

America's Secret War On Black Anarchism in Somalia

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“All power is truly in the hands of the people, and in the end the people will win.”

– Kuwasi Balagoon

With November rapidly approaching and a Biden victory appearing more and more plausible, Donald Trump, our petulant man-child in chief, looks to have chosen the Culture War as his Alamo, forgoing his previously hip harangues against those plague spewing Chinese communists for more homegrown boogeymen. It's now Chicago, not Beijing, that offers the true threat to American exceptionalism, and two time honored tropes of American conservative bigotry in particular have been dusted off to frighten elderly white suburbanites to their diseased polling places, the Blacks and the Anarchists. To hear Trump and company tell the tale, our Democratically run cities are being burned to the ground by a motley crew of nappy-headed Willie Hortons and their lawless Antifa-fied honky allies, and for once, the GOP has set their sites on a legit threat to their morally bankrupt way of life.

Anarchism has always been the deadliest foe to authoritarian structures for the simple fact that it's the hardest school of radicalism to commandeer. When done right, there are no leaders to be bought off, no central authority to sabotage, just an autonomous grab bag of pissed off kids shouting “Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!” Similarly, Black people have always been a minority treated as an existential threat to the majority because of their seemingly unstoppable resilience in the face of unimaginable odds and their generations of startlingly successful resistance to cultural assimilation. The White menace of Anglo-American Capitalism has claimed every pale negro from the Jews to the Irish, but the Blacks have remained its most stubborn foe. Everyone from Hoover to Lenin has observed that if America has a revolutionary class it is the one we brought in chains to build this infernal experiment rotting on the hill. The biggest mistake that Trump and both his slovenly followers and reactionary detractors alike make is assuming that these Turner Classic boogeys, the Anarchists and the Blacks, are mutually exclusive. You can just hear crusty Old Man Biden retorting at a debate, “Anarchists ain't Black!” Oh yes they are, you pandering zombie, yes they most certainly are.

While the majority of the much hyped Antifa allies to Black Lives Matter are most certainly of the pale-faced variety, a growing contingent of young Black urban warriors are embracing

a decidedly stateless mindset. One of the most effective and fearsome of this class combatting police aggression in the Seattle area are the Salish Sea Black Autonomists who have expanded the fight against the police state to its womb in the state itself, and this is no anomaly. Black folks have played pivotal roles in the larger American Anarchist Movement going back to Lucy Parsons, and the modern Black Anarchist Movement has its roots in the same gorey gears of the Prison Industrial Complex that the George Floyd Uprisings have rightfully placed front and center as the root of post-Jim Crow Black oppression.

Imprisoned veterans of the 60's/70's Black Liberation Movement like Ashanti Alston and Kuwasi Balagoon found themselves disgruntled with the limitations of Black Panther Maoism behind bars and embraced a radical blend of Black Nationalism and Afrocentric Anarchism that looked towards traditional African tribal societies for inspiration above the White liberal chauvinists of the much celebrated European Enlightenment. This synthesis of post-modern identity politics and stateless resistance served as a major influence for my own idiosyncratic post-White interpretation of Queer Anarchism. But Black statelessness stretches well beyond our borders and Seattle isn't the first place America has declared war on it. Back in the Dark Continent of Africa itself, the American War Machine has waged a decades long campaign against Black Anarchism on the Horn of Africa, and all anarchists do themselves and their comrades a great disservice to ignore this battle just because it rarely captures the attention of the mainstream media.

Somalia's turbulent modern history is sadly less than unique for a former African colony. Once a prosperous guild of sultanates maintaining one of the regions most important shipping routes, by the Twentieth Century Somalia had been chewed up and spit out by the Portuguese, the Ottomans, the British, and the Italians. After the empire shifting cataclysm of the Second World War, the British arbitrarily partitioned the Muslim Somali people between what is now recognized as Somalia and the Western allied Christian Monarchy of Ethiopia. The US consistently sided with the deeply Islamophobic Ethiopians in their numerous attempts to subjugate the quasi-socialist Somali Republic until Ethiopia itself fell to a Marxist-Leninist military junta known as the Derg in 1974.

It didn't take us long to not only shower Somalia's creepy Hitler-stashed strongman Siad Barre in American Dollars and weapons but to also back a suicidal attempt by him to retake Ethiopia's long oppressed Somali Ogaden Region, which ended with the decimation of most of Somalia's military, leaving them conveniently crippled and dependent. This was actually one of the milder acts of savagery by Barre who would also use his American guns in the long forgotten Isaaq Genocide of the late 80's, which claimed the lives of unknown hundreds of thousands of members of the Isaaq Clan, largely to solidify Barre's post-Ogaden dominance amongst the nation's increasingly disgruntled clans. Just another manic Monday for American funded Cold war savagery.

But as the Cold War came to a close and, perhaps more importantly, Ethiopia's communist regime subsequently came apart at the seams, the US lost its enthusiasm for Mr. Barre and left him to be run out of Mogadishu by the remaining clans he didn't exterminate. After a badly botched Clintonian "Humanitarian" intervention that ended in several massacres of Somali civilians and the frankly well deserved revenge ambush of Black Hawk Down mythology, America finally did Somalia a solid and fucked off for a minute. And here's where things get truly interesting. After a couple more years of violent infighting, Somalia found more stability than any

communist or capitalist regime had ever provided them by leaning back on the pre-colonial and totally stateless Xeer legal system, overseen by what became known as the Islamic Courts Union.

Snide western journalists point to this era between 1994 and the American backed Ethiopian intervention of 2007 as being one governed by lawlessness and savagery, but ask any Somali refugee who actually lived through those years and they'll likely tell you that this was the closest thing to peace and prosperity that they had ever known. It was far from perfect. Fighting among rival clans continued as it always had, but over all, the Islamic Courts Era was one of unprecedented stability and it did indeed occur in a state of pure anarchy. A coalition of civilian tribal elders oversaw a fluid legal system that allowed the countries numerous clans to settle disputes between each other and otherwise essentially govern themselves. There was zero monopoly on police and judicial functions and the rule of law was upheld by agreements based largely on uniquely Somali takes on property rights and Sharia law. There were no prisons and no central governments but rather multiple tribal governments overlapping and coexisting in Somalia's notoriously pastoral and nomadic clans. Most of these clans were entirely voluntary in nature, and movement between clans was common, with many having more adopted members than those born into them. The legal system was largely compensatory in nature rather than vengeful and punitive. Crimes required victims and victims received compensation for their losses. Judges were largely autonomous and those who didn't command the respect of their communities simply weren't sought to oversee disputes.

It's entirely too common for white western anarchists to look at such indigenous systems and anything outside the official dogma of traditional Eurocentric theory as some kind of blasphemy. The idea of Sharia Law coexisting with statelessness boggles the Chomskyite mind, but this is the solution to the biggest flaw in most anarchist thought. A stateless society on a global level will inevitably be local and thus largely cultural in nature. True anarchism can only succeed if it is about the ability to change shape from clan to clan. Internationalism is just a heap of bunk, an idea that is far more authoritarian in nature than any tribal custom. It's also quite racist. White left anarchists need to get off their high red horse and embrace the fantastic dangers of diversity. The Islamic Courts worked because it followed the only true anarchist value deserving of the concrete universalism of dogma, it was entirely voluntary in nature. This is why it succeeded and this is why it had to be crushed. The Islamic Courts failed because its western anarchist allies failed to defend them from the arsenals of our own empires, the ones we're supposed to appose. We chose phony internationalism over inconvenient solidarity and Black lives were crushed for our closed minded dogma.

It didn't take long for America and its quislings in Kenya and Ethiopia to realize that the only true threat posed by the Courts was the threat of a good example. If Somalia could thrive without a western government babysitter then why not the next clan or the one after that. The farce of arbitrarily drawn borders and jerry-rigged nationalism would disintegrate like sand. It had to be stopped. In 2005 a strange wave of assassinations and disappearances plagued the judges of the Courts. Rumors began to spread of US black ops lurking in the region. Local warlords, displaced and disempowered by the Courts, began to cry "Terrorism!" to western money changers, pointing to the presence of fundamentalists on the Courts. They conveniently left out the fact that the majority of the judges and the majority of the judges disappeared were in fact moderates. Regardless, the warlords and westerners alike seemed keen to frame their war on Black Anarchism as part of the amorphous and endless War on Terror. It paid off when a ragtag coalition of local extremists sympathetic but largely separate from the Courts emerged to lash out in revenge.

Al-Shabaab proved to be the perfect boogeyman and the perfect excuse for the US to greenlight a brutal neocolonial Ethiopian intervention in 2007 that crushed the Courts and empowered the terrorists they supposedly came to confront.

Since then Somalia has become a drone strike killing field littered with disposable black bodies. While anarchists rightly observe local victims of American white supremacy like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Freddie Gray as martyrs of the police state, why don't we afford the same respect to their brothers and sisters back in Africa? On April 6, just 49 days before the lynching of George Floyd, Abdl Osman Keerow, Goorar Maday, and a 70 year old woman named Xuailyo Muure Marow were slayn by three American missiles in a densely populated neighborhood of Jilib. Just over two months after Floyd, on July 29th, three children, 8 year old Abukar Ahmad, 12 year old Abdisamad Hussein, and 13 year old Abdullah Mohamad were slaughtered the same way in the same city by the same government that was firing live rounds into Blacks and anarchists and Black Anarchists at the same damn time in cities across America. My question, is where were their signs? Where was their graffiti? Where are the hashtags claiming their names and their black bodies as part of the same damn struggle?

I may not be Black but I am an anarchist, and those names and the courage of the Islamic Courts Union are part of my struggle to break free from the same imperial masters we share. I hope that someday those Black lives matter too, because they matter to me.

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