not free.

The first moment in this year, it really struck me, was to create this temporary space to start bringing people together. And that felt sacred, that we could begin to sort of process it and heal from it. Feel whatever! I'm not gonna describe it religiously, but some people might. This space that... like as anarchists I mean... here, we are in Asheville, and yesterday, you and I went to Firestorm: anarchist feminist queer collective bookstore, 13 years birthday party in a park. I'm visiting. For a lot of us it was the first time we've been with queer, feminist, anarchists together in this beautiful space of celebrating and gathering, which is what our spaces are usually. Right? And it just felt like "Okay, this is what all of us need!" Right?

Within Judaism there's so many places like that. And so we set up these spaces really regularly in Judaism. During Pesach we come... Passover, we constantly are debating "So what does it mean to liberate yourself? And then, how do you? In the story, you have 40 days where people are wandering around trying to figure out how to create freedom, or how to begin to understand that? But you really, every year, wrestle with it. Are we good enough to be free? How do we be free? How do we liberate ourselves? Do we do a good job of it? Blah, blah...

And this year, the conversation I went to online about it, someone pointed out because Jews like to go “Hey! But there’s another piece to the story. You can go a few more pages ahead in the Torah, it talks about how there’s this whole debate about how do you treat slaves well!” And they go “why would we have done that after we just liberated ourselves from slavery?” And it was like, “well, that is a part of wrestling.” If you become the person that suddenly is free, maybe you’re not as free as you think. And what if you start enslaving other people? Shouldn’t you start wrestling with why you’re doing it and how you’re treating them? And then maybe you’ll start thinking “Hey, this isn’t what we want to be doing.” So we have this really nice conversation about how does sometime liberation turned into the opposite? Which is exactly what’s happening right in the State of Israel.

And I’m just like, “Okay, this is why as a Jewish anarchist I’m just really appreciating spending more time within radical Jewish circles.” In one person’s conversation, [they] said “Why do we think even as radicals and queers... “ (they weren’t anarchists in this space, but it was definitely a queer space, radical space...) “Why do we think what it’s telling us in this passage is that all humans have the capacity to enslave other people.” And if we don’t continually revisit that, remember that, and reject it. We’re prone to doing it again. More than if we forget to talk about each year. And I thought that, “I feel like anarchism needs more...” It needs grief rituals for when things happen our communities instead of maybe it happens sometimes maybe it doesn’t. It needs holidays outside of capitalist time. There’s such a richness within Judaism of ways to create community without states ways to create solidarity without states.

TFSR: Yeah. And also like practicing, almost like practicing conflict, in a way, like the arguments and the reinterpretations.... in a way that doesn’t divide s community up. Or tear everything apart or make you enemies. There’s so much arguing and disagreement that is actually a richness rather than a problem or something to run away from.

CM: A lot of Jewish anarchists are very generous people. It’s really interesting. It’s because Judaism, there’s such a compulsion, you need to be studying and teaching and learning all the time to whole your life that’s completely another value within Judaism. The reason there’s so much sacred out of capitalism time in Judaism is meant used to spend time studying and learning and teaching and sharing ideas. And so, I was mentored by and learned a lot from Murray Bookchin. And he was very generous. Another Jewish anarchist. Murray was such a lovable and such an intense... So Jewish! Eastern European Jewish. Ashkenazi Jew. But like when I first met him, he was like encyclopedic, his mind was just like, amazing. The first year I was like, “Okay, I know, there was critiques of his ideas, but I can’t [argue], like he’s just... I can’t figure out the way...” And then when I did and start arguing with him... he loved that.

And everyone was kind of scared because he really argued intensely. But then when I started we became ... in a way.... I feel like that’s we broke through and had a loving relationship. when I would argue back... could finally argue back. He was teaching me to be able to argue back with him, even though it pissed him off. It’s kind of like, “I don’t want you to disagree with me, but I want you to argue with me. But that’s how all of us feel,” you know? Like, I want to argue things! But then I understood within, like Bookchin and a lot of his argumentative style, you could on the one hand find there’s a host of other reasons... his bitterness, blah, blah, toward the end of his life which I kind of understand the older I get... It’s like, how can we not be? Yeah, I’m not going to get bitter. But you can get tired being an anarchist for a long time, because people don’t stay anarchist for life or a whole bunch of other things.

But Murray had a really great mind about wrestling with ideas. Some phenomena would happen and he would want to debate, and argue it, and think about it, and really intensely! And we'd be almost nose to nose, almost screaming at each other about an idea. And then we would stop I would go "I love you" and hug each other. And that's so.... at least culturally, how I understand Judaism to me. Yeah. So I never took it as he was upset with me. And I get that I do that sometimes when arguing. And I'm like, I'm not being intense because I'm angry. I'm just enjoying, like, so enjoying that our minds are moving so intensely, because none of us know the answer. And I did appreciate this about Murray. He was like if I teach you nothing else, I want to teach you to think critically, and always imagine something else. Even if he ended up disagreeing with me, that really is what he wanted. That's such a Jewish thing. I want you to learn to think for yourself. And then I want us to continue to argue and none of us know the answer. And we're not going to.... always based on the context.

If you look at his body of his work... let's stick with Murray for a bit. His work is mostly very dynamic. You can disagree with different periods of different shifts. But he's this... he's constantly trying to reinterpret his own ideas through lens of society and reinterpret society through the lens of new ideas, bringing in other theorists. Because he's only one person he didn't... there's a whole host of things he ignored and didn't bring in right? Queer theory, colonialism... you know but what he did was so similar to a Jewish practice of continuing to push yourself and challenge yourself, wrestle and, you know?

As anarchist, I think we could stand to bring in, whether they are Jewish or not, a more generous sense of wrestling with ideas. I create a lot of anarchist spaces where I'm like, let's all come into the room and pretend none of us know the answer, because none of us do! And have a big conversation about it. I've been so perplexed, I've tried that experiment so many times. It is really hard to get a roomful of anarchists to set aside with their preconceived notion of the answer they think is right to solving capitalism. I'm like... if any of us knew we would have done... or whatever the question is. And I think it's so much more interesting to me, and I really am coming to understand this be more than my Judaism and my anarchism is: that it's actually okay for us to come in with questions, not answers and then together, question the questions and wrestle with them and come out with more questions and maybe a little bit better understanding, that's probably the best we can hope for. I don't know. I guess I'm wandering around on different topics, which is another very Jewish trait, you wander around and you come back to somewhere, but a very diasporic trait, you wander around, but you know, kind of where you're going.

TFSR: No, I love that. I mean, that's something I share too. And it's an experience I've had to with people that are close to me being like "my wanting to argue about that is love!" It's not, like anger or anything. And my intensity sometimes can read that way. But I am always wanting that and I love just like having to face the conflict, rather than let it sit. Because that's when we like get silenced and don't work together. And I don't know, it's much better to work those things through. So I can see that, you know the opening this line of like Jewish anarchism... trying to bring some of that Jewishness into anarchism, too. And it does seem, again, I said this in the beginning of our conversation, but this book seems timely in a way to me because I've been part of communities doing the same kind of thing that this book represents. And then, through my conversations with you around the book and meeting more and more people, who are all like "this is a moment to rethink it all." And so actually a question kind of along that line and going back also to how you're saying there's a sea change in terms of like the way that people are starting to distinguish Jewishness from the State of Israel from Zionism... Your book also

shows how there's different forms of Judaism. And like, even what you're talking about, it's not a uniform thing is not a one centralized hierarchy of like thought and beliefs. And new book contains all of these counter narratives to those stories. So I was just wondering if there's more of these kinds of perspectives that you might want to share here. Things that get left out, when we think about what a Jew is, what Judaism is, what being Jewish means... the diversity of the practices that go to make up Judaism?

CM: Yeah, yeah. I'm not sure I can answer that whole question. Because Judaism is... again is so enormous. And there's so many different understandings of it. I'll speak to ... maybe within the like radical anarchist Judaism that has led to this anthology is like, me generally. Especially before the pandemic, which made it harder, but finally me being like "Hey, I'm just I'm so much more comfortable in the diaspora, being diasporic. Both maybe from my own trauma and ancestral trauma, just this compulsion to move." I'm realizing that's part of how I protect myself and safety in a way. But also this way in which diaspora is like making connections and being really intentional about community and scattering seeds. And I don't know... I like doing that. So for a few years I was just going. When I was in all of these different communities across Turtle Island, and a little bit of other places. It was so striking to me. Suddenly, everywhere I go, people go "Hey, you happen to be staying tonight in a house where everyone's queer Jewish anarchists! We're also going to have a Shabbat dinner!" And then you'd sit down, people would start talking about how they're doing language... Latino and Yiddish language classes or they did a demonstration together as anarchist Jews, or blah, blah. I was "What is going on?!" There's suddenly... and then I started being looped into friends going, "Hey, we're gonna start every month meeting up some of us who are queer and trans for Rosh Chodesh." Which is like the new month and do conversations and rituals around that. Which I'm still doing! And so I thought "okay, something's going on." I think that's one reason I logged in diasporic.

Two is, I really like seeing the bigger picture about trends that are happening. And I was like "something's going on." And so then this Anthology... between putting out a call and asking people to write. It's actually been surprising to me since it's come out. Almost some things I was intentionally trying to do. Other things have been like this beautiful surprise! So there're about 40 contributions to it, magical stories, really heartbreaking. A lot of vulnerable, really moving, poignant stories, very honest and open, poems are at work.

And I mean, I definitely had a viewpoint in things that I like. I wanted pieces that were not assimilationist not Zionist, not statist. I want people, all the pieces to be challenging white supremacy, to be anti-colonial. There were things that I without saying that... anti fascism is like a big theme, that are threads through it. But I really wanted people to speak from their own experience and their own trauma. And I think one thing going into this anthology that really struck me is, and maybe it's because for me, I'm just like, "well, I don't know what else to do but say the truth of what I see in the world in myself." Which also feels like I understand coming a lot of my cultural Jewish experience kind of a directness because we put out what we want and we start wrestling with it.

I just realized how many people that are kind of coming in new to both their Jewishness and their anarchism and saying "well, maybe I can do both, and my queerness!" Not everyone in the anthology is queer or trans, but a lot of people are. And a lot of people were like "Who am I to say?" Because, within the wider anarchist and left and radical progressive circles... people see Jews as like, "What do you guys have to complain about? You're not facing any difficulties. You're not, you know... you're fine! There's no antisemitism, there's nothing going on. You don't have any

trauma. You don't have this." And I was like "I know that's wrong." I don't want our whole story to be one of trauma, but we have profound amounts of trauma ancestrally and contemporarily. From how we're treated, including as Jews, and there's still globally but it also in United States, there's antisemitism is not going away and it shifts and it changes, but it's not gone. And it can be deadly as we found out as expressed in the anthology. There's a lot of pieces on the Tree of Life, because that was kind of a pivotal moment that happened during the anthology being produced.

So the differences that struck me in this was I really wanted people to speak to their experiences with a forcefulness and a boldness and not hide that, because I understand that it isn't a contest. We have just as much stake in fighting white supremacy and fascism. Because white supremacy and fascism are fundamentally anti-Semitic. See Jews as other. See us as a threat to white supremacy. A threat to states. And we are! I want them to. But I also understand that they target us as people they want to kill. Right? I'm not saying it's all the same. The history of anti blackness is not the same as a history of antisemitism, or anti indigenous understandings, or anti... all the other anti's that are part of the founding of... let's just say, the United States. But there's a pretty serious connection between them all, there is a very powerful and real connection between them all. And our fights, our fates are linked, our liberation is linked, our pain is linked.

And so to come back to your question on the differences. I want people to be like "it's okay to say that. It's okay to say that." Because, I really felt the pain of a lot of Asians lately. A very flattened out category, because I know that does not encompass all the diversity within that phrase. So my apologies for using that as a shorthand for Muslims or other people that go "why don't we get named as often?" Or "why don't people see us?" Or "Why do people buy into the stupid stereotypes that make it seem like we're not in the bullseye of fascism or the state or hate or all these other things." Right? And that pain of like, I know, we can't just have a laundry list of things. So I wanted this anthology to humanize. I feel like when people see pain, each other's pain, they understand colonialism has stolen a lot from all of us. Capitalism has stolen, the state has. That pain feels similar even if the histories are different and through that pain, we can understand that the way to lessen those losses and create liberation. Freedom is going to be a shared struggle.

But the experience in this anthology, to come back to that question, really surprised me after reading. So many people want to write about their relationship to coming to spiritual practices. Whether that was going to Rabbinical school, or embracing trusts in God or understandings of God. There's that which in another Jewish anarchist book wouldn't have gotten there. And there's a profound amount of sort of wrestling with spirituality and rituals and other huge... people engaging in a lot of ritual. Different understandings of how you can use it as a personal practice or a political practice or combination there of. I think it also shows the spectrum of people coming in through, and what their relationship to Judaism was, whether they were raised to be religious or not religious or Zionist or not Zionist. Or whether they were Jewish or converted or not. How they came to it. I really wanted people stories to be their own unique stories to really show that it isn't there isn't this one path there never is.

But I really wanted that to be like... the differentiation of our experience is a strength. Not just Jews. In any understand whether we're queers or feminists or indigenous. But there's something I think I like showing in anthology is like a dialog that shows you know how difference can not end up meaning that people have to be antagonistic to each other. I don't know. I'm trying to think of what your question about, like different kinds of Judaism? I don't know. I think I'm not

answering the question as well as like, what different types of Judaism there were in it, because I think a lot of them it's more an emphasis on how they choose to approach their Jewishness or their Judaism or their political practice.

TFSR: I think you answered again, in a way that I wasn't expecting. But it's by having every contributor be forcefully, vulnerably sharing their experience, you show that each person's experience of Jewishness is different. And yet also kind of is Jewishness right? Or Judaism. So then it's like, that becomes the kind of multifaceted version. In a way, my question kind of would leave, like, "there's these different kinds of Judaism and like a, and b, and c" but actually you're telling me through the book that what we see is that there's all these different ways. They're all these strategies, rituals, practices, struggles. And for me reading, it was so helpful as almost like, therapeutically because it's something that I mean, maybe as you've said, my Jewishness is something I'm constantly struggling with. Actually, that made me think some of the stuff you were saying that maybe, in a way, I feel like Israel as the focus, and then the kind of history of the legacy of the Shoah, as a kind of defensive of why Israel needs to be. The same way that we see identities get flattened out, antisemitism, I feel like gets flattened out into this one thing. I could relate to the book a lot of the ways that I've been brought back into Judaism beyond just sort of a cultural identity has been through trans Jews and seeing how they ... because I'm always like, "I can't be Jewish and be queer, and be a feminist" and now I'm seeing all of these trans Jews finding ways to do ritual, and in the book there's one piece that I thought was so beautiful about hormones, like a ritual, a Jewish ritual around having your hormone shot. So for me I was wrestling with that my own internalized antisemitism of the fact that I couldn't be like anarchist and Jewish or queer and Jewish. And one of your pieces in the book that I found really important and beautiful was heartbreaking is you kind of going through all this sort of everyday antisemitism. I think non-Jewish people don't realize that like we as Jews face ... all the time. And I wonder if you can talk a little bit about that, the experience of sort of mundane antisemitism, not like the big violence, but even in like left spaces that should be on the side of Jews. If you have some thoughts about that you would like to share.

CM: Maybe it speaks to all the different experiences like... or what I was saying about wanting people to be able to speak directly to their experiences, because I've had so many experiences where in general, people do not see antisemitism or take it seriously. Like the January 6th Capitol assault being very recently... the far right, we have explicitly a whole bunch of symbols, explicitly antisemitic symbols and words and practices. Because white Christian supremacists, evangelical prayer as part of it, which I feel like is an assault against all sorts of things that aren't white, that aren't Christians supremacist. But there was very little conversation about antisemitism or Q Anon, or all these recent phenomena. A lot has shifted, where abolition is being named, or anti Blackness is being named, or white supremacy. And that's a phenomenal leap, because those things were not being named. But antisemitism still, it's almost never spoken.

And for years being in radical spaces, it's almost like... antisemitism-lite in this sort of sense. "Antisemitism isn't real because you all have power." And that's at the heart of a lot of the conspiracy theories, right? The Jews are behind the scenes pulling the strings. So when you're in leftist or anarchist spaces and people are basically saying, "We don't need to hear from you because you have all the benefits of society." And I'm like "we're also anarchist for a reason!" And we're talking about the liberation of freedom of everyone and hierarchy. I mean we can look in every category of people that are seen as oppressed or targeted people and find some people that

have better off situations. So I think it's this mythology that Jews are somehow both all fine and have lots of power.

I just kept thinking how much that hurts is when you needed people to come to your aid because you were being targeted for antisemitism. And nobody... people just got angry at you or laughed at you, or went on with what they're doing and ignored it. The pain of how that feels no matter what our identities are, right? And the peril to me as I understand is you can keep ignoring it until something awful happens. So one of the stories that I talked about that is [when] we happen to be in Pittsburgh, and some swastikas were painted on anarchic spaces a week or so before the Tree of Life synagogue murders. It's not a direct relationship but you know, those two spaces made a choice not to tell anybody it happened and to buff it over. To not publicize it. To not take it seriously. To not warn even the people that use that space, some of whom are Jewish, and they know that! Or queer! So this way in which "Oh, that doesn't mean anything and we're not gonna take it seriously." And then a few days later, white supremacists walks into a clearly labeled Jewish space.

As Jewish anarchists we get that it's all these things are dangerous, right? I used a quote at the beginning from a piece I really like called *Feminism Hurts by Sarah Ahmed* She talks about how patriarchy hurts because it's still happening, you know? And so I really liked that piece. It's feminism hurts or feminist hurts. I can't really remember the exact title. But she talks about all these little moments that happen in your daily life if you're treated as female or treated as hetero-normative. That the patriarchy just makes all these assumptions and you keep trying to tell people about them. People don't take them seriously because they're like, "Oh, that's just someone..." There's just all these little things you can almost not get words to.

And I was trying to show in a way with antisemitism. A lot of us who are Jews have just had so many experiences. I'm like questioning, thinking we eat odd foods, to joking about practices, to not taking seriously when people like are treating us with antisemitism. And then now I think another reason why there's a resurgence of Jewish anarchism is because there's a resurgence of fascism around the world and we viscerally understand. So many of us have parents or grandparents or know people that survived Pogroms or Shoah or other attacks more contemporaneously. And I think people think it's like the some far off distant thing and I think it's not... I don't know if to call it antisemitism but this way and not taking seriously. The pain is when people kind of go "You don't understand what it means to have your people tried to be killed off by structures" and I was like, "I mean it's horrible that the Holocaust industry, whatever you want to call it, turned it into almost a parody." I don't know where.

In the State of Israel was using it. But that was like a massive genocide and it wasn't just Jews. It was Roma peoples, and queers, and people with disabilities, and all the anarchists pretty much. It wiped out so many people. But underpinning that was antisemitism. So you can't understand especially in German forms of fascism, national socialism, you can't de-link antisemitism from it. But even contemporarily now, in the last four years, the number of like, all the neo-Nazis in the swastikas you still don't hear people talk, like suddenly that's completely de-linked from this history of antisemitism. And as someone who's Jewish that feels so disturbing. I don't understand how you can stop saying Nazis have anything to do with an anti semitic logic and they have it in the room. I mean, we can go into the analysis of like "what does it mean theoretically, antisemitism" or "what does it mean historically?" But there's just a pain in which people not taking it seriously when not that long ago, they were trying to annihilate every single Jew in the entire world, including every single space and every single book and every single grave, and

there was going to be one museum left that had pieces of Jews... so you could go look and see to show how weird Jews were. That was the end result of it, you know.

It's like, even if that didn't happen, which it didn't. I don't understand why that pain doesn't.... Of course we have pain, you know?! I was thinking I saw this thing the other day (I copy edit books for a living) it was in a book. Totally unrelated... Just a little tidbit about the schools in New York when there was a wave of immigration or a lot of Jews trying to get away from Pogroms before Shoah and poured into New York City especially, and had really huge Jewish communities. A lot of them spoke Yiddish and the public schools in New York were like "we will not allow Yiddish to be spoken in the public schools." And so they would wash the kids mouth out with soap if they spoke Yiddish. They would punish them. And it's not equivalent history. There's the pain of being like "I lost Yiddish." My Great Grandparents spoke Yiddish. And my dad spoke it, and he wanted to teach me. He was really young. And I was like "why do I want to learn this language?" Because they screamed at each other all the time in it so I wouldn't understand what they were yelling at each other. But now I'm like "that language was intentionally killed off by the State of Israel officially, and the Nazis were trying to destroy it." And then you have a contemporary history in New York and I think about the residential school history. It's not the same history. I'm not but where we're going to take indigenous children away, and we're going to beat their languages out of them, like, quite literally.

And the pain of people losing their languages. That's a pain. And there's so much more that happened in those residential schools that is horrible and painful that continues to this day. And for us to understand that, again, I really want to come back to that the pain I feel over loss of language. And a lot of this research as a queer Jewish anarchist. It's like "let's relearn languages." There's many different kinds of Jewish languages. And same with indigenous languages. And the beauty of relearning them is, you tell different stories about the world, you understand the world differently, you reconnect to the natural world. Because language has all, diasporic and indigenous languages have a connection to the natural world in a way that a lot of dominant colonial languages don't. And you understand that we come from a pluralism of people that didn't know borders, that knew sharing space together in different ways....

I don't want to romanticize indigenous peoples or Jewish peoples or any diasporic peoples. Peoples had conflict. People had asocial behaviors, people have things that... community riffs, etc. But they had all sorts of rituals and structures and ways without carceral logics. Without states without colonizers. To deal with them in a totally different ways. And if we bring back even those languages, let's say we will have different words for understanding how to deal with things, conflict in our community, that isn't about prison industrial complexes, for instance.

So, to come back to emphasize antisemitism hurts on this really personal level. And I want people to take it seriously because the more... when the Tree of Life happened, I went to this beautiful solidarity rally, but I know a lot of, almost all, the solidarity rallies that happened made this huge connection to white supremacists are coming into Jewish spaces and killing people that they can clearly see are Jewish. They're coming into black churches, they're going into mosques. They're going into places where they can find the people that they think are who needs to be eradicated.

I think the resurgence of this new Jewish anarchism is like a lot of people are starting to wear visible signs of being Jewish, Kippahs and embracing how they look and embracing practices in public spaces that clearly signal. Holding up a sign that says "I'm a Jew at a demonstration." Two years ago, I know a lot of my friends were scared to do that because of the fear of being targeted

by white supremacists. And now, we should be able to do that, right? I don't want us to have to hide any more than anyone else should have to hide who they are. So people not seeing the antisemitism within...

To come back to that lastly it really has been painful to me. I expect antisemitism is in the world. And I know most people don't see it or take it seriously. But what's painful is when your own community doesn't. In the same way when my own anarchist community doesn't take patriarchy seriously, or doesn't take forms of hierarchy seriously. It pains us extra because we're like, "but we should know better." It's not any worse, I would say, but it's more painful. And I think the last thing I learned is that a lot of Jewish anarchists have this really weird fear of when push comes to shove... who's going to protect us? We are going to protect everyone else. Like anarchists are really good at protecting each other and other communities... mutual aid and solidarity.

But I think part of the trauma of being a Jew is history has not been on our side. We have had to by and large to protect ourselves way too many times. And whether that's a false narrative or just a feeling or trauma... but you know, it brings that up for me in my anarchist communities, if you don't take antisemitism seriously now and it's just someone being a jerk to me about it in a public space. What happens when, you know, they come into our Jewish spaces and kill... People say "Okay, yeah, fine, still, it's only a synagogue. It's only Jews." I don't know, I think even to some degree, the Tree of Life... there's a couple really poignant pieces in the book. There's a bunch about the Tree of Life. But there's some about Charlottesville and other moments where, you know, fascist were yelling, blatantly antisemitic phrases, or targeting synagogues. And no one was thinking to protect those spaces or taking seriously again, those slogans.

The hurts! Of course it hurts. But it just doesn't hurt it has consequences in terms of who's going to ultimately get killed or targeted when it gets worse. And I think unfortunately, it's going to get worse again. Like that Capital assault was just the beginning of a euphoria from what they know their capable of... White supremacy, and White nationalism, Christian evangelicalism, White supremacists know what they're capable of and I feel like the reorganizing. It has not gone away.

So in this moment if we could take more seriously anti-Asian, anti-brown people, anti-Black people, anti-indigenous, the anti-queer, anti-disabled, anti-Jew, anti-Muslim, and say "Okay, this isn't just a fucking laundry list. This is our lives." And that "We care a lot about each other and that we have shared pain, and that we have marvelous..." I guess that's what I want to say with the anthology is a lot of stories of pain. In the Shoah, I think that's also the other problem is like "Oh, this whole stupid narrative. The Jews went to their death, like sheep!" Total crap. There's so much resistance. You know, it wasn't just the Warsaw Ghetto, which is an amazing story. If you read the story, it's a gripping story, because there was a lot of socialists and anarchists organizing that went into that. But there was all sorts of acts of resistance by Jews and non Jews, but especially including Jews during that time period that has gotten erased.

A beautiful book, I just remembered the other day again is *Blessed is the Flame* – about what resistance looks like. When you're at the last moment when you're about to be, you know, shoved into the crematorium or something. I read about 100 autobiographies of people who barely survived Shoah and each of them talked about what resistance is possible when almost no resistance seems possible. And that's what the *Blessed is the Flame* is about. And yet people still resisted. And we still are. But we resist in ways that also are about resilience and joy and beauty and creating life. So a lot of the forms of resistance that happened, as why I point to this book *Blessed*

Flame, but also looking at a lot of these autobiographies and what people did was they wanted to have a Shabbat before they knew they would be killed in a concentration camp, or they wanted to write down their name to keep or some or things they wanted to keep alive. The spark of the beauty of how they understood their Jewishness or their Judaism or their rituals. It wasn't, you know, just trying to pick up arms or trying to do other forms of direct action or blowing up a crematory – which were good, incredible forms of resistance that happened too. But yeah, just the way in which even in the worst moments people want to create life. Because that's what we do... and beauty.

So this anthology is full of all these Jewish anarchists. "Okay, the world's really bad right now we're facing fascism and ecological ecocide and now this pandemic, and capitalism..." There's so many things that are so overwhelming, and we're going to do it as joyfully and beautifully and lovingly and resiliently and queerly as we can till the last, very last moment, and that is resistance. You know? That is resistance because they don't want us to live. Us living is resistance. But us living... I don't mean just like surviving, I mean, trying to thrive, to love. There's a lot of really beautiful pieces like that.

I am diverging off the antisemitism part. But maybe coming back to the queerness and the trans-ness, I think I wanted people with this anthology to see both the pain and the beauty. And so with antisemitism, you can see here's the pain, but the beauty of it is, there's a lot of Jewish anarchists that are doing beautiful anti fascist resistance. And they're using their rituals as part of that, or their wisdom and their queerness and trans-ness. Part of that I've been really struck by is that there's another thing have been stolen from us and indigenous people and Black people and a whole bunch of other people who have been made diasporic and colonized and destroyed by states... we've had a lot of things stolen from us, like elasticity and dynamism in gender.

Within Judaism from the beginning, there's all sorts of ways, there's stories of people without pronouns, and there's five or six different ways of understanding gender, and there's a lot of spaces. A friend of mine was talking me recently about how trans-ness, or non binary people, non conforming people are often associated with Twilight. Within Jewish writings... with liminal spaces, with in between spaces, and they are considered the most holy and the closest... if you believe again in some kind of holiness framework. Because they have the most ability to see in a way.

In a way, bringing Judaism, and queerness, and anarchism, and trans-ness together creates a wider frame to see more. You know? Non-binary people, you're not stuck in this box. You see a spectrum that so much more beautiful and offers so much more possibility. And so we see antisemitism, we see anti-Blackness, and we bring those together... we'll see a better way to struggle against it. But we'll also see all the practices we share. They're so beautiful. How we've kept communities together without states, and how we've done community self defense without police. How we resolve conflict without cops. We're not going to have to expropriate from each other steal from each other. We can learn and borrow from each other. We can share land together without having to be a state.

There's plenty of diasporic people of all different genders and colors, and indigenous or non indigenous, that had all sorts of ecological and harmonious relationships with land and using it for different seasonal harvesting or gleaning or commons.. We'll have so much more wideness of a lens, and I think that's why I want people to see both how much we've lost as Jews. How much has been stolen from us, and how much we've been devastated over the centuries. It just widens the lens with each moment in history and there's more.

I just learned this thing recently about the witch trials, I love Silvia Federici's book – as a lot of people do – about the witch hunts been this massive way to kill off healing arts, and mending arts, and queers, and non binary and feminists in a way to rein in massive amounts of queer women, healer people murdered in the name of being witches. And then I overlaid that recently by learning about how much of that was tainted with antisemitism and potentially why some of the understandings of what witches look like because people equated them with Jews. A lot of antisemitism that led into who got killed during that time period. That only broadens the horror of that moment. And gives us more understanding, especially as queer anarchist Jews to be like “Wow, of course, we're going to fight against those things with other people.” And we're going to try now. There's a whole bunch of Jews that are doing healing arts, grief rituals, and mending rituals. Because we're reclaiming this beautiful thing that was killed off at this moment. 500 whatever years ago.

TFSR: You bring up a lot of really, really interesting, important parallels, in listening to you. Thinking about how... this is making connections in my brain. I connect like the kind of State based thinking with the kind of like universalism of Christianity in ways that tries to narrow our... make our narratives uniform. That's what cuts out the histories of resistance both with like Jews or Black resistance during the time of slavery. It makes it seem like this like simple thing. In a way I connect that with “leftist spaces” where they're, like “look like your particular problem as a Jew – with like antisemitism that can come later. We'll deal with that later. Because there's more pressing issues right now.” I'm not saying that we should be playing the oppression Olympics, but to secundarize whatever kinds of experiences of oppression that we have based on like embodiment, or like perception. I think there's the history of antisemitism going back. You know, it's completely entwined with the development and the subtilization of oppression that comes with like the formation of the state and the development of capitalism and markets. I don't think we can disconnect that from all the other things. Again, there's always like, risk in analogizing. You've been very careful to say “it's not the same what happens to different groups of people, but...” And I really like the connection you made with feminism because like with Sarah Ahmed too, like she talks about being like a kill-joy. My internalized antisemitism... sometimes I'm like, even just bringing up antisemitism is like “Oh, that's like an annoying Jewish thing to do.” You know what I mean? And it's so prevalent because people are ignorant of how much antisemitism is just basically woven into... implicit antisemitism is woven into our lives. Even just thinking Jews are powerful and therefore can't be experiencing kinds of oppression because there's been some kind of assimilation. That was really helpful to me to kind of tie these things together and I thought you did a really.... just bringing those parallels up was important and kind of building off the resistance and ritual...that's something else that really struck me from your book from various writers. You have mentioned a few times how the kind of horrors of the Tree of Life massacre kind of shadow the book and there's a lot of responses to that. Your previous collection of *Rebellious Mourning* is about grief and mourning. So I was wondering if you wanted to talk a little bit about like Jewish rituals as forms of resistance or even direct action. One of the things that gets talked about in the book is particularly mourning and sitting Shiva as a kind of communal thing. So I don't know if you have more that you want to say about that. But I would really love to hear more of the kind of Jewish resistance.

CM: Yeah, I think for variety personal reasons have been really drawn to loss, grief and mourning, but also because it's a part of life, you know? And as queers, anarchists, and Jews, and other identities, they're probably listening to this. We know, we are gonna experience a lot of loss. And

so how do we handle that? We want to lessen unnecessary loss. And we want to... I don't know, skipping over it doesn't make it go away. And not using it as a form of instrumentalness, but to both allow us to fully begin the journey of processing it so we don't.... people need each other to do that. Otherwise it is almost impossible to ever kind of integrate. Grief doesn't go away, you just have to integrate it in ways that allow me to journey forward with your grief in a better way.

What I love about Jewish grief traditions, just to focus on those. Traditions around sick, dying, and post death... I think they all pretty much ask of you to do it in community. And so you're not supposed to leave a body alone that is dead, until it is properly buried. Is that possible? I think that's why the grief of when police murder people and the bodies are left in the street... The horror of that! It is horrifying. It's horrifying for the people that know that person and love them. It's horrifying for those...

I've been around many of those, unfortunately, watching those bodies for hours in the street, and the indignity. There's so many levels, it feels horrible. Then denying people the capacity to be with that body and stay with that body. Right? And do it in community so they can process it. And I think why those moments when the police do that. That felt horrible and powerful to people is that you stand there for hours together and you create your own sort of communal space of helping, I'm gonna just wash the time again, you can see the pain and people instinctively want to be with other people. To be there for the friends and the family to help them process the horror of this for that moment and not skip ahead.

And Daunte Wright... I was just struck by that, because I love Unicorn Riot when they're right at the scene at the very beginning and some other live streamers right when he was first murdered. I would just watch for hours where people were like "Before we go to the police station, we have to sing songs to the ancestors" which they did. "We have to circle the body and be here with it, we have to write." And so what I appreciate within Judaism, is it's understood for 1000's of years we need... we don't want people to be murdered by police. There's also a long history of Jewish songs and tradition. Jews have not liked police for a long time. We want to get back to a time when we can stay. It gives you things that are already there to turn to that makes sense, right?

It's like you should be with a body, but also sitting Shiva is 7. Shiva means 7. It's like when someone you have a loss or someone dies, you're supposed to, as a community, stay together for seven days and talk and laugh and cry and eat and sing and be there. And if anyone has experienced someone who they love dying, you know, especially, I mean, there's so many different things that happen with grief. But that first week, especially, it's almost just... it's so unreal and you just don't know what to do. And the capitalist industry tells you to start worrying about buying things – coffins or arranging funerals. But the beauty in just being with other people is really profound. And knowing that that's the beginning of the journey.

And then there's a lot of different traditions, but how do you come out of that week? There's a lot of intentionality. One thing I've heard was like, with people, you walk outside and you walk around a block together to help you transition back into the world. Okay, so these are such beautiful moments, right? And so a lot of Jews and there's a whole bunch of other traditions I could go into. But a lot of Jews have been doing a lot, as Jewish anarchists and others, like with the Tree of Life. You know, again, I think it was just because that was people's practice. It's like that happened and people started sitting Shiva in the street around where it happened because this is what they do as their practice as the ritual.

And because the community was in pain, and because it's in an extremely long term Jewish neighborhood. It's everywhere you walk. Like, it feels powerful to me, because I don't really ever experience being around lots of things, where there's so many Jews, you know, even if they're not all my type of Jews! You see yourself in a way, you know, but yet here they are completely feeling like everyone sort of been a target. And in this neighborhood that's clearly a target, you can easily find Jews in this neighborhood, and people chose to sit in the street again and be visible and do this grief ritual. Then it became a direct action blockade in a sense too. But I'm not even sure that was, who knows whether that was the intentionality. But who cares! It doesn't really matter? Right? How do we use these rituals, not in the sense of "We are going to do the Shiva so we can have a blockade!" But be like "We need to be together now, we can't go home." We have to be here together.

And then over in Pittsburgh, there was a lot of intentionality for that first year. In Jewish rituals every month you're supposed to do something, then after the first 11 months, and the 12, then there's every year, it never ends, if you have someone that dies within Judaism, there are moments to remember that person, because remembering is keeping them alive, and the love alive, and the honoring. So that Jewish anarchist queer community in Pittsburgh was doing like, a lot of monthly and weekly rituals and ceremonies and on the one year did a really beautiful -which I end up coming to - a really beautiful Shabbat, that combined grief rituals, but also, were doing political organizing at the same time. I don't think they could have if they didn't have the community to be processing. They don't have to also happen in the same place.

But when we seen how profound it is... a lot of direct actions lately where people are like "You're destroying sacred land with pipelines. You're killing off sacred bodies with your cops." I think people are creating grief spaces around them, whether they're doing it explicitly or not, and bringing them because a lot of Jews are going "It's okay to be both anarchist and Jewish now." Which is a new thing again, and this is what's really distinct about this moment. And if you read the anthology it's so different than any other Jewish anarchism before... and to be spiritual.

That's been challenging for me, because I've never understood myself as religious or even believing in God, or even believing faith or having even spirituality. It's been really recent. "Oh, that's just that's like, you know, higher... That's something I don't know." I just always felt like it's something outside myself. And then I'm like "No! How can we do we do it ourselves?" Spiritualities, the non-hierarchical ways we are taking these rituals and making them queer, or bringing out the queerness in them or bringing our politics to them and making them anarchist.

Just a couple weeks ago, I was sitting under a beautiful stars with a bunch of queer anarchists in a backyard and we sang for like two or three hours: these beautiful songs about healing and solidarity and resistance and anti cops and under the moon. That's been Shabbat. We're waving to the sky change. And then it's just like "what are we doing?" We're having an anarchist hang out in the backyard! But we did the Shabbat. Which was lighting candles and every Friday (you're supposed to for 24 hours, slow down, stop, be with each other, be in community) you know? And again, politically, you're also with your buddies who are anarchist, and you're talking about other things. In fact, three days later, we're making banners to go to the Palestinian solidarity demo.

And because you see each other regularly and you build relationships, and you're like when things happen, okay, we need to be there. Right? So I don't know. There is an interrelationship with them. But I think there's something especially profound this moment where so much of what we're experiencing is loss and death. And that's what our resistance is responding to: loss

of beautiful forests that we love, loss of human beings to pandemics, loss of, you know, fentanyl, or whatever. We can go on and on about the horrors of what's happening. And as queer as queers, and as Jews and as anarchists... When you bring all those three identities together, that are all about having to make our own families, or on practices own on communities, each has its own lens, but I think you bring them together and you end up having this like "greater than the sum of their parts" way of understanding how do we create.

I was not able to be integrate my Judaism and my anarchism as much. Both my biological parents, I helped them die. What could have been horrible death and beautiful death. But I inadvertently sat Shiva with in both cases. Because they were both in hospice II type situations, a lot of other people were around. I just hung out there for a week and it was beautiful. But I went, I had to leave the anarchist world because I know the anarchists understood. They're like, come back when you're done. I'm like, I don't understand that I'm gonna be done with grief. And then when I came back I was like "Okay, this isn't enough."

As an anarchist, it's not going to be enough to keep me. I had such a lack of faith in anarchism at that moment. And I think that's what led me to think "faith is a promise". It's not a belief in a god, it's a faith that you will be there for me when someone's dying. It's a faith that we will be there for each other when a pandemic is really hard. We did sort of okay during this pandemic, we also did woefully inadequate as anarchists. As Jews, I think we did better. I think Jewish space that got created was what helped. This has been a horrendous year.

And the spaces that a lot of queer, radical, and anarchist Jews.... there's a space called Pink Peacock and in Glasgow – this Trans and Queer Yiddish thing. Yiddish anarchist, Jewish anarchist, and they've been doing on online Havdalah. It's very intimate and small. And we have these lovely conversations. I started doing that in a moment when I was unbelievably depressed and didn't even know if I wanted to live. Just waking up every morning and going "why am I still on this earth" and was at one of the lowest points. And I started going, and the first time I got on the phone, they said "it's okay to be wherever you're at," and I just almost started crying on the phone. And no one, you know... it was in held in a ritual Havdalah, which is another Shabbat and I've been going to that for months. I'm like, "okay, they created that space, the ritual to grieve and to find joy again, and to process what was going on". And anarchists have not been as good at doing that.

Muslim anarchists that I talked to have also profound rituals, and Black anarchists and indigenous anarchists. And I guess I want to ramble on about lots of topics. Part of the pandemic is I like "how do we keep our minds on... I feel so scattered!" What about the pandemic side effects? There's also a resurgence of Black anarchism and indigenous anarchism. And what I like to think of all in a way is all diasporic anarchism might be a next Anthology. Anarchists that have been people that have been displaced repeatedly and disenfranchised, seen as disposable, are understanding that their own... they're reclaiming. They're saying, "Hey, we're not going to let you take away things from us. And in fact, we're going to bring those things back in and use them as our power and as our resilience and our as our playbooks and as our way of being this for life." But it's making anarchism so much more beautifully complex and sustainable.

I'm more an anarchist each passing year the older. I'm like "Why are anarchists always in their early 20s?" The vast majority of them! Where do all the other anarchist go? It is hard, because there are not the things that keep you in it. But when you're a Black anarchist, or an indigenous anarchist, or Jewish or Black Jewish anarchist, all the overlapping [identities] where you can go and you can say "Hey, we have traditions! We have rituals!" More and more people bringing

those into the spaces of resistance. And we're bringing our multiple prayers into those spaces of resistance, or multiple grieving rituals.

I've been at things where people want to do several of those from different traditions. They all are so similar in a certain way. I've used this example before, a lot of diasporic peoples have used different things to make noise because you have to gather people. Jews use Shofar – a ram's horn. Things you can find in the ecosystems where people were. In Mexico or that part of the world, I just learned, people use big snail shells to call people together. There's the conch shell! A friend of mine yesterday said... I think it's in the Gulf region, some indigenous folks and other peoples. Black and indigenous communities use drums.... Indigenous peoples, we're all in different places. We're all experienced our own displacements and pains, but we have these rituals and we have these things we do. And when we get together, we're like, "Oh, that's cool! We all have these different ways of gathering each other!" We can return to those things together.

But especially I think the sense of what's sacred at this time on earth is so imperiled. In a way, I think that's why, weirdly, I think it isn't just me coming back to the sense of spiritual. Not in a hierarchical way. But a sense of if we don't understand the beauty and the mystery of the earth and that we're part of it, and that we actually can't even explain that. It's just beautiful. Why do we have to explain it? You know, you're sitting in a forest with some friends and you're like "why do you have to explain why this feels powerful?" I've done some Jewish anarchist grief rituals in the woods and it's absurdly beautiful and moving and healing. Why? Because I feel so connected to the ground and we've done things, the burning, and rocks, and blah, blah. We need that right now because humanity is destroying the earth and we have to remember our connections. And part of that is remembering this mystery.

The little anecdote about that Shabbat I was telling when we were under the stars? It was almost transcendent where you start singing... If you have ever done that? Just acapella. Your voices start... It's like so anarchistic... you all kind of know what song you're gonna do next and which words. Your voices rise and fall, when to start and when to stop. Like how is this organization without hierarchy? Whoo! Your bodies are just feeling really good! All of a sudden I was looking at the stars and was just in this beautiful "I just feel so good! And I haven't so much of the time!" And then I see this line of lights across the sky and they're moving and I almost scream and broke the beautiful space we created. Everyone looked up and someone's like, "Elon Musk, that's Elon Musk's satellites!" We all stood for five minutes watching him destroy the sky. I thought, "Oh my god. Jewish ritual asks you to look for three stars at the end of Shabbat to end the sacred 24 hours of a non capitalist time" Time and community time, and here's Elon Musk that's taking away the sky.

It's good to do rituals to remember that we have things to fight for. Things that are beyond us to even understand that we shouldn't be doing that to, right? Rituals have meaning. They're not just like woo woo looking at stars, they're like those are ours to destroy and they aren't Elon Musk's to desecrate in capitalism in the name of money and all this other shitty stuff. It makes you want to be radical and resist even more and not have it be that. So they're interconnected, not an instrumental way.

TFSR: I love how you're talking about that. One way I think about anarchism... or like, the way I want to talk to people about it who maybe aren't anarchists yet is to think about all the ways in our lives that the state doesn't touch us and doesn't reach us. And really what the history of the state and the capital is like, kind of tearing people away from their life ways from the land and making them dependent on the state (or seemingly dependent on it). But really, there's all

these moments that we don't have the state in our lives. The way that you're describing the rituals for all the kinds of cultures, not just Jewish culture is creating a different time in space that isn't the state that isn't capitalism. It changes that and that, and the more we do that, we would be making our lives more outside of the state. Doing something else than what we're expected to do or asked to do. So I think that's a really powerful way that you describe that.

CM: I watched someone during the "Chinese New Year" this year, they did this really beautiful series of posts about how this is actually not the Chinese New Year. It's the Lunar New Year. It's actually not one day, it's... I don't remember... I'm going to not say how many days it is because I don't remember, but it's multiple days. They said each day has a very specific thing and it's not, you know... you think about New Year's. New Year's has become this ridiculous go get fucking drunk and just have a horrible time. But you're supposed to pretend you're happy! That's not a ritual. That's like an unthinking, commodified... like Christmas or whatever, all these things!!!

But these rituals that you make your own. The Jewish New Year is also extends over multiple days, and you're supposed to spend a lot of time reflecting on harm you've done to others and harm. You're supposed to actually gather with the community, if you're part of one. Jewish anarchists could stand to do this, and other anarchists, once a year, to get together and think about harms that have happened in the community and whether it's possible... how we dealt with them, how better could we have dealt with them? Should some things be forgiven or not be forgiven? There's all these moments that are structured into ritual to help us do things that we want to be doing in our anarchist world. What does an abolitionist future look like? Well, we practice it through rituals. We're going to get better at doing that! Cleaning our space.

These there's all these rituals that people do there outside of the hegemonic ones. Christmas makes me so agitated and angry, because, you know, what? It's three months long and it's nothing but buying things. It's so dominant. Everybody assumes everyone's Christian. There's so many reasons, but it's even beyond that. It's like this deadening. It's not even a holiday or ritual. And when you come back to all these other traditions you realize people did them around harvest times to celebrate the harvest. Around moments to celebrate! There's a day, the highest day of sorrow, where Jews spend the day thinking about mourning, and then there's highest days of joy.

A few years ago, before the pandemic, I spent a lot of time in Montreal and some friends and I went to the day when you're supposed to unroll the Torah scrolls and start again, and I'd never done that before! You take them and dance with them. People were dancing it was really fun. And then when someone said "Oh, let's go outside and dance!" And my queer Jewish anarchists friends and I were like "Hey! Let's dance in the street!" Because not everyone was a radical. And then people were all moving in the street and then we're kind of creating a little blockade. But we were also just dancing, right? It was really fun, you know? And so you were kind of teaching people "Hey, you could actually take over streets." We weren't intentionally doing that. It wasn't like a lesson, but it was just like... "Hey, we're anarchists, we're gonna we're gonna go in the streets."

There's a joy in remembering these moments. We can do this on this day. I think this year has been really hard for a lot of us because our little teeny rituals... I realize how beautiful and precious they are and how flimsy they are, you know? Anarchist bookfairs are our sort of like dancing together. I don't know, we've lost those. And I think we need to come back into this time and think more about it. I really want to encourage Muslim anarchist, Jewish anarchists

and other Black anarchists, indigenous, brown, all the anarchists that are coming to try to say, “No, I want to be the whole of who I am with this!” And not have to keep those in separate spaces.

Of course, there’s some beautiful about just being with indigenous anarchists to do your thing, or just be with Jewish anarchists. I get the value the power of that too. But if we can all start saying, “Hey!” If we all start reclaiming all the beautiful rituals and holidays and practices and playbooks and trading them, I just think it’s gonna look so different. It’s gonna make our resistance better and our anarchism better too. Our anarchism needs probably more refreshing. It’s actually a much younger tradition than most of those other things I’m pointing to, which have actually had to go through.... much, much longer they have had to be rebellious and exist outside the states. Yeah, much, much longer.

TFSR: Yeah, we’ve been talking for a while. But one question. My question is in a light hearted spirit, but maybe I don’t know where we’ll go with the answer. One thing that struck me reading this book talking to my people – my queer trans Jewish anarchists, the way that all those things being queer, being Jewish are being anarchists individually often we are like “am I queer enough? I’m not queer enough, I’m not Jewish enough, I don’t know enough about Torah. Am I anarchist enough? Am I committed enough to the struggle? And I just wondered if you hadn’t any thoughts about how these three things? I mean, the book gives us a different image of that for sure. But why do we internalize... or how do we internalize these like... this impossible measurement of like what we should be to really be that?

CM: Yeah, it was funny when you said that. I was like “That’s so true!” Like, almost. I don’t know, almost everybody, especially Jews. There’s something about Jews always going around, “I’m not a good enough Jew!” I don’t know, I feel it. Maybe all of them. Maybe less so with anarchism. I think there’s something nice about that. I don’t know. It’s like, to flip it around. There’s something nice about being humble. We have to always be striving to be good enough to be these things. You know? It’s an honor to be all of them to me. Will I ever be a good enough anarchist? Probably not. But I should aspire to be a better and better one all the time. Especially all three of those, in their own way, have really profoundly beautiful (this is not a universal, because some people say “they are not always welcoming”).

But I think in general, they’re very generous and welcoming and mutualistic and reciprocal. You know, if you say you’re interested in anarchism, people start handing you zines or whatever it is. People really do want to share and borrow. Maybe to flip it around, maybe it’s comes out of humility. It also maybe comes out of... it is really hard to feel enough. Yeah, I don’t know. Maybe I’m just gonna flip it around. Because I think it’s nice think about humility, which I think maybe we need, and just be like “let’s aspire to be better and better at all of them” you know, maybe more... the “not good enough” comes from: it’s hard enough to be all these things in a world that says those things aren’t. Especially like radical versions of Judaism, and anarchism, queerness, that they’re all seen as is not enough. They’re outside of the... so it’s too bad that we have to take on that sort of self doubt about ourselves.

It does become hard to sustain them sometimes. I really hope with this Anthology, and almost everything I do to really emphasize, like, all we really have is each other in the solidarity more than anything to me is... if we don’t stick by each other, we don’t have anything else with each other. Maybe we’ll feel more of enough if we try harder to be there for each other in ways in the fullness of who we are. I don’t know. For me, I want to hear other people point out antisemitism, so it isn’t just Jews. I want to hear people that are not queer. I want everyone to not have to be

their own advocate, as it were. So maybe that's another way we don't feel enough because we all just feel sort of invisibilized by each other, which I think is sad, you know?

If we were more acknowledged, like, celebratory of each other. But I think it's really going in that direction. I really do. I feel like the last few years there's been so much collective trauma, so quickly, targeting so many people. Like every day now almost. The past few years if you think how many white supremacist murders, assaults on people. They pretty much have killed now every category of humanity except themselves.. I think we're all starting to go into spaces, each time, unfortunately. I don't want that to happen, for us to see that. Then I start realizing we're like, "Oh, we are enough because we start seeing each other. We are enough because we're there for each other." So, yeah, maybe we'll start getting past that. When we all try to be more of ourselves to each other too.

TFSR: Well, I'm grateful for you giving me your time to talk for the Final Straw and also it was really exciting to be in an actual space with you, physically together. But also for putting this book together because it did, for me, made me see that I'm not alone and that there's other people struggling with the same questions and having answers that I would never have thought of. That confirm things that I feel. So the book creates this community too. I think is really important work, so I'm really grateful to you for that. I really like the idea: may we be queerer and more Jewish and more anarchist!

CM: I know! I want to be! May we be more. We have to be more of all of them. Again, what I said I wanted this anthology to be liberatory. Queer liberation. Jewish liberation sounds weird. But I do want like a liberatory-ness within our Judaism and our Jewishness as radicals and anarchists and queers, you know? I wanted it to be bold and beautiful, and assertive in a way of beauty. But not just for Jews, I really, I hope. I've been really happy. Because one thing I was trying to do with this was to not just have this be something for Jews, to have the anthology really show interconnections of struggles and identities. Jews are all colors, all languages, all places, there are no borders within Judaism. If we don't see that enough, we push ourselves harder. I'm not saying that it's perfect at all. But there is no homogeneous Jew. And that points to this beauty of "we are all things across all borders." And including beyond just Judaism. So I hope... I feel like it touches people on this other level outside of being a Jewish anarchist.

But I'm also really, really appreciative. I feel the same way. I really want to acknowledge and thank all the 40 or more people that contributed to it. I've been really touched by how many people are reading it and saying "Oh wow. I feel. I feel seen for what I've been struggling with as a queer, feminist, non binary Jewish anarchists." Who is trying to be part of this resurgent, beautiful, bold new thing that's been coming out and creating this of anarchism with other anarchists that are coming to their senses of who they are together. And it's just really touching to see people. That's what I want. I want us all to see ourselves. The fullness of ourselves more. That's the title. *There's Nothing So Whole as a Broken Heart*. We're all so brokenhearted by this world because we should be. But I want us to be whole in that too. So I'm loving that you and other people are responding to it that way.

TFSR: Well, thank you so much.

CM: Thank you so much for having me on this.

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Cindy Milstein & The Final Straw Radio
Cindy Milstein On Mending The World As Jewish Anarchists
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