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The Sky is Falling; We've Got This

or: yes it's bad, no we need not despair

Margaret Killjoy

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I can't tell you things are fine. I can't tell you that hard times aren't coming. I can't tell you that hard times aren't already here. Things can always get worse. That seems like, more or less, a constant in this universe: things can always get worse.

The thing is, though, things can always get better too. We can make things get better.

Maybe the biggest problem with election years is that we seem to collectively forget that we have agency outside of voting. We forget that our actions have direct, measurable impact on the world. Our non-voting actions even impact the outcome of elections: as CrimethInc pointed out, the George Floyd Uprising of 2020 had a direct and measurable impact keeping Trump from winning the election that year.

Of course, the George Floyd Uprising wasn't trying to get Biden elected, it was trying to stop racist police violence. Moderate reforms are won by making radical demands. If you demand moderate reforms, you generally get, well, nothing.

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The Democrats gambled on the perpetuation of an old, dying (dead?) status quo and it cost them the election. The old status quo is gone. To quote that old saying by Antonio Gramsci, “the old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters.”

Let us midwife the new world that wants to be born.

How?

Hard times are in front of us. Fascism is on the rise in the US and its likely to replace the old neoliberal capitalist empire with something still worse. Climate change is not only inevitable, it is here. The climate will get more and more unstable and will, no matter what we do, for the rest of our lives and for the rest of our children’s lives.

We are in crisis.

Crisis is opportunity. I absolutely do not want to celebrate the fact that we are in crisis. It is not good. But it affords certain opportunities, ones that we need to engage with. What we do in the coming three months, what we do in the coming year, will have enormous impact on, well, the fate of the entire world, the people who live on that world, and the ecosystems that are woven across its surface. I know this sounds hyperbolic, but we live in hyperbolic times.

Perhaps most tangibly, what we do in the next few months and years will impact how we ourselves manage to navigate the hard times ahead. A therapist friend of mine reiterates to me all the time that acting with agency is the primary way to avoid being traumatized by negative experiences. Whether you win or lose, the act of fighting is enough to help our brains process what has happened.

Fighting to win, in other words, is the right move whether or not we are likely to win.

It just so happens, though, that I think winning is possible. I think we can make the world a better place. I think we can curb the worst excesses of the things that are happening now, at the very least. I also think we can radically transform the world.

How? Look, I am one girl and can't give you the answers. We have to collectively determine those answers. We have to collectively determine our strategy and tactics. But I do know that we need to create the means by which we do that collective determination. If I were to spit out some suggestions, based on my experience (about 20 years in anarchist organizing and a full-time job learning about and teaching about social movements of the past), here's what I've got:

- Things don't get done unless you organize to get them done. Now is not the moment to rely solely on cliques, friend groups, or subcultures. Now is a time to form or join organizations of like-minded people wherein you can collectively determine goals and the tactics by which to work towards those goals. Horizontally organized groups are more resilient and more likely to have a meaningful impact. Avoid cults, avoid authoritarian gifters (like, unfortunately, many or most of the large scale organizations currently operating on the Left, like PSL and other adherents to authoritarian ideologies).
- Any organization ought to remember they are not the directing force of the broader movement, and we should develop strategies that work in concert with other people's informal organizing and direct action. That is to say, there will never be a single strategy that the entire Left should use, and any strategy we develop ought to accept that and see our decentralization and organic nature as one of our strengths, not as a weakness to be overcome.
- We need organizations that are open to the public. Not every organization needs to be open to the public, but an awful lot of them should be. We are attempting to break apart a culture of isolation, and many people who need community (or would like to help) do not currently have ties to any existing

subculture or movement. Our movement needs fewer gatekeepers and more ushers—people who help newcomers find ways to plug in. Always be on the lookout for newcomers. Always try to help them find their place. Of course, this doesn't mean you should break the law with people you don't know.

- An awful lot of people are newly disillusioned with status quo politics. The right wing has an easy time bringing those people onboard, and we need to work harder to bring people onboard as well.
- Vibrant, confrontational presence in the streets is one of the only ways to accomplish, well, anything. Clandestine actions at night can sometimes accomplish specific tactical goals, and clandestine actors should be supported if they are caught, but movements grow because they are visible and approachable while remaining confrontational. No one sticks around a movement built around big boring marches where all you do is hold signs and chant, because those marches are disempowering and do not challenge the status quo.
- Deescalate all conflict that isn't with the enemy.
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- You can call a for a protest. You, wherever you are, whoever you are, you can call for a protest. If you live somewhere that already has a culture of protest, you might not need to, and we shouldn't replicate work too much. But the way that anything gets done in this world is that people just, well, do things. You might fail. People who don't occasionally fail at things are clearly not trying ambitious enough projects.

- Some people are going to be more affected by this week's news than other people. Immigrants (documented or not), religious and ethnic minorities, and trans people are particularly likely to be struggling right now. Helping other people is one of the best ways to soothe your own pain. Help each other. Tell people you support them, and more importantly, show people you support them. A lot of families with trans kids have been trying to move out of red states for awhile now, while other families with trans kids want to stay put and fight. Support people either way.
- Remember that everyone has skin in this game, even if some people have more than others. We all rely on a livable biosphere. Anyone with any ounce of conscience is threatened by a fascist government. It's okay to be fighting for your own future as well, whatever your identity, and it's important to not let identity divide us (despite the fact that we need to recognize that those of different identities will be impacted differently). We should not flatten our differences, we should celebrate them. And not let them divide us. Because, as always, we need to
- Deescalate all conflict that isn't with the enemy.
- We need to offer an offramp for people on the right wing. We need to offer people the chance to deradicalize away from fascism. This isn't to say we need to be nice to our enemies, just that we need to make it clear that they have the option of no longer being our enemies.

That's what I've got for now. We need to organize. We need to stop letting the state play "divide and conquer" against us. We need to welcome newcomers. We need to grieve and we need to fight. And we need to fight to win.