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Now is not the time for concessions, it's the time for utopian thinking

Collective Action

May 11, 2020

With both major parties jostling to position themselves as the most fiscally responsible, we must wholeheartedly reject the premise of neo-liberal austerity and dream of a new world.

As the ever-inspiring Arundhati Roy explained, the corona virus pandemic is a portal where a new world awaits us on the other side, one that is only limited by our imagination. As calls are mounting to “return to normality” we must question what was normal and reject the desire of simply reverting to the previous conditions.

Normality was the ongoing colonisation of First Nations land. It was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody. It was the ever-growing prisons with more people locked in cages. It was make-shift detention centres in suburban hotels, because the other detention centres that are modelled on prisons are overflowing. Normality was, and still is, politicians from both major parties scapegoating people of colour and migrant workers to gain political capital, with

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disregard to the consequences. Normality was the resurgence of overt white supremacist ideology into the mainstream.

Normality was growing inequality driven by a financialised housing market. It was more empty houses than people without houses. It was systematic precarity for workers through increased casualisation and the absolute reliance for some workers on the so-called gig economy. Normal was hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers living below the poverty line. It was millions of elderly Australians, people with a disability and their carers receiving poverty line payments, often forcing them to choose between food, rent or medication.

Normality was the widespread instances of family violence, largely perpetrated by men, which is only escalating under the current circumstances. It was the weekly occurrence of a woman being murdered by their current or former partner. It was ongoing attacks against LGBTQ people facing regular street and police harassment. Normality was the accelerating decimation of our planet and climate. The hottest, driest and most dangerous bushfire season we've experienced.

To avoid returning to normal, we need to unequivocally reject proposals from political parties that centre around austerity and neo-liberal solutions. We must imagine a world built on the foundational belief of mutual aid and solidarity. On this continent, it must begin with a deep understanding and unflinching commitment to decolonisation. Recent examples of the importance of Aboriginal community-controlled health services and autonomous decarceral solutions outline the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led initiatives. Through the process of decolonisation we must dismantle the structures of white supremacy that maintain the current settler society to create a world without racism and oppressive power structures.

We must imagine a world without prisons, detention centres or cages of any kind. A world that abolishes the cis-hetero patriarchy which continues to oppress and murder women, non-

binary and trans folk. We must imagine a world where housing isn't at the whim of financial speculators but provided to everyone. A world where everyone that wants to work can securely and safely work toward an ecologically sustainable future. A world that has its foundations rooted in climate justice, providing sustainable solutions to the current ecological disaster that centre the role of Indigenous led climate groups. A world that removes hierarchies and established power asymmetries to one that is organised horizontally on the basis of mutual aid and solidarity.

Our future is not pre-determined, we are not locked into conventional politics of austerity and corporatisation. However, we cannot simply dream our utopian future into existence, we must act. We must organise with our local communities, be they newly established mutual aid networks, existing community groups, faith-based organisations, activist groups or simply our friends, family, neighbours and co-workers. Organising is essential to achieving the goals that we want, but importantly, we must not limit our imaginations of what is possible.

Now is the time to be utopian, to discuss with those in your life what a world that sincerely inspires you to fight for might look like. While it is not safe to organise in person at this time, it is an opportunity to build connections with the local groups and organisations. A list of mutual aid networks can be found here, join your local group and start a conversation. If there's other groups or community organisations in your area that are already engaged in community organising, reach out to them and express your interest. If you can't find a group in your area consider joining your local Australian Unemployed Workers Union branch, your local IWW branch, join in on public discussion groups or reach out to us to see if we know of groups in your area. Being connected allows us to collectively dream of the world we deserve, the world we must create before we organise and fight like hell for it.