

# **Proposal For a New Love and Rage Initiative on Race and Color**

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Like most of the Anarchist scene in the U.S., Love & Rage is an all-white movement, with no real conception on how to bring people of color into the movement. Although, I do not think there is any deliberate policy of exclusion or hostile atmosphere at work to prevent Africans or other peoples of color generally from becoming part of the federation, it is 'clear that "whiteness" (i.e., white male dominance) plays its part. I think that Love and Rage has resigned itself to being a white movement, rather than take the necessary steps to build a more diverse movement.

What steps am I talking about? Well, the common-sense recognition first that an autonomous "Black" tendency will not burst forth spontaneously onto the scene any time soon, but rather that the pre-conditions for it will have to be organized within a federation like Love and Rage. Those people of color who are not already Anarchists will only learn of the social revolution within Anarchist movements in the initial phase, which means that they have to be recruited, just like anyone else. But those Anarchists of color already around need to be brought together into one place. I am trying to organize just such an anti-authoritarian tendency, with anarchists of color that I have met on the speaking tour and others interested in. Anarchist ideas. They all want to participate, but they do not want to just be tokens within a larger white movement. They should not have to be token participants, if this federation lives by its rhetoric, but if I thought that it would not do so, I would not be making this proposal. This federation is best disposed, ideologically and organizationally, to be the most effective program since the early Anarchist class struggle tendencies of the last century and the first two decades of this century, like the International Working People's Association, the IWW and others.

I am not implying that white radicals have to "teach" Anarchism to the African or other peoples of color, but I am saying that they must at least be exposed to the truth — and on a consistent basis! Because Love and Rage does not even put its newspapers and other literature in bookstores, schools and other institutions in the people of color communities, it cannot possibly win people over in those communities. What else should anyone expect? But then it magnifies this error by tailing after certain Black nationalists who have nothing in common with our tendency, or may in fact be hostile, rather than contacting ordinary Black people in the community and winning them over. This "hero-worship" of "leading Black nationalists" must stop; it is nothing but white fawning over certain revolutionists who are lions of the lecture circuit, but are not themselves organizing in the African community. This type of thing disturbs me, and it is why I have decided to "take a hard-line with this organization and urge a continuation of its needed reconstruction beyond just the simple stage of creating the federation.

It has only been since the tour that I felt that Love and Rage had any serious potential for revolutionary activity, as opposed to middle-class reformism, and that I could unite with it. I have now considered that this tendency *could be reformed* even though there is a serious set of internal problems within the group. The question of if there should be a federated organization with a membership, and what it should look like never really entered my mind as a serious priority. My views in favor of federations are known far and wide; I belonged to the now-defunct Social-Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, which existed during the late 1970's and early 1980's. The group died because of internal contradictions, especially its failure to carry out its social tasks, and its aversion to engaging in anti-racist struggles. It opted for the "white rights" politics so prevalent then, such as anti-nuke, "utopian communes," and other nonsense favored by the white middle class. I fought a long, lonely battle to try to get the group on course, but lost, and the movement lost when SRAF died. I hope Love and Rage does not make the same errors and suffer the same fate. But it must get Itself together now!

That is why unless this federation gets its shit together, and continues to act as a “support group” or “cheerleaders” for Black or other PoC struggles, instead of working toward the creation of a tendency within its own ranks, I will no longer associate with the federation. I will not join Love and Rage and then have to engage in a struggle where I have to go through this sort of white racist bullshit again like I did in the 1970s in SRAF or the IWW. Working class activists and persons of color have to be intrinsic parts of any federation. We must recruit people of color and real live workers. White middle-class men cannot speak for People of color men and women, it’s as simple as that. Also this lack of diversity in its ranks dictates how serious Love and Rage is as a revolutionary political movement and even how it is structured. We are not going to participate in any movement that we do not deem in our interests. So this paper is a test of the true spirit and objectives of this federation.

## **A. Creating a PoC Anarchist Tendency in the Love & Rage RAF**

I have talked to a number of Anarchists of color on this tour, and this is our position: If Love and Rage wants us to take membership, or even to continue to work with the federation except in a limited way, then it must make it possible for us to build an anti-authoritarian tendency which will recruit people of color into it. This must include:

1. Creating a membership drive at the earliest possible time to concentrate on PoC communities, and making all materials and support-available to people of color so that activists of color can organize their communities. We must bring in new layers of people who have not been exposed to Anarchism, instead of just continuing to concentrate on the white Anarchist community which is hostile to Love and Rage.
2. Founding a newsletter, newspaper insert, zine, or other document to be used to spread in PoC communities, and to reach PoC Anarchists.
3. Putting forth all the resources for a national conference for PoC Anarchists and those interested in the Anarchist movement.
4. Allowing PoC Anarchists to create an autonomous: fraction within Love and Rage RAF, with full rights, but also the ability to autonomously organize around issues important to our communities and even to withdraw en-masse from the federation if we so wish if our rights are not respected, and the whites continue to dominate proceedings in the organization.
5. ***Restructure the Love and Rage anti-racist working group as a separate organization under the management of people of color, so that it can be used to build a mass movement against white supremacy and police brutality.*** It will also be used to fight against white male domination in Love and Rage itself, as well as advise the organization generally on the matters of race and class to give it a more scientific analysis.

We do not feel that white people should be setting the agenda for anti-racist struggles in this country; people of color have ‘a whole different conception of how this struggle should go. White people have eliminated us from the struggle altogether, and reduced the issues of white

supremacy down to just fighting Nazis and Klan. This is simplistic, defensive, and defeatist. We must fight for a new politic around so-call anti-racist struggles, and reject the white left political style that Love and Rage and other white radicals have put forward.

## **B. Considering the New York-centric bias In Love and Rage as an impediment to a racially diverse membership.**

Like most chauvinistic thinking, the myth that New York is the best place to have an organization headquarters is another white radical bias which works to insure that all the daily decision-making for this' organization will always be done by white people.

To its credit, some in the group recognize this, and have tried to break this down by sending its federation offices to California, which is good, but still does not prove a serious commitment to diffusion of power. We believe that If Love and Rage is truly serious, it will work for regional centers of federation organization. For instance, why not have regional \_ organizing centers in the South (Atlanta and Houston), West (Denver and Oakland), North (New York), Midwest (Minneapolis) and so on, instead of just one office? This tends to break up the cliquishness that everybody says is a problem in this organization, but does nothing much about. This is what destroyed SNCC, the Black anti-authoritarian organization that I belonged to, after it changed its orientation to one with a "strong leader," a central committee, and all decision-making power in the Atlanta office, instead of with the field organizers or members-at-large. So this proposal of building a variety of regional organizing centers is one that must be considered as one of expanding and keeping the organization alive.

**But the most important consideration of all** is that this will allow for regional organizing. out of those areas, instead of bureaucratic paper-pushing or half-assed community work by young, inexperienced white radicals who think Anarchism is the absence of responsibility. We have got to get real here, and build real work units; for instance, ! call for the immediate building of a Southwide Revolutionary Organizing Project (SWOP) based in **Atlanta, Georgia**. It has already been proven with the September 11, 1993, demo and work by myself and other Anarchists in Chattanooga that the South is an especially fertile area for revolutionary work. It is also clear that in the South exists the best chance to recruit Anarchists of color on a large scale, who will come in through mass fronts. (I am not talking Leninism here, or some sort of . "Popular Front" garbage where we. would unite with Liberals on a broad amorphous. program, but rather "fronts" as mass groups which deal with one aspect of our work, such as anti-racism, and unites persons who would not join Love and Rage outright or might disagree on other issues). We got to get organized in the South and other areas, not just in New York.

Love and Rage will have to seriously restructure to rid itself of this New York-centric bias. I propose the Southern base-building as its first serious regional reorganization project to break down this domination by white males in New York. The SWOP can best be aided by calling for Love and Rage activists in different parts of the country to move to Atlanta, send resources to us down there, and help us open an office; we can do the rest. I think we will be more successful than New York in building a mass base on working class grounds, which is badly split on political, class and race lines. The South is a fresh territory, with its own history of struggle, but with very few openly Anarchist movements. Opposing Leftist formations are extremely weak and poorly organized. It cannot be stressed enough that it is not New York that has produced the most

dynamic social struggles of the last 30 years, it has been the South. Even the Black Panther Party of California, in many ways was a creation of the South since SNCC created the Black Panther symbol and autonomous Black political style in Alabama which Huey Newton seized upon, and later SNCC even merged with the BPP in 1967 which took it from being an isolated faction in the Bay Area to a nationwide revolutionary tendency. Its mistake and that of SNCC was not to organize the South with a revolutionary program. Don't you make the same mistake!

### **C. Decentralizing and Reorganizing Newspaper operations as a key to a diverse membership.**

It may not be apparent at first but the newspaper's reorganization may be the best and most effective vehicle to recruit people of color, restructure the group on a more democratic foundation and remove decision-making. out of the hands of a clique in New York, *if such exists*.

While I propose that the NYC Production Group continue to produce the paper, that in fact a number of Newspaper Editorial Committees be created so. that a steady stream of copy would be generated I from collectives all over the U.S., Canada, and other . places. These editorial committees would be formally structured, just like the PG is now, to produce copy. This lightens the load of writing and production in one location, and it lets others participate in the revolutionary. project. This also breaks down the domination of the newspaper project by a white male urban crew in the Northeast.

Contents-wise, the paper just reeks of whiteness, movement-insider jokes, and SAWB elitist orientation. Even though it should be quite clear by now, that the "mainstream" Anarchist movement just reviles Love and Rage and is not a significant political force anyway, the news-paper still caters to these assholes and to the white middle class "alternative" milieu which they wallow in. We must get away from this shit entirely; it is as ridiculous as the Democrats trying to "recapture" ° members of their ranks who defected to Reagan and the Republicans in the 1984 and 1988' elections. To me this is how Love and Rage is sure to remain white. We must use the newspaper to recruit new layers of the population to Anarchism, especially people of color and to give an Anarchist critique of the issues of the day. Enough nonsense about "Summer vacations to Mexico" (put it in the disco bull where it belongs); "Wind Chill Factor' (let them report their own shit); "Animal Liberation Front" (remember what I said about white rights?); Fierce Pussy interview" (white rights again), IWW (hey, ain't they got a newspaper?). Look, I could go on, but the point is that much of this precious newspaper space could and should be devoted to serious issues analyzing everyday concerns and the crimes of the capitalist state, not cultural bashes or other such bullshit.

I also was very disappointed in the coverage of the book *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* and the tour. it was totally slapdash, (that picture was awful!) and the book should have been given a review anyway. The tour was very important from many standpoints, not least of which is to let everyone know that I am close to Love and Rage's anti-racist politics, rather than the WSA's protection of white privilege, or the Anarchists' nonsense belief that I am not about federations. (How does this foolishness get started that I am anti-organization and don't like Love and Rage?) An article can still be written mentioning this, why do you think I rewrote the book?. The articles on Cuba, Palestine, Kenya, and C.L.R. James were excellent, and I think is more of what we need.

Everyone I showed the paper to was most impressed with this writing, and thought it should be the norm, and that they would buy it and sell it throughout the Black and PoC communities.

My final criticism is about elitism and cultural bias in the newspaper. You keep writing about things which people who pick up the paper cannot understand. How about explaining Anarchism to “ordinary people” with the newspaper, who might in fact sympathize with us and even join with us? I was even talking to comrade Mike about starting a regular page, a so-called Anarchist “glossary” or formative page, to explain what . Anarchism stands for and what the terms we use mean. I am sick of so much elitism and intellectual posturing in the paper, it’s clear that you are writing for college graduates. Who should we be writing for, and can we change the focus to make Love and Rage a mass newspaper? **What about a page for Anarchists of color each issue? How about a page on labor issues from real live workers?** How about some more debate around serious theoretical issues like Marxism, Race and Class, gender oppression, etc., and leave the subcultural reporting to Profane Existence, which does it so much better than you?

I am asking that Love and Rage give us a page in the paper, later allow us to put a insert in the paper, and/or financially support a zine for PoC Anarchists and anti-racist activists. I believe that it will be published each month, 10–24 pages, and will have a 2,000 copy press run, and will cost in the neighborhood of \$350–500 per issue to print on newsprint and have distributed nationally. The first few issues should be fully subsidized by Love and Rage, but this will change as the paper becomes more self-sufficient.

Finally, I believe Love and Rage should change its profligate ways on production issues, and not be wedded to this idea that the paper has to be done in a union print shop in the New York area, but instead use Black-owned and co-op printing houses down South, the cheapest in the nation, which will save you 20–50% in print costs. So what is the problem here, more Liberal moralizing instead of cost accounting? I will be happy to provide you with sources; instead of I just coming out every two or three months, this will , allow the paper to be published each month. I talked to Todd Prane and he liked the idea, hopefully the rest of the PG people will.

Well, these are tough criticisms, but they are also constructive criticisms, if I did not care at all about Love and Rage I would not make them. I will join when I am ready and think that there is a serious effort to bring people of color activists into the movement, not until then. I will never be some “token” Black inside a white dominated movement, so help me bring PoC Anarchists in and build a tendency. There is noting more to say. Thank you for considering our position.

In Solidarity,  
Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin

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