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How To Prove The Existence Of Anarchists Of Color Once And For All

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This commentary by a Chinese anarchist was prompted by Simoun Magsalin's recent piece, The Western Left's Erasure of Anarchists in the so-called Third World.

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i wanna start with a few observations:

- the overwhelming majority of those denying the existence of anarchists of color, nonwestern anarchists or “anarchists in the third world” are, identify as, or otherwise act as anti-anarchists. that is, distinct from those who don't identify as “anarchists,” they are fundamentally at odds with anarchist ethics and seek to sabotage them when possible.
- when leftist anti-anarchists do acknowledge the existence of anarchists of color, they almost always suggest that anarchists of color are a cia op, or the result thereof. usually they heartily endorse state repression. in one public instance, they threatened to report an anarchist of color to state security where the anarchist resides.
- the occasions in which this discourse takes place are, or are imagined to be in the absence of anarchists of color.

usually, they happen between a white or western anarchist and their leftist anti-anarchist counterpart. at the heart of their disagreement is not whether anarchists of color exist. for both, citing the presence or absence of anarchists or color is meant to prove or disprove the validity of anarchism to the other party.

why do anarchists of color so eagerly seek the recognition of their enemy, in a conversation they aren't even a part of?

perhaps i'm being disingenuous: i don't particularly care about whether leftist anti-anarchists recognize our existence. if we're invisible to them, all the better. in fact, i don't particularly care about what they as anti-anarchists think at all — their opposition to anarchist ethics takes precedence. this is not to say that i would rather turn a blind eye to them — any information is, to some degree, informative of how we can act in and on the world — but that i don't think of them as potential models to emulate, let alone lose sleep over. leftist or otherwise, there are too many opposed to the liberation of all to do that; you don't see anyone get dismayed that the fascists have a "bad take" on the situation in ukraine.

i would suggest that the main reason for the constant recurrence of this dastardly discourse is anarchists' obsession with left unity. if only we can prove to them that nonwhite anarchists exist! surely, then they will give up their antics. leftist anti-anarchists are supposed to be unprincipled comrades; misguided as they may be, they are mere interventions away from "seeing the light." when they do or say fucked up shit, we call it "opportunism." when they espouse fascistic beliefs, we are compelled to look for signs of "red-brown collaboration," even in cases where the "brown" is leftist homegrown. a leftist can only be so wrong or bad, otherwise they cease to be a leftist (and become a "so-called 'leftist'"). the leftist is good because they are a leftist; the leftist is a leftist because they are good.

but there's no proving our existence to them. this discourse is beguiling in its absurdity — it's hard to imagine a satisfactory close ("once and for all, anarchists have finally demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt the existence of anarchists of color!"), because ultimately it's not about that. you can't wake up someone who feigns sleep. as long as anti-anarchists are anti-anarchists, and as long as they cling to their fantasy projection of people of color and nonwestern people, it's ideologically imperative that they insist on our nonexistence.

we can't prove to them that anarchists of color exist, but we still could put an end to this miserable discourse. to do that, we need only to dispel the illusion of the left.

our fascination with the left makes us blind to the deep and wide divide between anarchists and anti-anarchists. if their non-acknowledgement of anarchists of color seems to be the backbreaking straw, the camel has long been dead.