

# Ediciones Inéditas Anthology

an anthology of original essays published by ediciones inéditas

ediciones inéditas



2019

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*Note on the font used for the ediciones ineditas logo and cover: this font was recently popularized by White artist, Cali DeWitt when he used this font for merchandise for Kanye West. This was a font first used by Chicanxs in the 80s, most notably on sweaters made to memorialize those recently deceased, often by gang or police violence. Using it here is an act of taking back what a White artist has appropriated for their own financial gain & furthering of their career off of Chicanx pain and cultural innovation.*

## **A Note on Authorship**

Unless otherwise stated, the author of the work is Noche.

Works translated by Ediciones Inéditas are not included in this compilation.

# Letter from an Ineditor

What was intended as a small translation project among a few friends grew into a thing whose reach somehow spilled across borders and languages. To translate international radical texts which often go unread by Anglophone readers due to a language barrier and which also often go untranslated since they break with classical anarchist & communist orthodoxy: the ultra-left with its impossible positions.

What this project proved is that there is indeed a deep interest in the ultra-left in 2019 and which the spreading wave of proletarian revolt will only deepen. We would often get messages expressing having not previously heard of ideas such as the abolition of work, a vision of anarchy & communism beyond worker self-management, the abolition of money, a critique of democracy, communization, a critique of art, etc.

I can only hope that this project helped people understand this world we live in and the way that some of us seek to radically transform it. I also hope that it served as a nexus point where people could link up and talk to each other across languages & borders: the kind of correspondence we need more and more of these days.

To my Black, indigenous and other comrades of color: write, act & be active in this world. Your thoughts & actions are more than ever needed to clarify and deepen our positions against this world. Let's vibe.

Unfortunately the project outgrew its ineditors and we decided to fold instead of further burning out. But true to the ultra-left & insurrectionary anarchist projectuality, this does not spell the end of our activity. We continue on but in other capacities.

Most of the original essays written by me were written quickly, for better or worse, and often as a reaction to something happening in the world or in my life, hence their brevity. And as I wrote, and translated, I learned more about what I desire and what I reject. We learn by doing more so than through simple contemplation. I invite you to attempt to write out your own dreams & nightmares. You may find comrades who feel (or think) the same way as you and from that bonds can form which can break this world.

North of Yangna,

Noche of the so-called Los Angeles Eastside

# Prole Wave

A recent wave of protest activity against climate change, and general environmental degradation, has been seen around the world. But curiously *open revolt* around the world has not centered around climate change *itself*, but rather around circulation struggles: the name for struggles that occur beyond the point of production; i.e. around the distribution or consumption of commodities. These struggles largely have revolved around *the price* of a commodity which is directly linked to climate change: petroleum.

In 2017 Mexico went through the *gasolinazo*: a rise in the price of gasoline (20%) due to then Mexican President Peña Nieto's privatization of the Mexican oil industry bringing about removal of price controls. Riots, looting and blockades rocked the country. In 2018, the *Gilets Jaunes* movement rose up and rocked France (& its territories) with riots, looting and blockades. The spark: a rise in fuel prices due to French President Macron leveling *carbon taxes*, as part of a plan to stem climate change, ut on the backs of rural proletarians that need cheap fuel to get to work or go about basic errands since there is little public transportation infrastructure in the French rural and semi-rural countryside. In Haiti, fuel shortages and price harks have also sparked open revolt, along with fighting a government which is openly-aligned with U.S. interests. More recently, Ecuador has been gripped by an insurrectionary, largely indigenous, wave that has also been set-off by a rise in fuel prices: the president, Lenin Moreno, had planned to cut fuel subsidies as part of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund austerity plan as part of a loan to deal to with Ecuador's debt and fiscal deficit (the plan has been recalled, halting the revolt for now). In all cases, except Haiti, the price hikes have been addressed after governments & national economies were rocked by proletarian revolt.

Comin Situ

Replying to @Breakaway\_chi

**We are witnessing the advent of mass struggles against climate barbarism as imposed by fiscally desperate states on their proletarian and surplus**

**1:21 PM • 13 Oct 19 • Twitter Web App**

Now, if the proletariat around the world seems to fervently want fuel, and at a low cost, what are we to make of the real need to address climate change? The problem, as we see it, is that liberal ecologically-minded individuals & groups typically conceptualize climate change *in the abstract* (think of all this talk of humans going extinct), whereas the proletariat reacts to climate change via its *material* manifestations. Why? Because they have no other choice. In some parts of the world proletarians are directly dealing with rising seas, but what does this reality mean to proletarians in Forth Worth, Texas? The same reason the proletariat does not produce *communes* or *communism* out of some ideal, but out of a real *material* need. (We'll address the role / position of *the radical* later.)

Returning to the question of communism, we recall the words of Italian insurrectionary anarchist, Alfredo Maria Bonanno:

*“We must counter the satisfaction of spectacular needs imposed by consumer society with the satisfaction of man’s natural needs seen in the light of that primary, essential need: the need for communism.*

*In this way the quantitative evaluation of needs is overturned. The need for communism transforms all other needs and their pressures on man. ”*

*Armed Joy (1977)*

How then do we counter the *spectacular needs* imposed by this society? First we should clarify that proletarians largely do not *need* fossil fuels. This is an imposed false-need, just like employment (or some way to get money) is an imposed false-need. Do proletarians *need* consistent access to cheap gas if they live in a world where work has been abolished?

The rise of circulation struggles we noted above open up the possibility to demonstrate that the *real need* of the proletarians is not free, or cheap, access to *x, y, z* commodity, but rather a world where our lives are no longer *dependent* upon commodity-production itself. Abolition out of need, not mere ideals. In Chile a fare hike, on top of an already high cost-of-living for proles, has instigated a wholesale revolt against the State, its brutal State-of-Emergency & capitalism in general. High school students self-organized *MASS* fare evasions, which others quickly joined in, and it was only a matter of time until the whole country came to a halt. The struggle in Chile is also a circulation struggle, but here the commodity in question is the price of transportation. But as comrades in Chile have noted, part of their struggle is not only against the fact that free movement comes at a price, but that human life has further commodified on a class basis.

This is the link that Extinction Rebellion misses, and other idealist, class-agnostic environmental movements as well. That the *climate crisis* is a product of a certain set of *coercive capitalist social relations* and not just *bad management* on behalf of our so-called representatives in power. (We’ll get to more on Extinction Rebellion later on).

These circulation struggles are part of the beginning of a movement against not only against *Capital* but also climate change. *How?* As part of the course of circulation struggles giving way to *open revolt*, proletarians will begin to realize *through struggle* our problem is not *merely* the price (or lack) of fuel, but the fact that fossil fuel is a commodity that is only as crucial to us in a world that moves at *the speed of Capital*. All the cars on the roads with proles heading to jobs they hate; all the fossil fuels burned to generate electricity for content delivery networks bringing the latest *non-news* to smartphones and the jet fuel burning in the sky for global commerce...is only necessary for a world where *Capital* reigns.

The speed of human life was profoundly slower for much of what we can call human history. And a return to a much slower speed would not only be beneficial to arrest the causes leading to deepening climate change, but it would do wonders for our mental & physical health. Work is literally killing us and this world. Anti-work as *de-growth*, to use a hip new term.

Responding to climate change as some sort of global, abstract *thing* (i.e. human extinction) will likely not be the basis of the movement to abolish the present state of things: i.e. communism. You can see where that leads: groupuscules like Extinction Rebellion UK which openly work with the police and call the police on those who exceed their notions of protest / resistance. Whereas

most racialized proletarians know that the police are always *our fucking enemy* and never an idle, protective force. Proletarians do not fight capitalism at a global, abstract level; they fight it at their local level, but with an understanding of its global nature.

Social democrats, and other State-agnostic Leftists, ponder *State policy* to get us out of climate catastrophe: *the Green New Deal*. We see that the State is inherently part of the climate catastrophe when the U.S. military is itself the greatest consumer of fossil fuels.

Recently, Extinction Rebellion staged actions around London to halt the London Underground, and specifically blocked a train at Canning Town (a *working-class* district of East London, England) by climbing atop it and faced angry commuters who dragged them down, pissed-off at the disruption. We recalled the freeway takeovers in the U.S. during the height of open proletarian Black Revolt (#BLM), between 2013 ~ 2015, against anti-Black policing (and this anti-Black world) and then we also saw angry commuters, but this anger was quite often *racialized*: lawmakers even passed legislation that would absolve angry commuters of killing protestors block their way (who were largely Black).<sup>1</sup> Angry white Americans wanted to mow down angry Black protestors and now had the blessing of the American Legal System.

Then the difference?

Some will say that proletarians aren't at all responsible for environmental degradation. That it's the fault of the capitalist class. Unfortunately this isn't entirely so. The commuters in Canning Town did in fact need to go to work, so that they can get by as all proletarians are compelled to do, and it is this world of work that is a key component in environmental degradation.

But we should note instead that this degradation, that all workers are a part of, is also a part of the coercive relations which also degrade our very lives.

So then the difference?

During the Black Revolt of recent years it was Black proletarians, and their comrades, acting together & *materially* against this anti-Black capitalist world. With XR we have a largely liberal, and by all accounts fairly white & middle-class<sup>2</sup> movement whose direct actions still are meant to act at the level of Spectacle. As a comrade noted:

Extinction Rebellion is doomed to extinction because it has no tactical aptitude and is fighting on the spectacular terrain of the enemy by relying on the moral sensitivity of the spectator's heart.

6:15 AM • 17 Oct 19 • Twitter Web App

We must go beyond *spectacular moralism* to find a way out of capitalism and the *climate crisis* it has wrought in the pursuit of infinite growth.

This is not to say that the success of an action is the *number* of proles who agree with it. Not all proles will welcome the measures necessary to bring about free communal lifeways. There will be open reactionaries we will need to defend against, but the actions of proletarians against capitalism, and NOT actions *directly against* proles, will be what will help us win the day.

For example: If XR had instead done what has occurred in Chile with mass fare evasion, their efforts would have *built solidarity* with their movement but instead they chose to attack those

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.charlottestories.com/nc-house-just-passed-hb-330-allowing-drivers-legally-hit-protesters-block-roads/>

<sup>2</sup> We have no sociological data of the makeup of XR in the UK but the fact that they are so openly police-collaborationist is key feature of middle-class whiteness.



who benefit the *least* from this world. And now we see a broad movement against capitalism growing in Chile.

As we said a couple of days ago when images of Chilean proletarian looters were seen chucking flat-screen TVs into a bonfire and some people noted how ‘wasteful’ and ‘toxic’ these acts were.

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@edcns\_ineditas

If yer more concerned abt the ‘wastefulness’ of destroying a S , or its toxicity, than the fact that a nation’s proletariat is waging offensive class war then we know yer not on our team. What’s rising is the horizon of communism & anarchy which is the ‘greenest’ shit possible.

2:37 PM ■ 10/20/19 ■ Twitter for Android

## To the homies

The task at hand for radicals, as we see it, is not necessarily to *raise climate consciousness* (mass media already provides endless terrorizing click-bait on this issue) but to push the proletarian revolt emerging around the world to generalize so that the horizon of communism draws nearer and nearer. We will always be in the minority, but we understand that communist revolution (as we see it) is not the concerted actions of those self-identified as *communists* but the proletariat expressing its immanent capacity to abolish its condition as the proletariat which just means proles are the ones that are gonna get ourselves out of this mess by destroying this world that marks us as proles.

We can begin to strategize & actualize preparations for climate catastrophe where we live, and build networks of solidarity and mutual aid, but the climate will likely not kill off capitalism for us so we must understand we will still have to meet our global enemies on the streets, in the mountains, in the valleys and at the ports. *This image made by Chilean comrades sum up what we feel is necessary.*

ALGÚN DÍA LA SOLIDARIDAD LES HARÁ TEMBLAR



SOMOS  
COMUNIDAD  
EN LUCHA

POR LA COMUNIZACIÓN DE LA VIDA

ALGUN DIA LA SOLIDARY LES HARA TEMPLAR / SOMOS COMUNIDAD EN  
LUCHA / POR LA COMUNIZACION DE LA VIDA

tr. "One day our solidarity will make them tremble. / We are community in struggle.  
/ For the communization of life."

# The Real Death Of Politics

Trump has been sworn in, the Left and Liberals have come out in droves to denounce a president whom Congressman & Civil Rights Leader, John Lewis, has declared *illegitimate*. Though the grounds for illegitimacy, as he states, are not necessarily based on Trump's racist, sexist, isolationist, ultra-nationalist, anti-queer agenda but rather that he is the subject of a Russian conspiracy. (Though we have had presidents who have been slave-owners, rapists, leaders of genocide, fervently anti-queer and yet they were able to complete their terms.) Others more generally decry Trump as a Neo-Fascist set to bring 1939 onto American soil. The U.S. Radical Left clamors to revive itself and swell its numbers. Though this Radical Left has chosen, more and more so, to speak the language of politics rather than of revolt (or revolution). This Radical Left sometimes speaks of *communism* as a set of affairs to be installed, and to which proletarians must be won over to, rather than the means by which proletarians will free themselves.

In Mexico, there are already some who are finding a *fruitful ground* for a rupture away from capitalism and politics. Though even there it is commonplace to point to the more radical elements of the response to the #Gasolinazo (state mandated rise in fuel prices) as part of a deep-state conspiracy to discredit more populist responses: marches, protests, list of grievances.

Here in the U.S. we had massive marches across the country, under the umbrella name "Women's March" (on January 21<sup>st</sup>). A variety of critiques have been directed at it: its centering of white womanhood & its feminism, the trans\* exclusionary images & slogans, its championing of non-violence and a generally pro-police sentiment. On Trump's inauguration day, January 20<sup>th</sup>, we saw the black bloc emerge, with an attempt at demonstrating both a show of force but also to disrupt as much as possible the pomp & circumstance of the day. Though we all delighted in the punch-out of Richard Spencer, self-proclaimed leader of the "alt-right" movement, by someone dressed in black bloc we could say that the same critique could be made of both the "Women's March" and of the black bloc: they both were a but response to a political moment. A political moment which bears deep consequences for this country and for the world, but a political moment all the same.

Largely, most of the large-scale *revolt* we have seen in the United States, and around the world, the last few years have not been a reaction against a political moment, but ferocious responses to domination both economic and direct. See:

- the #Gasolinazo
- Ferguson
- Baltimore
- Labor Reform in France
- Education Reform in Mexico

An attempt to *create* revolt has always been the modus operandi of the Left and even of Left-Anarchists in a vanguardist way. Rather, we contend the task at hand is to *foster* and help *further along* revolt, but the Left can only see the world politically even when it has its historical-materialist glasses on.

The Democratic Party is essentially dead in the water. Many on the Radical Left are not deriding party politics, or parliamentary politics but rather are calling for *a working-class party*. To push for a political party at that moment when voter turn-out has been at its lowest in decades is not only politically unsound, it is tone-deaf.

“Granted, we don’t have a political party in the United States. We don’t have a labor party. And we’re a long way away from becoming a force that can enact policies to represent and empower the working class. But we’re building momentum and making demands.”

–Jacobin Magazine, “The Party We Need”

The Radical Left offers more of the same because their strategy and tactics are precisely centered on a field where *workers*, whether racialized, gendered, employed or not, have not been able to win in decades: politics.

We are still speaking of a new cycle of struggle in the worn-out language of the old. We can refine that language as best we can, but we have to recognise that it is nearly, if not completely exhausted.

–Endnotes, “Spontaneity, Mediation, Rupture”

This language is largely the language of politics which boils down the capacity for any substantive change in our lives into polls, charts, numbers and voting turn-outs.

## If Not Politics, Then What?

One of the prevailing guiding principles for those of us of the insurrectionary kind is **reproducibility**:

“Concretely, reproducibility means that acts of sabotage are realised with means...that can be easily made and used, and that can be easily acquired by anyone. [...] Reproducibility also encourages the radicalisation of the individual or collective acts of attack, extending to the maximum the autonomy amongst individuals and collectives, generating, when one desires, an informal coordination in which, outside of the logic of dependency or acceptance, one could also come to share the knowledge of each comrade concerning sabotage.”

–Revista Negacion, “Reproducibility, propagation of attack against power and some related points”

Reproducibility means bringing extra masks to the looting street party, letting the people you trust know how easy it is to X or Y against the police, showing people how easy it is to be

as-close-to-invisible online, disseminating simple ways to scam corporations to help you get-by. Reproducibility guides us in our attacks against the State & Capital, but attacks will not carry the day for the creation of communism. This is often the critique directed at insurrectionary anarchists: that we bear no image of what a future communal way of life may hold and how it would be formed. Though any substantive reading of intelligent insurrectionary anarchist literature would demonstrate otherwise, our fellow travelers in the communization current do bear the productive notion how we can act in the here and now by way of *communist measures*:

“A communist measure is a collective measure, undertaken in a specific situation with the ways and means which the communist measure selects for itself. The forms of collective decision making which result in communist measures vary according to the measures: some imply a large number of people, others very many fewer; some suppose the existence of means of coordination, others do not; some are the result of long collective discussions, of whatever sort (general assemblies, various sorts of collective, discussions in more or less diffuse groups) while others might be more spontaneous... What guarantees that the communist measure is not an authoritarian or hierarchical one is its content, and not the formal character of the decision which gave rise to it.”

—Leon de Mattis, “Communist Measures: thinking a Communist Horizon”

Here we have demonstrated the *suspended step of communization* which makes communism possible without the proletarian seizure of political power and which makes of communism not *a state of affairs* but rather a process which proletarians actively engage in from the very beginning of revolutionary activity. Though our comrades in the communization current claim that *now* is the historical moment when communization is possible, insurrectionary anarchists have contended that the time has always been right. A reading of the illuminating text, *Dixie Be Damned: 300 Years of Insurrection in the American South*, demonstrates that *something akin to* communization as the way towards a communal way of life is not hard-encoded into *any* particular historical moment, *rather* it is has long been the way that oppressed peoples have responded to the State actively trying to control them, their way of life and as the means to be able to flee slavery and colonization, while making communal and autonomous life possible. Ex-slaves and their comrades would routinely raid plantations so that they could live outside of slave society and would often not make any political demands of the State. Those involved in this raids (appropriation as a communist measure) would be as much interested in disrupting and destroying slave society as much as they wanted to be able to live outside of it.

What we need to be speaking of in this moment is not a zero-sum game of recruitment of *the workers*, or the surplus population, or whatever to our side. These days hardly anyone but Radical Left die-hards bask in proudly calling themselves *workers*. For most, work is a drudgery imposed which bears no possibility of bearing a positive program. We often see our work as that which is destroying our lives and the world we live in, rather than contributing to a positively-viewed *development of the means of productions* necessary to make communism possible (to hearken to old productivist notions of communism). We view our identities under capitalism as impositions which *can* prove to be sites of antagonism against this society. Though we reject identity-politics, we also understand that favoring a class-reductionist *worker-identity* to unite us is yet another form of identity-politics.

## The Anti-Political Turn

This leads us to a final point. Though we found the Arab Spring inspiring, we would roundly say that its failure to move beyond its initial success was that it relied heavily on populist rhetoric around democracy, (political) freedom, transparency and anti-cronyism (The same critique could broadly be said of most of the Occupy Mov't). Its attacks against the State and its forces were awe-inspiring but falling short of a rejection of the State *in toto* and of capitalism allowed a return to normality that we see there today. This is why we describe our position towards politics as *anti-political*.

There will always be push back against us by Liberals *and* the Left when we act in a way that views them as unnecessary. We will be called upon to explain our position and how it could be constructive or productive. Such debate is ultimately meaningless. Some of us have already been attacked by Liberals and the Left for expressing this very position. We would contend that our actions may at times require some explanation but those who see us riot, loot, fuck-shit-up and are inspired are often those who have the most to gain from the fall of this society. Those who have the most *to lose* will use whatever means necessary to stop us and we can understand why. Those of us who struggle to get by will not flinch when the ultra-rich get theirs.

This anti-political wave may take on different names according to its context: proletarian insurgency, *les casseurs*, the invisible party, *los desmadrosos*, thugs, etc. but they all point away from relying on the state to recognize us as citizens to negotiate with. The point of course is not to merely *be ungovernable* but to be able to initiate, with our *revolting* actions, the means to live free of the State, Capital, Patriarchy, Colonization and Work. If we merely react to what Trump's presidency may or may not do, we then foreclose the wide breadth of actions we may take. If we foreclose our actions around anti-fascism, we would end up with a return to a normality which was already genocidal and miserable but which would not be called fascism.

Lastly we end with Leon de Mattis further clarifying what *the nature of what could be communist measures*:

Likely to be communist, then, are measures taken, here or there, in order to seize means which can be used to satisfy the immediate needs of a struggle. Likely to be communist also are measures which participate in the insurrection without reproducing the forms, the schemas of the enemy. Likely to be communist are measures which aim to avoid the reproduction within the struggle of the divisions within the proletariat which result from its current atomisation. Likely to be communist are measures which try to eliminate the dominations of gender and of race. Likely to be communist are measures which aim to co-ordinate without hierarchy. Likely to be communist are measures which tend to strip from themselves, one way or another, all ideology which could lead to the re-establishment of classes. Likely to be communist are measures which eradicate all tendencies towards the recreation of communities which treat each other like strangers or enemies.

# Nice Shit For Everybody

We hereby reject any form of self-imposed austerity. We posit that we want nice shit for everybody and that is not only feasible but *desirable*. We will not put forth graphs announcing how much work (or not) will require such a project but will state that such a project is part of our desire for communism. We hereby reject all forms of feigned punk slobbiness, neo-hippie shabby chic, or pajamas in the outdoors. We see the stores in the bourgeois parts of town (& the newly-gentrified ones too) and say that we want that shit and even more. Capitalism is that which stands in the way of us having the shit we want with its hoarding of commodities only to sell them to highest bidder. We've been told to live with less and less by not only Green Capital, but by the Church, by our liberal "friends" and even by fellow comrades. Fuck that shit. Nah: if we're going to be putting our shit out on the line it's definitely not going to be so that I can live *simply*.

Is this commodity-fetishism? Yes, of

*the worst kind*. Mainly, it's the kind that does not want to maintain capitalist social relations, but one that seeks to destroy them. We've been living without and we want to remedy this situation. Do we also want to live with the deepest, most sensual set of social relations: yes. But why must we choose between the two? The destruction of capitalism, *for communism*, will leave us with so much time to cultivate ourselves, our tastes, our desires. Pre-capitalist peoples did not dress themselves in tunics of ash gray or shave their heads en masse. It is capitalism which has made our self-fashioning so impoverished; though glimmers of *indulgent* self-fashioning sometimes does grace the streets; sadly only to be homogenized, recuperated and sold back to an indiscriminate consumer. It is capitalism which has accustomed us to bland food & drink, or tricked us into paying top dollar at the co-op.

It is capitalism which has us moving our IKEA furniture from apartment to apartment. We imagine all the home furnishings to be plundered. Capitalism in its poverty of ideas, by way of colonialism, plunges itself into our indigenous cultures and sells us back what it took from us. We still remember that we used to build structures that still stand while cheap buildings kill so many now in disasters. We still remember that European colonialism spread its tentacles across the world because it was without and we lived in such wealth (after it had plundered its own).

"I want to shed myself of my *first-world privilege* and not live confined by how capitalism wants me to." If only it were so simple. We've actually read this sentence (though its intent we've seen many, many times). This is *pure reactionary thought*. To run and do the opposite just because capitalism displays certain social features does not make one an anti-capitalist. It makes you a petit-bourgeois bohemian. We all want to not pay rent, or pay for food, or have to work so many hours of our lives but *there is no outside of capitalism*. Asceticism is not revolutionary. Even those nodes of "autonomy" scattered around the globe, like among the Zapatistas, or Marinaleda, Spain still have to contend with the fact that Capital has them surrounded. But we will not squat our way to a revolution. Squatting, dumpster-diving, train-hopping, stealing from work, work slowdowns are not acts of revolt but of *resistance*. Thus we understand that the nice shit will



not come until capitalism is done with, because little acts of appropriation will not really *get the goods* as we see fit.

This is no mere provocation: it is part of our intent. Communism, for us, is not as we were taught in schools: the general immiseration of everyone, but as Marx so eloquently put forth in 1845, “the real movement that abolishes *the present state of things*.” The present state of things is poverty, hunger, work, racialized social death, gendered violence, the unmitigated murder of transgender people, the free movement of goods but not people and the *general immiseration of everyday life*.

Further, a critique of consumerism (& likewise Capital) that only asks us to consume less misses the trees for the forest. Capital would have us consume less only to appease our consumer guilt. Let us not be fooled, Capital necessitates eternal growth and this growth is done on terms that will destroy us regardless of how much (or little) we buy. Capital has made a sin of our desires because they inevitably know that it cannot satisfy them. To each according to their need, and to each according to their desire. We contend with capitalist logic and aim for the unreasonable because capitalist logic would have us cut ourselves from our ludic, indulgent dreams.

# Contra Aztlan: A Critique of Chicano Nationalism

The cap above is an image making the rounds as a counterpoint to now-President Donald Trump and the hat that he's made (in)famous. It serves as a visual reminder that a great deal of the U.S. territory was once Mexican national territory. A Chicano act of detournement.<sup>1</sup> Though it's an act of detournement which lacks a critical analysis of Mexican history. That such much of the Chicano movement's nationalist fervor arises from Mexico's territorial loss at the hands of U.S. racist aggression. This resulted with the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848, which 'ceded' the territory now known as California and a large area roughly half of New Mexico, most of Arizona, Nevada, Utah and parts of Wyoming and Colorado to the USA.<sup>2</sup>

Last year, two artists undertook the task of surveying the northern border of Mexico as it was in 1821, marking it with obelisks that lie well within the current U.S. borders. Today we refer to this historical form of the Mexican republic as the First Mexican Empire; this empire extended well into the Central America, extending into the national territory of Costa Rica. If these artists were to survey the southern border of this Empire then we would begin to see the glaring oversight of this project. Yes, they claim to want to show the transient nature of borders but they inadvertently highlighted what the project of the Mexican republic is really about: the extraction of Capital to be found within its borders without the need of wars of aggression (colonialism); a project which prefers the class warfare of privatization of natural resources<sup>3</sup> held in common and the extraction of surplus value from its native, Black and mestizo populations. Once this State project held a territory which was once much more vast. The nostalgic picture of a peaceful homeland that Chicanos often project onto Mexico begins to lose its luster. Yet from this nostalgia is born much of Chicano Nationalism.

## ¿Aztlan Libre?

It is the Chicano poet, Alurista, whom is largely credited with spreading the story of Aztlan as the mythic homeland of the Mexica. He also wrote what would become the leading document for Chicano nationalists: El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan. In it we find the first few fundamental errors in Chicano Nationalism:

“Nationalism as the key to organization transcends all religious, political, class and economic factions or boundaries. Nationalism is the common denominator that all members of La Raza can agree upon.”

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<sup>1</sup> Further reading on detournement, *Detournement as Negation and Prelude* by SI 1959

<sup>2</sup> Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

<sup>3</sup> A prime, current example is the the current struggle against the Constellation Brands by the people of Mexicali, Mexico and its surrounding areas from taking their water. For further reading see here: <https://ediciones-ineditos.com/2018/01/17/communique-our-resistance-at-rancho-meno-6-arbitrary-arrests/>

Hic salta, hic Aztlan: a new nation to arise in what is currently the U.S. Southwest/ West as part of the assumed patrimony of all Chicanxs, by way of a supposed shared ethnic heritage.<sup>4</sup> As an anti-state communist I desire the overthrow of capitalism en su totalidad. How then could even Chicanx anti-state communists/ anarchists support a plan which would inevitably align us with a new national bourgeoisie? The contradictions are glaring and would result in no liberation of the actual people which would make up this “Chicanx nation” from either wage labor or general exploitation. Yet another revolution forestalled in the name of national sovereignty. Though there may be certain things which bind Chicanxs across these “factions” and “boundaries” which Alurista alludes to, it is these binds that dampen the communist project which understands that the notion of a Chicanx Nation is a false one. Fredy Perlman, in his incendiary essay *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism*, wrote:

“[One] might be trying to apply a definition of a nation as an organized territory consisting of people who share a common language, religion and customs, or at least one of the three. Such a definition, clear, pat and static, is not a description of the phenomenon but an apology for it, a justification.”

This fabricated justification is used to allow the project of capitalist exploitation. Further, if we were to begin to analyze this homeland which Chicano Nationalists hope to reclaim we also run into the fundamental contradiction wherein this supposed homeland has already been continuously occupied for millenia by many different Native peoples. To mention a few: the Tongva-Gabrielino, the Chumash, the Yuman, the Comanche, the Apache, the Navajo and the Mohave.

Further, the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* states that Chicano Nationalists “declare independence of [their] mestizo nation.” Here creeps in the danger of a new form of oppression: yet another settler-colonial, mestizo nation once again makes an enclosure around Native peoples. Though the National Brown Berets, a Chicano Nationalist group, instead claims that.

“The amount of mixture of European blood on our people is a drop in the bucket compared to the hundreds of millions of Natives that inhabited this hemisphere. The majority of us are of Native/Indigenous ancestry and it is that blood that ties us to and cries out for land.”<sup>5</sup>

A strange play of blood belonging lays the groundwork for a presumed claim to Aztlan. Kim Tallbear, an anthropologist at the University of Texas, Austin and a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate of South Dakota, laments:

“There’s a great desire by many people in the US to feel like you belong to this land. I recently moved to Texas, and many of the white people I meet say: “I’ve got a Cherokee ancestor”...That worries us in a land where we already feel there’s very little understanding of the history of our tribes, our relationships with colonial power.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I note that this is a supposed shared heritage for even if the territory which Alurista calls Aztlan were truly the ancestral homeland of the Mexica, not every Chicanx could lay “claim” to it since not all Chicanxs bear Mexica heritage. Chicanxs contain a multitude of ethnic heritages, including from Native Peoples from so-called Mexico, other origins such as from Europe and Africa. Chicanx is not a race.

<sup>5</sup> National Brown Berets, *Our Nation Aztlan*. [Site is gone, link is cached content]

<sup>6</sup> New Scientist, “*There is no DNA test to prove you’re Native American.*”

Chicanxs are the historical product of colonialism, racism, capitalism, slavery genocide and cultural erasure. Part of the struggle to liberate Chicanxs (and all people) would inevitably incorporate the reclaiming of lost ancient ways, but this cannot overtake the struggle of Native peoples who have managed to maintain a direct connection to their deep past & present. Indigeneity is more than just genetic heritage; it is a real cultural link. And a politics based on genetic heritage begins to look more and more eugenicist.<sup>7</sup> It is unclear how the Chicano Nationalist project would differ from the sovereignty that the American Colonialists merchants ("Founding Fathers") sought to establish from the English Crown.

## Against All Nation-States, Against the Police

The original 10-point Program of the Brown Berets includes the demand that "all officers in Mexican-American communities must live in the community and speak Spanish."<sup>8</sup> Forty-seven years later in 2015, the LA Times reported that 45% of the LAPD force is Latino and yet relationships between the LAPD and the city it overlooks remain strained.<sup>9</sup> It could be said that at the time of the drafting of this program that this was a radical demand, but 61 years prior there is an anecdote that exemplifies that Mexican-Americans had already known another way was necessary.

"scores of cholos jumped to their feet and started for the spot where the [LAPD] officer was supposed to be sitting. If he had been there nothing could have prevented a vicious assault and possible bloodshed"<sup>10</sup>

Now the context: Mexican-American LAPD Detective Felipe Talamantes, along with other Mexican-American LAPD Detectives, arrested three members of the P.L.M., a Mexican Anarchist-Communist organization, in Los Angeles under trumped up and false charges in 1907. At the time it was noted that it was highly possible that the LAPD detectives were working under direction of the Mexican Federal Government, then headed by dictator Porfirio Diaz. It was seen as a way to clamp down on Mexican radicals in the USA just prior to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910.

Someone in the courtroom said that Det. Talamantes might have been in attendance at a hearing resulting in the scene described above with the jumping cholos. At the time there was already a very strained relationship between the LAPD and Mexicans in Los Angeles. Consequently, there was massive support by Mexicans, Mexican-Americans and white radicals for the three anarchists. Noting that on principal, all anarchists are against the institution of the police. Throughout their imprisonment they were able to raise a remarkable \$1,950 in their defense: remarkable in light of the meager size of the contributions ranging from \$0.10 to \$3.00.<sup>11</sup> This anecdote is so telling since it mattered little to the those who supported the 3 arrested that the LAPD detectives were themselves also Mexican-American. These detectives were clearly understood to be

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that the notion of La Raza Cosmica created by Mexican philosopher Jose Vasconcelos (a notion widely embraced by Chicano Nationalists) is essentially Eugenics.

<sup>8</sup> Hecho en Aztlan, "Brown Beret Ten-Point Program" (1968)

<sup>9</sup> LA Times, "LAPD is more diverse, but distrust in the community remains."

<sup>10</sup> LA Times, Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> 1907

<sup>11</sup> Edward J. Escobar, "Race, Police and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945, p. 58

complicit with the white-majority which controlled the conservative power structure which was local governance at the time.

To this day Chicano National Liberation group, Union del Barrio, advocates in Los Angeles what the Brown Berets advocated back in 1968: a Civilian Police Review Board. As the more radical elements of the Black Lives Matter movement call out for the wholesale abolition of the police, Chicano Nationalists, in their racialized myopia, fail to see and acknowledge the anti-Black origins of the police in the U.S.A.<sup>12</sup>

Fredy Perlman notes something curious about pro-nationalists and says:

“It is among people who have lost all their roots, who dream themselves supermarket managers and chiefs of police, that the national liberation front takes root; this is where the leader and general staff are formed. Nationalism continues to appeal to the depleted because other prospects appear bleaker.”<sup>13</sup>

But what is the prospect, however bleak, the anti-state communists offer?

## **Contra el nacionalism, por el comunismo y anarquía!**

Chicano nationalists often talk about “the border jumping over them” to counter the racist narrative that Mexicans are somehow invaders of what is now the American SouthWest. They rail against borders that their parents, grandparents and others have to perilously cross, yet they evidently do not desire the abolition of borders but rather desire a re-drawing of them. Anti-state communists (& anarchists) desire the wholesale abolition of borders, nation-states, capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism and work. Though of course it is a difficult push forward these measures without speaking to the experience of identity, speaking through the lens of a purely national liberationist scope is to speak in half-measures.

Mao Zedong thought, a frequent source of much National Liberation ideology, here is critique by Perlman:

“Few of the world’s oppressed had possessed any of the attributes of a nation in the recent or distant past. The Thought had to be adapted to people whose ancestors had lived without national chairmen, armies or police, without capitalist production processes and therefore without the need for preliminary capital.

These revisions were accomplished by enriching the initial [Mao Zedong] Thought with borrowings from Mussolini, Hitler and the Zionist state of Israel. Mussolini’s theory of the fulfillment of the nation in the state was a central tenet. All groups of people, whether small or large, industrial or non-industrial, concentrated or dispersed, were seen as nations, not in terms of their past, but in terms of their aura, their potentiality, a potentiality embedded in their national liberation fronts. Hitler’s (and the Zionists’) treatment of the nation as a racial entity was another central tenet. The cadres were recruited from among people depleted of their ancestors’ kinships and customs, and consequently the liberators were not distinguishable from the oppressors in terms of language, beliefs, customs or weapons; the only welding material

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<sup>12</sup> For further reading, see “*Origins of the Police*” by David Whitehouse

<sup>13</sup> Fredy Perlman, “*The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism*” (1984)

that held them to each other and to their mass base was the welding material that had held white servants to white bosses on the American frontier; the “racial bond” gave identities to those without identity, kinship to those who had no kin, community to those who had lost their community; it was the last bond of the culturally depleted.”<sup>14</sup>

The project of supplying Chicanxs with an alternative to National Liberation, or some other false appeal to Nationhood, is one that is more necessary than ever. As radical Chicanxs who desire to truly free this world (or perhaps destroy it), we should take it upon ourselves to create the rhetoric, the movements, the history which we want to see in the world. I look forward to helping find, create and elevate such work which would fulfill this project of total liberation, not just for Chicanxs, but for oppressed people everywhere.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid

# The Broad: Class Hatred, Concentrated

**by Asmodeus, a friend of the project**

Eli Broad is a multibillionaire. He made his fortune constructing tract homes, which is to say by pumping hot air into the pre-2007 real estate bubble. Later he moved into life insurance as well. Some of that money ended up bailing out LA's Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) around the time the housing market was going south — the museum had been hemorrhaging funds for years. It was a maneuver that some have described as closer to a hostile takeover than an act of philanthropy. Notably, Broad's intervention was closely tied to the arrival of a new director — the gallerist Jeffrey Deitch — who fired the museum's widely admired chief curator, Paul Schimmel, in 2012. Other wads of cash ended up at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) — where the donor had Renzo Piano build the quasi-autonomous Broad Contemporary Art Museum — as well as the Los Angeles Opera, which promptly used the funds to stage a full production of Wagner's Ring Cycle. These actions, among others, won Broad a reputation in the art world as LA's resident Maecenas-cum-Evil Emperor, with Deitch, perhaps, playing the role of a bumbling Darth Vader.

As of September 2015, the city has had a new museum downtown, known simply as The Broad to distinguish it from the edifice at LACMA. It is a clean slate: it exists to display the personal collection that Eli Broad and his wife Edythe have amassed over the previous five decades. The museum's architecture is by the firm of Diller Scofidio + Renfro. They are perhaps most famous for the High Line that runs through New York's blue-chip gallery district in West Chelsea. Having already designed what is arguably the world's first vaporwave structure (the fog-enshrouded "Blur Building" that was their contribution to the Swiss National Expo in 2002), their work in LA further develops the play of circulation, sightlines, and cladding that has become the agency's signature. The Broad's initial aspect is unprepossessing, however: its exterior is a drab box with two of the bottom corners shaved off. On one side of the facade there is an "oculus" that stares unblinkingly at the Colburn School (a well-regarded music academy) across the street, as well as at the Colburn's next-door neighbor, MOCA's Grand Avenue flagship. On the opposite corner is Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall, the completion of which in 2003 was widely taken as a sign of Downtown's revitalization. (Eli Broad had a hand in that, too.) If one were to draw lines between The Broad and these other monuments, the resulting triangle would, very roughly, point in the direction of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel about half a mile away, where Fredric Jameson once discerned the hallmarks of postmodern space. New, pricey condos have been sprouting up nearby, some of them connected to the more desirable parts of Downtown by walkways that are literally raised above the plebeian street.

Developers' dreams notwithstanding, this remains a weird and uncomfortable part of the city, nestled as it is between multiple freeways and the massive homeless encampment that is Skid Row. There are few other parts of Los Angeles where the contradictions of capitalist real estate, of which Broad is a Donald Trump-level protagonist, are so clearly on display. Thus the location is fitting. The building itself is encased in a sheath of corrugated off-white webbing that screens

the interior from its surroundings. Most of the perforations in fact conceal windows that are oriented to the rising and falling of the California sun, with the result that the upstairs galleries, at least, can boast some of the world's most luxuriant natural lighting. These subtleties are little apparent from the street, however. A friend points out that the museum looks like nothing so much as the raw material of menudo: tripe, that is. But whereas menudo is a venerable hangover cure, one suspects that The Broad will remain a headache for some time to come.

Visitors enter the museum through either of its lifted corners, where they find themselves in a gray, cavern-like space. (One of its chambers houses Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Mirrored Room, 2013 — the museum's biggest crowd-pleaser, to judge from the lines.) Goofy sculptures by Robert Therrien and Urs Fischer establish a funhouse vibe. Both this area and the galleries are almost extravagantly well-staffed by headset-wearing attendants. Ascending either by escalator, stairs, or in a Willy Wonka-ish cylindrical elevator, one then arrives at the top floor, only to meet a funereal installation of Jeff Koons' immense, polished metal Tulips (1995–2004), flanked by no less than nine word-paintings by Christopher Wool (Untitled, 1990). A grander imperial reception could hardly be imagined. In the same space there are equally imposing works by Julie Mehretu, El Anatsui, Mark Bradford, and Marlene Dumas, all of which combine a diffusely political charge with market-friendly scale and format: this is globalization as viewed from Sotheby's. The art is about, and exemplifies, the workings of capital, the market, and the uneven distribution of violence in the global economy. It might even be read as "critical." Could it be that The Broad is thinking about its own noxiousness? No, it seems: that feeling soon dissipates.

The problem is the collection in toto. There are no surprises here, although there are some very good pieces. There is not a single artwork on display that would give a hedge fund manager qualms. It is all investment-grade, and it is all nearly equally so. The paintings are big. The sculptures are shiny. That said, there are things worth seeking out. The museum's top floor is by far its best, due both to the quality of the art and to the influence of the punctured ceiling that rains filtered sunlight into the galleries. There are no permanent walls on this level, but only movable barriers that demarcate the exhibition spaces. Half of the top floor is dedicated to art of the 1950s through '70s, with a particularly fine stock of American Pop; there is also a cluster of superb paintings and sculptures by Cy Twombly. The other side contains art from the following decades and almost up to the present day. Some galleries are monographic, while others are devoted to small groupings. One, for instance, throws together Damien Hirst with Andreas Gursky — practitioners who seem to have little in common other than a distinctively '90s brand of gigantism. Local heroes such as Chris Burden and Charles Ray are also in evidence, while another gallery boasts yet more works by Koons, who is something like the museum's mascot. Indeed it is interesting that Koons is at the physical center of the inaugural installation, on the axis, in fact, along which the top floor splits cleanly in half. A roll call of postwar greatest hits lies on the one side, mostly '90s-vintage art on the other — meaning art that is often concerned with the politics of race, trauma, and gender. This may suggest that it is Koons who mediates from the one to the other, and thus, that there is no nexus other than the extreme of reification that he represents to link the mid-century to its end. Which would be a defensible if depressing art historical argument.

Things go downhill from here, figuratively as well as literally. Descending through the museum's midsection, where its storage spaces are visible from two portholes cut out of the stairwell (like windows onto a big cat's enclosure at a zoo), one returns to the first floor, where The Broad displays, or rather stockpiles, its contemporary holdings. There are large, bland pictures by the



likes of Mark Grotjahn, as well as an installation of Ragnar Kjartansson's *The Visitors*, an irrepressibly cutesy nine-channel video from 2012. The largest exhibition space of all — it is directly beneath Koons' *Tulips*, if I am not mistaken — harbors a generous selection of manga-inflected works by Takashi Murakami; their cumulative effect is queasy-making. Karl Marx himself puts in an appearance in a fairly execrable piece by the Polish artist Goshka Macuga, which at least stands out for being slightly less warmed-over than everything around it: it is a photo-tapestry that plasters some of Miroslav Tichy's voyeuristic snapshots of Czech women on top of a view of Marx's grave. And that is about all that I remember, or care to. Even the John Currin paintings, typically good for a chuckle at least, look more lethargic (read: less perverse) than usual.

It is sometimes difficult to keep in mind that this abundance of very expensive art was assembled by only two people, so doggedly does it resist the detection of any guiding sensibility other than the sheer will to accumulate things upon which the market has left its stamp of approval. Such anomie may have social significance. This is how a class — a very small class — sees; this is how it dreams. And what banal dreams they are. For granting that insight, The Broad has some value. Yet there is a way in which discussing the details of the inaugural exhibition is entirely beside the point. The collection is a placeholder; one has the sense that it might as well be switched out for anything else of equal value, or painlessly liquidated should Eli Broad ever fall on hard times. Whatever their intrinsic merits, the works are significant, here, primarily as tokens of capital's supremacy. This is true regardless of the fact that admission is free, and also of the fact that LA already has a multitude of institutions that bear the names of other tycoons (Getty, Hammer, Geffen...). The critique still has to be made anew, if only because the building is new, familiar as everything else about it may be. What this museum means has little to do with what it shows, and very much to do with the relations that it materializes simply by being what it is, where it is, and bearing the name that it does. The scandal is not that The Broad is bad, but that it exists.

Guy Debord said that spectacle is capital accumulated to the point that it becomes an image. Fair enough, except that it is too easy, when thinking or writing about spectacle, to forget what capital is. Capital is dead labor. It is the abstract form of a trillion instances of suffering. Contra Debord, it need not become visible at all, and in fact capital is perhaps most destructive where the social relation that it objectifies is most naturalized and unseen — in the everyday violence of class, race, and gender; in the omnipresence of money and commodities, which are violent forms in themselves because they distribute life and death according to an inhuman logic. Contemporary art is the obverse of this invisibility. This is why The Broad is a shrine to class hatred. As a sponge for surplus capital — its function as a hedge or investment — art absorbs human suffering; contemporary art is therefore class hatred in one of its most concentrated forms. Art takes upon itself the guilt of those who caused that suffering and who think that art will discharge it. But it does not.

# About Hating Art

by Asmodeus, a friend of the project

Basically the art world exists to make money for a small number of people and to make a larger number of people feel like they're cool. The first purpose is just capitalism. The second is an effect of capitalism, because only in a world as ridiculous as ours would standing around in mostly empty white rooms be considered a valid form of community. This probably sounds cynical, and in a way it is. But if you think about it, the fact that lots of people have nothing better to do with their "free" time than to stand around in mostly empty white rooms, rooms that make a huge amount of money for other people, is a good reason to destroy pretty much everything.

Hatred of art, in the best and truest sense, has always really been disappointment that art can't keep its own promises. The German philosopher Theodor Adorno once said: "*The bourgeois want art voluptuous and life ascetic; the reverse would be better.*" Hatred of art isn't hatred of beauty. In fact it's closer to the opposite. It's hatred of capitalism for trying to make us accept the fact that we can only find beauty in art. Or in some other commodity, or some commodified experience. (On Instagram everyone lives in paradise.) Of course it's also hatred of the people who buy and sell and talk about art, because they're mostly rich assholes. Nothing mysterious about that. For academics, though, it's a lot easier to come up with elaborate theories about iconoclasm than it is to admit that iconoclasm is usually quite easy to explain.

Hatred of art, or at least this kind of it, has nothing to do with hatred of pleasure. Or even hatred of artworks, exactly. You can enjoy looking at art at the same time as you hate the art world and its institutions, in the same way you can shop at a store in the daytime and then loot it at night, if you get the chance. Communism means nice shit for everybody, as some other people have pointed out.<sup>1</sup> You can even make your own art if you want to. That's fine. You can also be a revolutionary — better still. (Much better.) But don't try to do your revolution through your art. That's not how it works. If you feel the need to argue against this more or less self-evident point, there's a good chance that you're an art world asshole.

There are few things more depressing than the idea that art is the last zone of freedom in a capitalist world. If this were true, it would be yet another reason to destroy everything. (Don't worry, we're not running out of reasons.) But it's not true, anyway. The art world is part of capitalism, just like everything else, which means that it's built on a set of antagonisms. Class antagonisms, racial antagonisms, antagonisms around sexuality and gender. Of course this isn't any secret. The problem with a lot of art world people, though — aside from the other, obvious problems — is that they want their participation in the art world to function as a complete package. In other words you can get your aesthetics, your ethics, and your politics in the same place, by doing the same stuff. Your art is your resistance, or your academic research is your resistance, or whatever. Conveniently enough, you can sell art, and you can also sell your labor as a radical academic. Maybe not for much, but somebody has to do it, right? Walk into any gallery these

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<sup>1</sup> Nice Shit For Everybody by Noche (<https://ediciones-ineditos.com/2017/01/12/nice-shit-for-everybody/>)

days and there's a good chance the art will be "political." You have to wonder exactly when the market is going to peak.

The package deal only works so well because the art world absorbs and mediates conflict in order to fuel its own reproduction. Where else would constant scandals over racist behavior turn out to be good for business, for example? An angel gets its wings every time some art world drone writes a think-piece about the latest racist shit in the latest biennial. Or rather, somebody or other gets to accumulate a little more (political, academic, aesthetic) cred. What this means, perversely enough, is that nearly everyone in the art world has a vested interest in yet more racist shit happening in the future. Otherwise there wouldn't be anything to talk about.

Buying into the "*complete package*" means that when you do your politics, you do it through and in the art world. You want to make the art world a better place, so that everybody gets a seat at the table. You make sure that museum collections, biennials, and gallery rosters have the right demographics (they never do and probably never will). You make sure that everybody knows that you do not like Donald Trump, nope, not one bit! Or else, your activism boils down to mobilizing art for some other political purpose, as a tool or a weapon. That's usually even worse. (Did you hear about the Art Strike earlier this year? I'm guessing either you didn't or you already forgot.)

Unless you're extremely edgy, art activism doesn't mean questioning whether there should be museums or biennials at all. The tendency to circle the wagons (the settler-colonialist metaphor isn't totally accidental) has become much worse since Trump's election, which had the effect of resurrecting a bunch of liberal-humanist clichés about the goodness of art that seemed like they'd been deconstructed out of existence decades ago. Whose team do you want to be on, after all: the nice, progressive, intelligent, well-dressed art people, or the right-wing philistines? The fact that the alternative is false, that other options exist, doesn't make it less attractive. The art world is so used to being on the right side that it's almost impossible for them to grasp that maybe it isn't.

In LA, right now, we've had the pleasure of witnessing some of the art world's contradictions unravel in real time. Militants in Boyle Heights and elsewhere have been very good at explaining what they're doing and why, so I won't even try to summarize the issues at stake. Instead, I recommend that you just read the statements from the involved groups, such as Defend Boyle Heights, Boyle Heights Alianza Anti Artwashing y Desplazamiento / Boyle Heights Alliance Against Artwashing and Displacement (BHAAAD), Union de Vecinos, the Los Angeles Tenants Union, and Ultra-Red. Some of the press coverage has been decent, too. (That being said, let me put in an extra special fuck you to LA Times reporter Ruben Vives for threatening to write a negative story if he wasn't given an interview with a member of this coalition.)

In general terms, the conflict has to do with art's complicity in the process that we call gentrification — a term that gets thrown around a bit carelessly, it's true. Often, saying "*gentrification*" is a way to avoid saying "*capitalism*" Cloning white hipsters is cool (also — they aren't always white, or hip), but it shouldn't distract from the fact that the bigger enemy is the real estate industry, not to mention employers who don't pay workers enough to make rent. Some extremely violent forms of gentrification won't necessarily look like the stereotypical "*artists with fixies and cold brew moving into the hood*" narrative. What if we talked about new Chinese money pushing out poorer people of Asian descent in the San Gabriel Valley at the same time as we talk about Boyle Heights, for example? In economic terms the phenomenon might not be that different. There's a danger of reinforcing existing forms of oppression and exploitation in the name of a preexisting community that supposedly overrides class divisions. That said, gentrification often does look

like artists with fixies and cold brew moving into the hood, which is why these events east of the LA River have a meaning that goes far beyond the local context.

What is important about the struggle in Boyle Heights, and what makes it different from any other anti-gentrification conflict I know of, is that it's developed into a direct confrontation between the "*radical*" art world and a local opposition that won't back down, even when offered the chance for dialog. This is how you win. For example: a huge victory for the anti-gentrification campaign was the closure of the gallery PSSST in February of this year. Representatives of PSSST described their project as queer, feminist, politically engaged, and largely POC. All of which are perfectly good things in themselves, of course. A space for queer, feminist, politically engaged POC artists and their friends only becomes a problem when it contributes to a colonial, gentrifying dynamic. Which will inevitably happen as soon as well-connected art world people move into a historically working class neighborhood, regardless of their color or credentials.

This isn't a matter of intentions or consciousness. No doubt PSSST thought they were doing good. It's a matter of economics — in other words, stuff that happens whether you want it to or not, because there's money to be made. Real estate developers don't give a shit about your MFA in social practice art. PSSST never understood this. People in Boyle Heights did. PSSST was all about "*dialog*." So is every gentrifier. Refusing dialog was the best (in fact the only) strategic decision the neighborhood's defenders could have made. There's no such thing as dialog when one side is pushing you out of your home. The fact that groups like Defend Boyle Heights have been so willing to engage with their enemies is the shocking thing, not their supposedly aggressive tactics. These tactics could be generalized. In fact in some places militant resistance to gentrification goes back decades, which is why cities like Berlin, for example, are so much more livable and fun than otherwise similar areas. Resistance won't stop real estate from destroying livable communities — nothing except the end of capitalism will do that — but it can slow the process down and make life better for a lot of people.

The Boyle Heights conflict is racialized. Obviously. "**Fuck White Art**" is an excellent slogan. However, the adjective "*White*" is unnecessary, for reasons that I hope are clear by now. But then again, it is necessary, too, a bit in the way it's necessary to say "*Black Lives Matter*" instead of "*All Lives Matter*." In effect, the slogan points out that the default setting for all art is "*white art*." This isn't to say that there aren't any non-white artists, or that their work is somehow marginal or inauthentic. Rather, it's to point out that the art world as such, which really means the art industry, is fundamentally connected to capitalism, which is white supremacist even when there happen to be non-white people running things. Real estate works by fine-tuning the racial composition of neighborhoods so that it's possible to sell property to more "*desirable*" (wealthier) buyers, who happen to be white people most of the time, coincidentally or not. Galleries, as well as fancy cafes, record stores, etc., are the smart bombs of gentrification. Land one in just the right place and you can take out the whole barrio. It was perfectly logical when another Boyle Heights gallery, Museum As Retail Space, called the cops on a picket line at one of their openings.

Of course smart gentrifiers prefer to avoid calling in (uniformed) pigs, if they can. Nothing works better than getting a few "*diverse art spaces*" to help out with your development scheme. That's pretty much expected now. And it probably would have worked in the case of PSSST if nobody in Boyle Heights had tried those supposedly alienating tactics.

After these events it almost seems unnecessary to present a critique of the non-white artist as representative of something called "*the community*!" (What community? Whose community? Is your landlord part of your community? How about your boss?) PSSST did a program focused

on Latinx party crews in the 90s. It didn't save them. It just pointed out how the phenomenon that some people have started calling gentefication — gentrification with a brown face — can be just as much bullshit as the idea that galleries “enrich” the neighborhood (as if Boyle Heights doesn't have any culture of its own). Instead of trying to say something new about the topic I'll just recommend this short text, which is already a classic:

*The Poverty of Chicano Artists by El Chavo*<sup>2</sup>

The one thing that has possibly changed since those words were written **over 20 years ago** is that the art scene, in its role as advance scout for capitalist development, has become much better at providing an apparent space for disagreement and even resistance — as long as nothing goes beyond empty talk.

The way PSSST operated, the way places like 356 Mission still operate, is through a technique that you could name “*The Conversation*.” The ideology of The Conversation works by taking a conflict that's pretty clear from the start and then insisting that there's more to talk about. The Conversation is always “*more productive*” when the people getting fucked over avoid actually doing anything about it. The Conversation feeds on panel discussions. Often, The Conversation takes its cue from somebody or some group of people who have the right credentials to represent The Community, or who happen to be “**activists**.” (They hate Trump! Don't you hate Trump, too?) Usually these activists have a long record of doing lefty stuff. They never understand that the left is the enemy, too.

There is no purer expression of The Conversation than members of the Artists' Political Action Network (a post-election group of lefty artists) crossing a picket line to hold a meeting at a Boyle Heights gallery, then sending a letter that reads: “*In deciding to stage the event at 356 Mission, we hoped that, rather than ignoring or attempting to avoid the conflicts in the area, the choice of location would create an opportunity for engagement and dialogue.*” Funny logic: it works for every invasion. I bet the Aztecs loved it when Cortes gave them such a great opportunity for engagement and dialogue.

Here's a more abstract way to express what I've been saying:

There is no such thing as a public dialog and hence art does not contribute to it. There is rather an antagonism between those who would like to continue pretending that such a dialog exists and those who want to demolish that pretense — not in theory, but in practice. (Leonard Cohen understood this, or at least he came up with a good phrase: “*There is a war between the ones who say there is a war/And the ones who say there isn't.*”) The antagonism cuts across race, class, and gender, although it's certainly weighted. Those who have nothing to lose but their chains, or their abjection, or their social death, obviously have greater clarity about it. But it might be that the edge of the antagonism runs not so much between those who are comfortable in their fiction versus those who have no such luxury, but rather between those who might, in however precarious a way, benefit exactly from the boundary's mediation, and those who have no interest in anything of the sort: between those who might profit from abjection, exactly by claiming to represent it, and those from whom this profit is made.

This distinction becomes the stuff out of which careers are built. It turns out that the maintenance of aesthetic appearances (I'm thinking of the German word Schein, which also means “*illusion*”) is one of the more convenient ways of putting the abject into circulation. Convenient,

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<sup>2</sup> This text is included in full at the end of the essay

but not necessarily final. Not decisive. Much less so, anyway, than other forms of Schein that are less recognizable as such — for example race, which is an abstraction infinitely more violent than either the zombie formalism everyone in the art world was talking about a few years ago, or zombie protest. Art attracts conflict in part because the stakes are so low, because the battles are so purely spectacular, even as art also serves an absolutely real function in preserving the status quo. Antagonisms play out in art when they can't (yet) be resolved in the rest of the world. The shittiness of the present moment is how impossible it seems to advance from the front lines to the citadels. Art tends to function as a border guard, here, asking for papers that reduce every real conflict into a problem of checking off the right boxes, which these days are usually a set of commodified forms of identity. Can you sell your abjection? Yes. Of course. You can also sell your politics. Your "resistance." At this exact moment it's probably the smartest thing you can do.

The worst participants in recent art world debates, hollow as these debates have been, are those who presume to understand everything best. Which in practice often means confessing your perplexity, but doing so as a technique, a move on the chessboard, a way to strengthen your own authority (not by actually knowing anything, perhaps, but by at least asserting your right to weigh in — your right to join the dialog). When in fact it's the bleeding suture between one world and its negation that art world bureaucrats always try to sew up. They have their mission. The rest of us need sharper scalpels.

# On the Poverty of Chicanx Artists

by El Chavo, a friend of the project

If the artist is not the most hated member of the Chicanx community it is certain that a very healthy disgust towards the artist is felt by many in the barrio. In the artists attempt to express themselves, speak for La Raza, or to raise their consciousness, they come short of the mark. The inherent poverty of the art scene is its inability to understand and change society, its refusal to see itself as a market place for one more commodity. This is what we detest. From cholos to viejitas, to mocosos and their relatives, everyone hates the false notion of the artist as a representative of our needs or as a spokesperson for change.

All the novelty rappers, uninspired singers, hack writers, crayola painters, pretentious poets, and the hardly-funny cartoonists and comedians that make up the Chicano And Chicana Artist (CACA) cultural scene imagine themselves to be that which they are not: for some reason they believe that they are a challenge or an opposition to the dominant culture. The truth is that they are merely another aspect of the same society or as some would accurately call it, they are part of the spectacle of negation. When a person's life lacks in meaning, pleasure, and they have no control over how to run their own lives, they look outside of themselves for salvation. The artist finds his calling in "self-expression", creating art pieces in which she can live out a dull reflection of what has not been possible in real life. That's not beautiful; it's pathetic.

In a world that runs on a heavy dose of alienation the reverence for art serves only to strengthen that society. The emergence of the Chicano Art scene is a movement of the forgotten commodity back into the flow of the marketplace; the desire to belong within the world of separation; to be bought and sold *like everyone else*. The artist has no vision. She fails to see what is truly beautiful, just as they failed to see the poetry in the streets during the rioting in '92. Can their little doodles ever top the critique of daily life that the looters offered in their festive events? Of course not.

So what happens to La Raza once the artist sells his piece, gets her grant, or has that special gallery showing? Nothing. All the people that you aim to represent on your canvas or in your poems, we still have to exist in the same ghettos, we still have to work in the same stupid jobs, or wait in the same welfare lines. We will never see you there. You will never mean anything to us.

We laugh at you and the society you reinforce.

Give it up.

You're headed nowhere.

# This House is a Fence

The wood-slate fence has jumped from being a simple signifier of “this house has been flipped” to becoming a part of the construction of the house itself. The above is a photo of an actual house in Boyle Heights being offered for rent at \$2995 for 3 bedrooms.

Whereas previously the function of this fence was to shield its new, well-heeled owners from the insufficiently gentrified neighborhood, these wood-slates now are free to signify “flipped” no matter where they are placed on the home. The now defunct website, LAist quotes Dave Bantz an architecturist designer when they say “So, in that respect, the slat is a wordless billboard with the subtext, ‘this neighborhood has potential. But it’s still a place where you’re going to want a sense of protection from the street.’” Just as the pristine, white-walled cafes modeled after an Apple store (and filled with as many if not more Macbooks), that more and more riddle Los Angeles, once merely had recourse to its exorbitantly priced coffee to keep the the proletarian locals out, a new cafe in Boyle Heights is now a selling point for the flipped house pictured above.

Before gentrification in the L.A. East-side, fences served a much more utilitarian purpose: to keep stray dogs out of your yard or a way to keep solicitors at bay. Chainlink fences predominate but there are also the wrought iron fences for those homes with a bit more money. There was no real attempt to completely shield one’s home from view. One’s gaze could easily pass through either of these type of fences and see your neighbor on the porch or tending to their garden.

A walk through the heavily gentrified areas of the L.A. Eastside has houses distinctively separated from each other with those wood-slate fences where you would not be able to see those who live inside, sometimes completely obscuring the house. All this speaking to the fears of the new arrivals who love the relatively low prices but do not love the neighborhood. One Boyle Heights affordable advocate caught heat two years ago for posting a photo of a home in Boyle Heights with a wood-slate fence. People found out where the house was and the owner was livid. He was “45-year-old, white ‘non-hipster’ who purchased the house last year in Boyle Heights because ‘it’s the one place in LA where I could (barely) afford to buy a home.’” Interestingly this home owner thinks that being a non-hipster means that he could not possibly be contributing to gentrification in Boyle Heights: something akin to how middle-class Latinxs returning to Boyle Heights think of their “development” of the neighborhood as a neutral/positive gente-fication and not gentrification. In wealthier areas of Los Angeles you see homes without fences and with uncurtained, unshuttered windows: the interior on display to any passerbys.

A friend called these newly-fortified homes, “a gated community of one [home].” At this rate it would not be a stretch of the imagination, in the not-so-far future, to walk down a street with only slightly-varying wood-slate fences, essentially creating a walled-off street. A smooth transition would be had from the walled-freeways to a walled-street. It’s been noted that the wall that Trump wants to build (but which essentially already partially exists) along the Mexican border would be a fence, and not a wall. On this future street you would see an old Subaru parked out front, with a Bernie 2016 and Coexist sticker on it. But the owner would never, ever dare chant



“Build that wall! Build that wall!” like their relatives back home — they listen religiously to KPFFK’s “Global Village.” In some parts of Los Angeles you can already see corrugated metal in use.

It is claimed by pro-gentrification advocates that the inverse of the White Flight which happened after the 1992 Riots spells a current form of local de-segregation in a still very segregated city. This would be easier to believe if the well-off “returners” did not feel the need to replace every party supply store with a cold-press juice bar, an old local dive bar with a mixology bar, a cheap local restaurant with an art gallery, a Cambodian-owned donut shop with quirky takes on traditional donuts or encourage some to erase long-standing murals just in time for an event serving to bolster brand-new-to-the-hood businesses. Every city being gentrified now just looks like every other gentrified city. And somehow we are told that these neighborhoods are being revitalized. On the contrary, they’re being sterilized.

A city where Historic Filipinotown only remains Filipino historically; where Boyle Heights exists as a place only to document its past and fading present; where an old Lincoln Heights jail which once housed the Bilingual

Foundation of the Arts, will soon serve as a site set to erase our present; and where people learn of Echo Park’s past from a fictionalized movie right when being a Chicanx with hood fashion becomes most marketable.

This is the rigged game the racialized proletarians of Los Angeles are forced to play in. We only become desirable when what we have produced out of struggle can increase profits for someone, somewhere. Until then we are forced out of our neighborhoods with racist laws (like gang injunctions), racist landlords and when our neighborhoods do see an improvement in safety and quality of life after years of struggle (as the women of Boyle Heights have done), they can’t stick around to enjoy it. It makes perfect sense then that the wood-slate fence would reach its semiotic apogee in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Los Angeles is quickly becoming a place exclusively for the white and rich.

# For Anarchy, Not Anarchism

Why for *anarchy* and not for *anarchism*? This may seem like a small point to split hairs over but it is a point which is important to us. It is important because we are interested in a vital anarchist (anti-state communist) milieu. For us *anarchism* points to the notion that there could be a special set of practices (forms) which can be found out to be complementary for a free life *for all*. We feel this is **foolish** and assumes human life could ever take on a singular form. Life should take on the form necessary for its free reproduction, unlike its current state which only serves those who rule/control us.

*Classical anarchism* (i.e. European anarchism) was in many ways a pursuit of the best practices for/of *anarchy*: whether the mutualism of Proudhon, the collectivism of Bakunin, the individualism of the Bonnot gang or the communism of Kropotkin. As we want to distance ourselves from Eurocentric anarchy, we feel that there should be some leeway when it comes to all this; though it should be a tempered leeway. For us the emphasis should be on *content* over *form*. Let us explain.

The communization current often writes about this. For them it is not a question of radical democracy, equitable distribution, popular power, council-decision making, local self-management...but whether the set of relations are *communist* or not. *Communism* becomes the basis for judgment. Why? Because *communism* constitutes set of relations which are free, without measure, (and consequently) without exchange and without needless hierarchy. And this is something which most anarchists also aspire to. We want to wander away from *anarchism* because we feel it is more about defining how we should live than allowing us to live as we see fit, from time to time.

For instance, if some of us were to enter into a life or death battle then a consensus-based decision makes sense. We are all entering a situation where I lives may likely end. We should be able to decide our participation over own life or death. Now, if we are deciding whose house will hold the seasonal party do we really need a *consensus*? Do we even really need to come to a vote? Do we need democracy among friends? Do we put to a vote who will make the enchiladas or who will serve their homebrew? Probably not because this is not how daily life is generally decided. We rely on other factors to decide and other links of kinship/comradeship/friendship. This demonstrates the limitation of the fetishization of democracy (or consensus).

Also many speak of *anarchism* as though there is only one.<sup>1</sup> Recently one of us attended a free school gathering where a Classical Left-Anarchist presented **their** *anarchism* as **the** *anarchism*. Fortunately the attendees generally revolted against this conception, this insidious *authority*. We despise authority as much as we despise work and having to pay the rent. Instead of propping up our *anarchism* we prefer to gauge our *forms* against what is communist and what is not. We are anarchists that agree with the communization current when they say that the revolution is communization or rather:

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<sup>1</sup> Though truly, anarchism has never been pro-capitalist. Anarcho-capitalism is but an online aberration.

“communisation will be the moment when [revolutionary] struggle will make possible, as a means for its continuation, the immediate production of communism. By communism we mean a collective organisation that has got rid of all the mediations which, at present, serve society by linking individuals among them: money, the state, value, classes, etc Communism will thus be the moment when individuals will link together directly, without their inter-individual relations being superimposed by categories to which everyone owes obedience.”<sup>2</sup>

This is briefly to state that the institution of *communism* and *anarchy* is not a pre-revolutionary possibility but a possibility that arises out of revolutionary struggle. This is why we prefer to speak of *communism* instead of *anarchism*. *Communism* becomes a revolutionary verb, whereas *anarchism* becomes a pre-revolutionary dead weight (noun) that some try to impose on the present (or future). This is why we say we are *for anarchy* (a condition) and *for communism* (a verb).

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<sup>2</sup> de Mattis, Leon. “What Is Communisation.” Libcom, 16 Nov. 2011, [libcom.org/library/ what-communisation](http://libcom.org/library/what-communisation).

# Anti-Politics... Explained

*Here is our attempt to explain what anti-politics means to us and how we link it to communization and ultimately to communism.*

Anti-politics: action and theory that posits itself against the sphere of politics (and therefore also political-economy). Politics being the sphere of power, alienation, mediation and domination. In this way anti-politics questions & attacks the mediation & coercion found in democracy; the centrality & domination of the economy (whether capitalist or not) in our lives, patriarchy & its deadly logic; settler-colonialism & its persistence; questions whether the breadth of human desires could ever constitute a unitary & enumerated positive program and opens itself up to the possibility of affinities of shared antagonism with those who do not explicitly express themselves *politically* but nonetheless attack that which anti-politics is set against (i.e. rioters).

Anti-politics does not seek to “build power” although the building of the *capacity* to broaden communal self-defense and social-reproduction is a part of the struggle against power, it is not the struggle itself. Immigrant enclaves and other dominated peoples have always found ways to support each other through moments of direct attack (fascists, racists, the police) or indirect attacks (racialized & gendered wage relation, State policy). This is what we call mutual aid. Mutual aid is a force that binds us, but it is not in itself an antagonistic force. The State & Capital sees very little problem in proletarians getting by on their own: in many ways it unloads the burden from their shoulders. Anti-politics is that antagonistic force. It is when anger, pain, or even joy hits the streets against this world.

So many moments in recent history have shown that revolt against power has not come from a previously united powerful front (unless you still dream of 1917), but by those who have found each other in the struggle and sought to extend & generalize their revolt until they are free. The goal of *this project* is to do just that. Our capacity to destroy the order which maintains the world as we right now live is linked to how quickly, deeply and generally revolt is spread. A war against the order we are forced to live under is a losing war. This is how anti-politics is linked to communization.

Communization, similarly, does not seek to create new nodes of power (or counter-power) but to act as an encroaching acid on power through the openings created by a revolutionary moment (or moments). Though communization looks on to the terrain from the ground-level: how do we, as proletarians, abolish that which makes us racialized & gendered proletarians (self-abolition) while also bringing about another way: communism. Anti-politics tends to look up from the ground with its sights on politics, on power. So communization is not a political program to be installed, but rather the revolution as the creation of communism *immediately*.

*Now some clarification of what we mean by **communism**.*

Many think of Stalinist Russia, or the Cuba which Fidel Castro ruled for decades, or even the regime of North Korea. All those Nation-States hold, as their claim, the intent to build communism through some variation of *State Socialism*. As anarchists, who also call themselves communists, we see their attempts as different forms of *State Capitalism*. Money still exists. Communi-

ties are still produced. There are still police and prisons. Gendered violence and division of labor largely maintained. Work as a sphere of life separate from the rest of life maintained. Race persists and is violently maintained. Value is still valorized. The State is still the final arbiter of what will be and what will not be.

Communism is a free, classless way of life. No State; no money; no commodity-production; gender & race *as a site of oppression* abolished; stolen Native lands restored;<sup>1</sup> work abolished;<sup>2</sup> art re-integrated into daily life; the economic way of life largely (if not totally) abolished; decision-making no longer a specialized separate sphere of life; and the parties are gonna be pretty banging.

There is much more to be said and we wish we had more time to say it: this project is run by proletarians and *free time* is not a luxury we have. This is but a modest first attempt at attempting to explain why we say the things we do, do the things we do and why this project exists at all. ***La lucha sigue y sigue.***

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<sup>1</sup> This is something we add into our variant of communization but it is something not found in communization theory in general since the bulk of theorization has arrived from Western Europe. This is a deep flaw and one which we look forward to further theorize and write about in the future since Ediciones ineditas is a project that sits on occupied Tongva territory. Creating communism on a territory occupied by settlers without questioning the settler-colonial relation would merely be a perpetuation of settler-colonialism.

<sup>2</sup> For further reading on the abolition of work see our translation of Gille Dauve's "Getting Rid of Work." <https://ediciones-ineditas.com/2018/03/08/getting-rid-of-work/>

# An Experimental Thread on the Commune and Communism

*We originally posted this on twitter here. We learned that some of the text formatting on there made it difficult for people to read it. So we share it here de-twitterized.*

We don't deny the necessity of organization in toto but we reject the primacy of *The Mass Organization*<sup>™</sup> as an a priori necessity for class struggle. The organizational forms necessary to class struggle (proletarian self-abolition) arise from the struggle itself. As we see it, the commune is not necessarily a thing to be built in the absence of a general struggle but rather it is a communist way of life that arises from the struggle itself. Its arrival is not merely due to an 'organizational' preference by proles. It simply is the beginning of a way to sustain the antagonism of the struggle, to help prolong a rupture in capitalist space/time logic so that the revolt can further generalize & de-specialize.

The commune is mobile because it's not just a thing in space/time but how people relate to each other and to the land. A re-integration into the metabolism of the world, not a domination over it (as Marx once noted)

The commune is not the end goal, but it is a form (filled with communist content) likely to arise as part of the proletarian communist movement set to destroy the world we live in. Some attempts to build the commune now end up as enclaves or the work of self-selected specialists who have the capacity to independently suspend their condition as proles. Or perhaps they never were proles at all, or are intentionally declassed. Collective living is not itself revolutionary. The media has published instances of very wealthy white young professionals now seeking "collective housing" as a way to network or unload the burden of social reproduction: someone else washes their clothes, does the dishes or turns are taken in cooking meals. It seems even the bourgeois long for connection in our hyper-atomized society.

Now the commune is not meant to be a space for the self-selected or specialists. The commune is not intended to be the center of communal life nor is it really a place. Though it would be a recognizable node within a largely decentralized mesh network. It would be porous & allow movement in and out of it. It would not be a new Nation-state with borders.

Struggle specialists will have us think radical democracy would be a feature of the commune. We maintain democracy is what we do with those we don't trust (or for life or death situations). Would we need to gather for a vote to decide who will be the DJ at the harvest party? Decisions would be made but no longer will decision-making be a specialized and alienated sphere from everyday life. It's just what we do cuz life requires decisions. This immediacy means the commune is inherently anti-political.

The commune is mobile because it's not just a thing in space/time but how people relate to each other and to the land. A re-integration into the metabolism of the world, not a domination over it (as Marx once noted). This is why communism must be anti-colonial. Those of us who have maintained a deep connection to an original human culture borne of a deep interaction

with the land we are on have a knowledge more necessary to our lives than anything Western science has ascertained in the last 500 years.

The strength of the commune would not merely be its defensive measures but the the intensity of need that proles-in-abolition have for it. This is why it would have to abolish race & gender as a site of oppression, though this does not entail the abolition of difference. If anything social-communal life would deepen & enrichen because no longer would the basics of life be meted by the market based on who you are, how you choose to live and express yourself. Culture, now de-commodified, returns to its pre-capitalist richness & malleability.

Communists who view life only economically have historically created a social life that is flattened and impoverished. They confuse means with ends. They view meeting “needs” as the goal of social life; rather than social life as a way of meeting our primary need: each other. Further the division of human life between needs & not-needs is an economistic way of viewing things. We are more than machines requiring fuel. Communism would necessarily overcome this economistic way of viewing ourselves & our lives.

# Communization and Decolonization

*Recently we were asked about our thoughts on communization & decolonization and this essay is our response.*

It should first be noted that the communization milieu is indeed European in origin and largely does not address our settler-colonialist reality in the so-called Americas. Its largely European writers are conceptualizing from a different context than we live under in the so-called Americas (& other colonized lands).

## **Then why do we still talk about communization?**

Those of us that work on this project still find value in communization theory because it demonstrates a clear way to bring about the conditions for communism immediately.

But what is communism:? For us, and fellow travelers, communism is not a mode of production. It is not just a economic system of 'fairer' wealth distribution. It's a broad spectrum of life-ways that are based on communal social relations, including (but not exclusive to) mutual aid, solidarity, the collapse of the production / consumption binary (thus, the abolition of work), the abolition of the State, abolition of money, the abolition of value, the abolition of race & gender as a site of oppression, the abolition of cis-hetero-patriarchy (and all that entails, like compulsory heterosexuality). Some also call this anarchy. A negation of what props up Western capitalist civilization.

We are not interested in a transitional stage, as 'revolutionary socialists' call for, or in an incremental way, as those calling for 'dual-power' or 'building the commune.' Those of us that work on this project are not indigenous, but we do have indigenous ancestry. As we have had our ties cut off to our much-more communal lifeways of our respective indigenous ancestors, we are left to find other possible roads towards a free & communal life without misappropriating contemporary or ancient indigenous lifeways (though understanding these lifeways will be paramount to the successful project of assuring a free, communal way of life that does not doom us all). We do not claim that communization would replace indigenous resistance & revolt against the settler-colonial capitalist world, rather we maintain that we understand that without this resistance & revolt the settler-colonial capitalist world will remain.

It should also be noted that although communization theorists employ Marxian categories & concepts, they do not see these categories & concepts as eternal. We recognize them as tools which Marx developed to understand & critique capitalism (of his time) and not necessarily eternal categories & concepts that will / would / should always exist. We will not carry these concepts into a post-capitalist, de-colonized world. If anything, the communism which we write about would be a clear rupture from not only capitalism, the State, patriarchy, white supremacy but from Western civilization itself. This is why communization theorists often call themselves communists and not Marxists.

What communization theory largely offers is not a rigid program, but an understanding of how capitalism functions (with its embedded contours of race & gender) and what it would mean to



abolish it. It allows for space for improvisation & flexibility when it comes to the actual process of what communism (or anarchy) could look like. There is no rigid party line.

Communism is not a state of affairs to establish (or impose) but rather it is the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. And if the communism Marxists, and some anarchists, are attempting to establish retains the same settler-colonial relationship to the land then it's not communism at all. Settlers building a commune on occupied land still maintains a class society. A class society where settlers are indeed still preventing indigenous people from reproducing their lifeways, as they see fit.

Now decolonization, like communism, is a vast topic. And like full communism, decolonization (or anti-colonialism) will vary from place to place, bio-region to bio-region, etc. A one-size fits all plan does not exist (and should not exist) and the creation of such a plan would grind against our strong anarchist inclinations.

We can think about communization and decolonization as two aspects of the same weather system. Communization would attack the capitalist social relations which exist on occupied land, but clearly it would not go far enough. We're writing from occupied Tongva territory, known by its original name Tovaangar, and to merely create communism (anarchy) and make no attempt to restore native lands to their original inhabitants would (once again) not be communism at all. Decolonization (anti-colonialism) reminds us that there is more to be done.

The coupling of communization & decolonization recognizes, especially with ever-intensifying climate change, that settlers do not deeply, or even superficially, understand the deep natural history of the land they are on. Here in so-called Los Angeles we are constantly facing the increasing danger of massive wild fires. But wild fires are an ancient part of this landscape. The ecology of the landscape made famous, via its mass particularization, around the world depends on fire for its rejuvenation. What has caused an increase of danger for humans is not just climate change bringing less rain and hotter weather, but also the fact that unmitigated capitalist development has made it profitable to build in places which would previously burn with little effect on human life: hilltops, in mountain forests, etc.

Communization works as a corrective on Marxism and Left-Anarchism which merely call for a different kind of management of production (worker self-management, state-run management) instead of a fundamentally different set of social relations. Even Marx noted that communism is part of the human community's return to a re-connection with the land, instead of capitalism's attempt to control & extract as much value from it (though we are also critical of humanism as well). Since the beginning of colonization, Indigenous people across the world have repeated that the settler-colonial-capitalist way of life has not only been genocidal but has also been an unmitigated act of ecocide.

This is our understanding. A work in progress, but our understanding. There can be no 'decolonized socialist state,' just as there is no such thing as 'scientific socialism.' A way of life cannot be a science. What we desire is to see the words communism, and even anarchy, to eventually be forgotten and instead live in a world where we can be intimately connected to the land and to each other, and understand that this disconnection is an alienation much more ancient than the alienation we have from our labor under capitalism.

# An L.A. Radical Memory Rant Against Erasure

What was once Mr. T's Bowl is now the Highland Park Bowl. The bowling alley described above in the blurb from Purple Magazine's L.A. issue. Previous to Mr. T's Bowl destruction and re-branding as the Highland Park Bowl, it was a no-frills but great Los Angeles divebar and underground music venue. It was also the first place I got served an underage beer. The heyday of Mr. T's Bowl had already largely passed by the time I started to go there, but it still served as a venue for NorthEast L.A. to showcase the kind of musical and creative acts that would not get any stage time in the Hollywood clubs.

I went to check out HPB once it opened and I almost felt physically ill by its transformation into some gaudy, neo-vintage bowling alley. What existed before actually bore history and this was just a simulacrum of it. It's ironic that this short, badly-written blurb mentions the bowling alley in *The Big Lebowski*. That bowling alley which existed in East Hollywood is now gone; it stood just east of the 101 freeway. Like much of L.A. history it's been erased, which is why newcomers to the city feel that they are breathing life into the city. But this city has always self-cannibalized to save face & make space. That's part of its attraction to outsiders. A city of no-history where re-invention is possible. The fact of the matter is that Los Angeles is a place with a deep history, previous to European invasion & settlement. And even its settlement is rife with settler-colonial, racist and class-struggle history. Not far from the new Highland Park Bowl, is another bowling alley: All-Star Lanes. An almost dilapidated bowling alley which until fairly recently was one of the few last bastions of proletarian entertainment in Los Angeles: a city that is hellbent on erasing proletarian social life. The venue has often hosted underground Latinx punk shows.

Some 10+ years ago some friends started a localist blog to help us tell our own story about our part of the city, the L.A. Eastside. This was before gentrification crashed into us. What's troubling about this blurb is how even in 2019 NorthEast L.A. is seen as "remote." Back in 2008 the L.A. Eastside was almost invisible in both local & national media, so it's not altogether surprising NELA is referred to as remote; but remote from where? These same friends also once had a radical space in NELA known as Flor Y Canto Centro Comunitario, from 2000–2005. A space where I learned about local anarchist history, the Situationist International, the Ultra-Left, Post-Left Anarchy and about what it could mean to live in a fundamentally different way. But these spaces don't get memorialized, remembered by local media or even re-imagined the way Mr. T's Bowl has been. There's no money in it. Previous to FYC there were other spaces & projects in NELA like Radio Clandestino & Regeneracion/Popular Resource Center in the 1990s (named after a Mexican Anarchist-Communist newspaper from a century ago). So here we are, in 2019, waiting to be revived and colonized by those seeking cheaper rents, and yet also agents of displacement. All this reminds me it's important we write our own history on our own terms or else someone else will do it for us.

# Radical Anti-Gentrification

An anti-gentrification strategy which counters the “good local business” to the “bad, ‘gentrifier’ business,” and thus does not question capitalism itself, is a strategy which may garner popular support, *but* it is one which is ultimately shallow & reformist in nature. It confuses the symptoms of gentrification for the causes. If we take gentrification as an opportunity to truly interrogate what housing means under capitalism for proletarians, we would see that this society will always have us living as close to the edge as possible.

It’s easy to say “*Fuck Hipsters*” because of their hyper-visibility at the surface/ cultural level. But if we are radicals, we have to be able to see beyond the white-tiled cafes, the art galleries which used to be party supply stores and the breweries which used to house manufacturing machines. Gentrification is very much a homogenizing force: every gentrifying city looks like every other gentrifying city but what unites these cities more than a spreading basic aesthetic are the intensifying capitalist social relations which they are a product of. Capitalism ever deepening its teeth into proletarian life.<sup>1</sup>

If we were to remove every ‘gentrifier’ business from Los Angeles, or any other city in the world, we would still have to pay the rent, go to work and lead a life so disconnected from our own needs & desires.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, a strategy which takes into the consideration the totality of capitalist society is difficult to imagine at the level of everyday life, but if we are radicals then this is part of the dream we must make. Surely we will have to level antagonism towards the shocktroops of gentrification, but like a moldy piece of bread the shocktroops are but the end of a lifecycle of the parasites they are. They go on as contagion, but the deep work happened before their arrival. In the same way, we must look and think deeply. It is not simply “the community” vs “the not-community.” It’s about liberation of those of us under the thumb of capitalism and those who gain from pressing the thumb. And those pressing the thumb are more likely to be local & State government, international financial institutions investing in real estate, the police, local real estate agencies and banks...than those pressing French coffee presses.

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<sup>1</sup> In other words, the intensification of the extraction of profit from the cycle of accumulation under capitalism: an intensification necessary to the very being of capitalism.

<sup>2</sup> Here, we also have to call into question what exactly is a ‘gentrifier’ business. Some would say it is a business run by the ‘gentry’! But what is the ‘gentry’? Is the ‘gentry’ the petit-bourgeoisie? The shopkeeper? If so, then even the small, local, longtime shopkeeper is also the ‘gentry.’ Some say it is a business which tends to promote the forces of gentrification, but in a way most businesses do exactly this by *requiring our money in exchange for their commodities and/or services* and thus act as a way of impoverishing us., making it harder to pay the rent. Although, often times cultural connections cultivated in ethnic and/or proletarian neighborhoods act as a mask, a cover for the fact that there too does capitalism wield its control.

# The Psycho-Geography of Gentrification in L.A.

*Gentrification as the intensification of the psycho-geography of the real subsumption of everything to Capital. No place for cultural remanants outside its logic. The banalisation of all spaces, streamlining consumption. You don't live here, you just buy here.*

## **But what does this mean?**

Much has been written about gentrification, but simply put it is the name for the rise of property values (and then *ipso facto* rent prices), resulting in displacement and often cultural erasure of those who were displaced. As Stuart Hall said, “race is the modality in which class is lived” and so by this logic gentrification is also *deeply* racialized. But what is the *cause* of this *rise* is more contentious. Some point to art galleries/ spaces; others to international & national real estate speculation looking for new markets to profit off of; some see it as a natural process of *re-vitalization* of areas once thought of as blight (if life under Capital could be seen as *natural*); some see the incursion of the (white) *hipster* as the cause. Suffice to say the cause is complex and may include all of these.

Now what is *psycho-geography*? In 1955, Guy Debord [a French anti-state communist who wrote much about art & cinema & The Spectacle] defined it as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.” Of course, as gentrification attests, the physical environment we encounter does not effect all of us in the same way. Later in 1961, he clarified things a bit by saying, “sectors of a city... are decipherable, but the personal meaning they have for us is incommunicable.” We may all be able to see how hostile architecture (as seen below) works to discourage loitering and/or camping by the homeless, though others may not understand why the appearance of a *juice bar* (also seen below) may be just as offensive to some of us (especially since a Mexican juice & snack shop is right up the street selling the same thing at cheaper prices).

So *psycho-geography* could be a way to think about how certain spaces in a city could be seen as either welcoming, hostile or open-ended. Most spaces are very controlled in Los Angeles, though their control is highly racialized. For instance, public drinking is illegal in Los Angeles but curiously at art gallery openings, where a largely white audience take their Tecates or cheap red wine onto the sidewalks or street, there seems to be little enforcement of this law. The video below, take from a 2010 documentary on Skid Row, sheds some light on this racialization:



Part of the power of whiteness is that those emboldened by it feel they can and *should* be able to go anywhere and be safe. Freedom of movement and safety are two things we all desire, but because whiteness is something which demands defense under the White-Supremacist society we live in — that enforcement comes along with an armed gang with a monopoly on violence: The Police. There are countless of stories of white people calling the police on Black or brown people where there was indeed no threat and the Black or brown person ends up being brutalized or killed by the police. One of the clear fears of Black and brown proletarians who live in a neighborhood being gentrified is that with new white neighbors with money, so will come a police force who either would ignore their neighborhood in the past or would already terrorize their neighborhood. What were normal house parties would now attract aggressive police attention (house parties which occur because often bars/clubs prove too expensive for proletarians).

*But what does “the real subsumption of everything to Capital” mean? This is a topic which has been explained much better in Ultra-Left communist texts than could be explained here, but briefly as Endnotes note in their second volume: “formal subsumption affects only the immediate labour-process, while real subsumption extends beyond the sphere of production to society as a whole. ” Or as Theorie communiste put it, it is “capital becoming capitalist society. ”*

So, at one point in time Capital only absolutely controlled proletarians when at work, but over time Capital has been able to control proletarians non-labor time as well (“free time”). Gentrification could very well be seen as the intensification of this control within (typically) the realm of the city. One of the tell-tale signs of gentrification is how what were once old *mom-and-pop shops* which likely fulfilled a need within a specific ethnic neighborhood (fresh tortillas and tamales!), transition to boutique or high-end shops which fulfill needs much more based on *commodity-fetishism*: the purchase of things (or services) not so much based on need but based on what they say about the purchaser:

*I buy a coffee at Cafe de Leche because it says that I have refined taste in coffee and also that I have the disposable income to spend much more for something as banal as coffee, rather than picking up a cup from a Cambodian-owned donut shop for much less. I buy crystals supposedly-imbued with healing or other properties because I see they are part of a trend I’ve come across on Instagram (and I will post them on Instagram) vs. buying candles in a local botanica from a culture I don’t know enough about to spin for social capital.*

Interestingly enough many times defenders of gentrification advocates say that the changes brought by gentrification amount to bringing much needed services and/or access to certain commodities to poorer neighborhoods; or some even claim they are bringing *culture & difference*. The first claim assumes that residents wished they could pay more for the things already for sale in their neighborhoods. This second claim is rather ludicrous as anyone who has visited more than a few gentrified neighborhoods will attest to their *sameness*: juice shop, high-end cafe, yoga studio, crystal shop, wine shop, etc. What gentrification is bringing is the blight of middle-class/bourgeois whiteness. A blight which sees itself as the default and cannot imagine that those *outside* of it could *not want* what they want.

*El Sereno starts to look like Highland Park which looks more and more like Echo Park which inevitably becomes annexed by Silver Lake.*

More and more what could have been a street where people hung out on and could buy cheap snacks to pass the time becomes a place where one cannot visit without spending less than \$20 (currently LA's minimum wage can be as low as \$10.50/hr). The last remnants of what some would call *community* disappears. A recent LA Times article on the creeping gentrification faced in Lincoln Heights notes how some people stay in this L.A. Eastside neighborhood not just because it is still relatively cheap, but because they have found a place they cherish and call home. For the petit-bourgeois/bourgeois who see themselves as *cosmopolitan* and shuttle from living in one city to another and then on to another city based on whim or fancy, Lincoln Heights has no historical or personal meaning. Their newly-flipped rental (or mortgage) is just a *nice place* (with maybe a nice view).

*"Oh you can see Downtown L.A. from here."*

*"It's so conveniently close to everything."*

*"It feels like a real L.A. neighborhood — not like Echo Park does now."*

*"It's really an up-and-coming neighborhood!"*

*"If only it had a Trader Joe's!"*

Gentrification is the *further* realization of the power of Capital over the lives of proletarians. And this realization says one thing loudly & clearly: you don't matter and your connection to a place does not matter. Perhaps the coming years will continue to show a Los Angeles which says:

*FUCK YOU, WE DONT WANT TO LIVE WITHIN THE LOGIC OF WHAT CAPITAL THINKS MATTERS. WE WANT TO LIVE OUTSIDE OF ITS LOGIC AND WILL DESTROY CAPITAL IF NECESSARY.*

Cuz we know when we drive or walk around a gentrifying Los Angeles we know that what we see is akin to a *fuck you* to the revolt of 1992. Capital is taking the city back and it's time we remind Capital of what we can and *will do*.

# But We Have To, So We Do It Real: Slow On Anti-Work, Mexican(-American)s and Work

In Los Angeles to be against Capital typically presents itself in a pro-work/ worker position. The problem is never work itself, the nature of work or that work is waged but instead what is desired is extending a sphere of work that is unionized and bolstered with higher wages. Take for instance the CLEAN Carwash campaign,<sup>1</sup> where carwash workers (whom are mostly immigrant men) have been unionized under the representation of United Steelworkers Local 675.<sup>2</sup> Though this move one is that brings much needed betterment of working conditions and wages for these workers, what is ultimately not brought up is that the work of a car wash workers can and has already been automated. But the fading labor movement seems to be no longer concerned with the overthrow of capitalism nor the abolition of work. That dream is a dream that has been lost along with the labor movement itself.

The expression of an anti-work position has either been minoritarian or unheard of. In a city where working conditions for immigrants can be well below the legal standards set forth by the State and the Federal Government, the push for more protections and rights within the workplace takes precedence. An anti-work affect (rather than a bonafide position) among Mexican immigrants and/or Mexican-Americans is usually to be found in cultural forms and do not often take on explicit anti-political, or anti-capitalist forms. That said, the playful, tongue-in-cheek cultural forms are plentiful, the other mentioned forms are few and far in between.

## Anti-Work / Anti-Capitalist: An Introduction

My first encounter with an explicit anti-work position came from Chicanx friends who I had met in 2001 who were heavily-influenced by the French Marxist theorist Guy Debord and the Situationist International. In 1953, a young Guy Debord painted on a wall on the Rue de Seine « NE TRAVAILLEZ JAMAIS » (tr. Never Work). A statement that was difficult for me to understand conceptually at the time but which I immediately gravitated towards (*who as a youth looks forward to a lifetime of work ahead of them?*) Previously, all the anarchist literature I had read on work concerned themselves with how wage labor was theft of our time & of our labor-power and that the solution was not the abolition of work per se but worker self-management. [Think of all the nostalgia that some Left-Anarchists still have for the revolution lost by the anarcho-syndicalists during the Spanish Civil War.]

Anti-work was a scandalous position growing up in a Mexican household where what was prized was the opportunity to find well-paying work, as well as a hearty work ethic. Though the starting point for Guy Debord's opposition to a world of work was not a beatnik, bohemian-

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cluejustice.org/campaigns\\_carwash](http://www.cluejustice.org/campaigns_carwash)

<sup>2</sup> [www.usw675.org](http://www.usw675.org)



lifestyle refusal common to the 1950s, but rather a rejection of the blearyness of life under capitalism and part of a whole project to overthrow what they called The Spectacle and to once again make life a joyous.

The critique of work can be found elsewhere throughout history including Paul Lafargue's "*The Right to be Lazy*" (1883) written by Karl Marx's son-in-law; in the unfortunately notorious post-left Anarchist Bob Black's "*The Abolition of Work*" (1985) and Gille Dauve's "*Eclipse & Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement*" (1970) where he clarifies what the abolition of work could mean and says "what we want is the abolition of work as an activity separate from the rest of life." He further explains that the issue at hand is not whether we are active or not, but rather that under capitalism what we do is abstracted into two spheres, both alienated: work-time and leisure-time. This (anti-state) communist critique of work notes that the liberation from Capital is not the liberation of labor but the liberation from labor as it now exists. Currently we assume only those activities which are paid a wage have value and that only those things which are productive, in the capitalist sense, are necessary to human life.

## Mexican-Americans & Work

That said there is no shortage of cultural output from Mexican immigrants, or Mexican-Americans (some of whom identify as Chicana) that takes a swipe at the way work is made necessary to our social reproduction.<sup>3</sup> Take for instance a comedic song from "*Up In Smoke*" (1978), where the character Pedro de Pacas sings a song trying to upend notions of popular Mexican-American identity and says, "Mexican-Americans don't like to get up early in the morning but they have to so they do it real slow."

Here we catch a key moment in the subjectivity of the racialized Mexican-American worker caught up in a world where labor is managed and controlled by borders. There is an understanding that work and the preparation for work is drudgery but also that the refusal of work might be impossible; this refusal is acknowledged but it gives way to a sabotage on social reproductivity, a *slow-down*.

The spectacular production of the Mexican as a worker in the USA (or as a Mexican-American) is often tied up in a binary of either being hard-working; job-stealing; or lazy and welfare-scheming. As seen by the words used by Donald Trump during his presidential campaign, there is also the perception of the Mexican as a dangerous criminal, forming a trinity of prejudice that returns when it suits the need of nativist, racist politicians. This type of characterization was first seen when the U.S. forcefully annexed the so-called American Southwest from Mexico and bandits like Tiburcio Vasquez haunted the minds of the waves of Westward-bound Anglo-Americans. In 1954, this showed up as *Operation Wetback* where the INS (which later becomes ICE) enacted indiscriminate round-ups of Mexican laborers to put a chilling effect on undocumented migration of laborers into the USA. Laborers need only "look Mexican" to be deported and many of those deported were in fact U.S. citizens.

To posit an anti-work position and to take into account the racialization of workers in the USA looms as an impossible task. Often immigrants internalize a work ethic that can be as entrenched

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<sup>3</sup> DEFINITION: all the labor that needs to be done so that workers are prepared to work the next day. this work is often un-paid though it is necessary for any work to be done under capitalism. examples: doing the laundry, child-care, sex, dish-washing, food preparation, commuting.

as that of right-wing Anglo-Americans that erroneously describe the USA as a meritocracy. This is more necessity than reaction by Mexican immigrants under racialized capitalism since they are often forced into the most grueling of work that most native-born, or Anglo-Americans, will simply not take on: picking of fruits & vegetables, construction, food service, child care, landscaping, etc. We work hard because we have to and we make a self-serving mythology around it where we are the hard-working ones but everyone else is the not-hard-working ones, where notably elements of anti-blackness come to the fore.

To further the myth of the hard-working immigrant, that does not threaten the colonial-capitalist social order of the USA, is to strip immigrants of the agency to express refusal, resistance and revolt. In a time where nativist racism is peaking once again, we must realize that this myth proliferation is no safety net against ICE sweeps or other racist violence. There is no pride in presenting ourselves as hard-working, since under capitalism working hard merely means we are putting in more labor for the same amount of pay. In effect, we are lowering our wages by putting in more work than is expected and making ourselves hyper-exploited. If we were to collectively express our reluctance or refusal to work beyond the bare minimum we could begin to flex the capacity of our labor power across industries. (An inspiring moment of this kind of flexing was the general strike on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 where immigrants largely self-organized a strike to show how much their labor is integral to the functioning of U.S. capitalism; in Los Angeles 1 to 2 million people took to the streets & over 90% of LA Port traffic was shut down.)

And as it has been noted, more and more Mexicans are returning to Mexico than coming into the USA, the payoff for this hard-work is in decline<sup>4</sup>. I've heard amongst friends and family that many recent Mexican immigrants find that the work they encounter in the USA is either too dangerous, too difficult or too hard to find.

## A Way Out?

But this desire to be the most hardworking Mexican in the world wasn't always the norm. In British historian E.P. Thompson's 1967 text *"Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism"* he mentioned how economic-growth theorists viewed Mexican mineworkers as "indolent and childlike people" because they lacked discipline. For instance, he notes from a book on the *"The Mexican Mining Industry, 1890 — 1950"* that Mexican mineworkers had:

"[a] lack of initiative, [an] inability to save, absences while celebrating too many holidays, [a] willingness to work for only three or four days a week if that paid for necessities, [and] an insatiable desire for alcohol..." (Bernstein)

It seems that time changes little. Of course, in many ways we always knew that we don't really want to go to work and that we only have disdain for those who don't have to because we are not them. That we enjoy the winter break where we fill up on tamales, cervezas and spend the evenings talking about what we'd really like to be doing and dreams for the future. Even the Left's obsession with the mythologized collective worker that is socially-responsible, punctual and whom identifies with their work is largely a fabrication of the dead worker's movement.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> [www.pewhispanic.org/2015/11/19/more-mexicans-leaving-than-coming-to-the-u-s/](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/11/19/more-mexicans-leaving-than-coming-to-the-u-s/)

<sup>5</sup> tr. The ideal worker / Damn! it seems the company isn't making the profits that it should be. well, say no more! : tomorrow I will quit without any kind of compensation or anything. how would I dare protest! I'd rather call the anti-riot police and have them split my head open!

The anti-state communist theory journal, Endnotes, states that:

“the supposed identity that the worker’s movement constructed turned out to be a particular one. It subsumed workers only insofar as they were stamped, or were willing to be stamped, with a very particular character. That is to say, it included workers not as they were in themselves, but only to the extent that they conformed to a certain image of respectability, dignity, hard work, family, organisation, sobriety, atheism, and so on.”<sup>6</sup>

Too often we are given the lie that the way to progress is to submit to the rationalization of the capitalist system; that we simply need to awaken the sleeping giant which represents the possible Latino voting bloc; that the rich are rich because they really know how to handle their money; that if only we could sway Congress to push immigration reform; if only we could get universities to tell us back our histories or to enroll us at all...but really the way out is to abolish the social relation that is capitalism

that protects itself by way of the State; that protects itself with borders, police and a standing army; that controls the way we envision our lives with careers, time management and gender roles; that makes into a commodity even the way we choose to spend our not-working hours, which yet are still spent preparing or recovering from those working hours.

## **¿Pero Como Resisteremos Por Mientras? / How Can We Resist Right Now?**

*Or we’ve been resisting this whole time /*

Thinking back to the 90s when the ditch party was both an escape from the terrible LAUSD as well as a form of resistance to the most alienating of compulsory schooling: in many ways these teens that would not show up to school and party instead contained much more awareness of the society around them than the kids that would instead get ‘straight As’ and then study Chicano/a Studies. These kids implicitly understood the pipeline that the LAUSD was to low-paying, entry-level service work where they would have to do much more rule-following, guideline-abiding, button-pushing, uniform-wearing than critical thinking. It was as though they were able to envision the no future we currently find ourselves in.

So many of us already partake in the public secret(s) of our resistance to work:

- we slack off at work, which in Marxist terms could be seen as a way of raising your own wage since you are putting in less labor for the same length of time.
- we steal from work and thus make our time at our workplace much more worthwhile, and even get some nice gifts for friends and family.
- we sabotage the flow of productivity by working real slow, or by shutting down the internet, or by talking to our coworkers about not work-related things, or by not working at all and taking a nice siesta.

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<sup>6</sup> A History of Separation” by Endnotes

- we call in sick when we're really not sick at all or really we're just too hungover from the rager the night before.

A world without work seems like an impossibility, a utopia, an unlikely dream especially when most of our waking time is spent thinking about how we're gonna pay the rent, the power bill, car insurance, possible student loans, more probable credit card debt or the bar tab...but a world without work is also a world without capitalism a world of communism.

That world is a world without wage labor, without patriarchy, without race, without class, without a state, without police; where we would decide our lives on our own terms without the limitations of value production, without the control of borders, without Monday mornings, without social death, without artificial crises, where we won't have to suffer the indignities of being harassed by the boss, a world beyond accounting, a world where what we do will not define who we are to each other. For a world without measure!

# The Rasquache Way

Ni de aqui, ni de alla. Neither from here, nor there. An old Chicane saying that still rings true but tired, with a Chicano-Studies dullness...like Gloria Anzaldua speaking to us from the other side telling us that the border is a wound, but paraphrasing Cesar Miguel we rather maintain that instead the border is the knife. We also have Corky Gonzales telling us of the great hope of Jose Vasconcelo's *raza cosmica* for Chicanxs: a hope that is but an inversion of Social Darwinism, infused with anti-blackness & anti-Native erasure and sold as a sort of metaphysical eugenics. It seems we're in need of some rhetorical updating.

But this is not meant to be a reformulation of what it means to be Chicane, though I agree with Cheech Marin when he said: "a Chicane [is] a Mexican-American with a defiant political attitude that centers on [their] right to self-definition. I'm a Chicane because I say I am." Rather I'd like to talk about a way out of our disappointment and our collective dispossession: a way out of capitalism and the world it has created; a way out of the racist-colonial state we live under; a way out of the Patriarchy learned from the West and which we also have homegrown. This modest proposal is the *rasquache* way.

First for the unfamiliar: *rasquache* is a word with origins in the Nahuatl language. In Mexico it is usually a derisive term for things that are seen as low-class or just down-right cheap. Since Chicanxs have learned to make do with what we have, this term has been transformed on this side of the U.S./MX border into a term to describe art or aesthetics that arise out of making do with little and with little regard for a singular visual cohesion. Neither of these definitions exactly suit my intended purpose. Let's create a new one. The *rasquache* way is a way for not-just-Chicanxs to give up the charade of ideological purity in favor of an antagonistic fervor which bears many sharp edges like a hominy can cut into the shape of a flower for a potted plant. It is a way to *encabronar*<sup>1</sup> orthodox politics into a deep and generative anti-politics.<sup>2</sup>

If you got your radical politik-learning from the university then you are probably used to putting every variant/ flavor/tendency/current of radical politics into neat little boxes that sit next to each other but rarely ever touch. This is hardly the way real life works or the way humans live out their lives (and those who live their lives according to abstract ideals are often boring, quarrelsome or both). Anywayz no revolution was ever led by a singular idea focused on a singular position. I am no idealist and neither is any proletarian revolution. The Leninist, Maoist and Platformist conception of ideological cohesion and rigidity as a precursor for revolutionary activity is an impasse that forever reaches out towards a future never to arrive. Though we should temper our actions against what we know and what can be known, we must realize that limit point of thought is thought itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Def. to get riled (familiar)

<sup>2</sup> "...the road of political ideology and programs is no more useful to the project of subversion. Because this project is the transformation of existence in a way that destroys all domination and exploitation, it is inherently anti-political." — *Against the Logic of Submission*.

Rasquache inserted into the realm of anti-politics allows us to take what we want and leave behind that which does not suit our needs. To build our own vision despite what the gatekeepers of good taste and orthodoxy may want us to align with. This is why I have chose to join the call of the return of joy and antagonism of the Situationist International, but leave behind its fetishization of worker's councils; why I can talk about the material conditions which lead to the rise of the riot, yet also echo the insurrectionary fervor of Alfredo Bonanno; why I choose to still call myself a Chicano despite the fact that my (anti-)politics fall outside the realm of The Chicano Movement; why despite the fact the the Partido Liberal Mexicano called itself "liberal," I admire it as an openly-insurrectionary agent for anarchist revolution; why I can hope to one day loot a jacuzzi with friends, yet still have a critique of commodity fetishism. Anywayz, a revolution is not the collective action of angels.

Those who take very few steps to put their politics to the test of experimentation by engaging with the world find it easy to stay within their dull ivory tower. Being in a room with people you may not know and speaking your piece is how one learns to blend, to mix, to re-purpose, to discard and to re-imagine. Of course, this is already the history of those whom are forced to live between cultures & traditions. But we are also told that some things are not for mixing, not for blending, not for re-purposing, not for discarding, not for re-imagining.

The rasquache way is a liberation of our desires from the stifling world of orthodox radical politics. The youth are especially attuned to finding ways to make what was reserved to the staid Leftists and breathe new life into it by transforming its content and sharpening its edge. All over the internet I see the youth blending radical high (and low) theory at a scale and scope that did not exist 20 years ago. Memes are often derided for being overly-simplistic or niche-driven, but often distill truths hidden by hazy theory.

Rasquache-ness would help us be flexible in light of changing circumstances. We would not simply attempt to build mass organizations because that's what the Classical Worker's Movement have been trying to do for the the past 200+ years: we would see that the impasse we face is not so much a lack of unified organization, but a lack of concerted action. That last few years have shown what a few determined desmadrosxs<sup>3</sup> can do to set things off. See Ferguson, Baltimore, Oakland, Orange County and even Los Angeles.

Rasquache-ness would allow us to be elusive when cornered. It would allow us to slip into spaces and that things that would go unheeded if were to first proclaim, "I Am An Anarchist." Rasquache-ness would push us to defy categorization and become opaque to the State. Rasquache-ness would value creativity over regularity.

Chicanxs have not offered the world of radical politics much in the last 30 years. Usually we offer ourselves up as transmuters of Mexican culture into colorful commodities (see: the proliferation of Day of the Dead products). Perhaps the very rasquache we engage in because of our historical position could be that which we offer the world. This would stand as a counterpoint to the way some Chicanxs flock like moths-to-the-flame to the dusty & anachronistic ideologies of Maoism, Leninism and Cultural Nationalism.

Rasquache-ness would allow us to speak to those we need to build connections with by circumventing the old language, iconography and slogans of Leftism. No more calls to defend "The People." No more Che Guevera t-shirts. No more adoration of Subcomandante Marcos.<sup>4</sup> No more

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<sup>3</sup> Def. troublemakers

<sup>4</sup> Whom technically has ceased to exist

bad “conscious” rap. Sure those things may attract a certain demographic. The kind of person who thinks, “I need to join an organization” instead of “I need to do X, Y, Z action with my homies where I live.” The type of person who needs a “mass organization” to feel like they are “doing something.” The type of person of person who ignores revolt, riots, insurrection because they are not “organized forms of collective action.”

*Let’s get real rasquache and get free!*

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