

Organize and Resist Anti-Gay Attacks and Violence!

To Live and Love, We must Fight!

First of May Anarchist Alliance

2013

Summer's here and that means celebrating; from annual Pride festivals and street parties to the recent Supreme Court's striking down of the Federal anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act. There is a growing sense that people everywhere can be who we are, love who we choose, on our own terms and in our own ways. But a string of attacks and murders in New York City against gay men and women has shocked us!

No one thinks that homophobia and anti-Queer prejudices are gone, but the recent attacks should make us step back and take a close look at what is going on around us. In one horrible incident on May 17 of this year, Mark Carson, a young gay man was followed, harassed and then shot to death by a homophobe. This happened while Mark and a friend were walking in the neighborhood of Greenwich Village, NYC. Since Mark's murder several other outrageous attacks have happened. One attack included a man being yelled at and taunted as being a "faggot" before being smashed in the face. In another, a gay couple was attacked in the SoHo district just hours after thousands marched to protest Mark Carson's murder and anti-gay hate. In one of the most recent, a woman in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Greenpoint was assaulted at knife point by a man claiming he was raping her for being a "gay".

Being gay can be dangerous in New York at any time. Some of these attacks involved antigay persons apparently set off just by seeing two gay men walking together. In other situations gay men have been attacked by a "drinking companion" or a gay man who left home without ID at midnight and was in a car with three men—suggesting pickup and cruising situations.

It's all these attacks that remind us of how often situations can trigger sexist violence.

It's a jolt when we hear about anti-gay violence in big cities like NYC, San Francisco or Chicago. There has been a great sea change in popular consciousness, where more and more people either have open minds and embrace Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) folks or in other ways don't care what someone's life, identity or sex preferences are. We welcome this! As anti-authoritarian and anarchist revolutionaries who are fighting to break down hetero-patriarchal social norms, some of us LGBTQ ourselves, we have and will continue to fight for everyone to be who they want to be and love how they want, whether it's LGBTQ, straight, or off the grid gender

bending without identification. On this we will continue to unite with others in the struggle for both individual and social freedom.

But while we welcome these open and pro-LGBTQ moves on the parts of millions, the realities are that anti-gay hatred and violence is as rampant as ever. Major shifts in society are happening and there is a polarization between what is seen as “liberalization” on one hand and a conservative patriarchal and heterosexist reaction on the other. This System we live under is an authoritarian, hierarchical, racist and heteropatriarchal capitalist order. It has established itself through slavery, colonization, war, exploitation and an anti-human violence perpetrated against the masses of people – the working classes and poor. It both incorporates age old social values when it’s necessary and adopts and absorbs new ideas when it’s in the System’s interests, thereby co-opting the more radical dimensions. This dual tendency of a system attempting to transform itself to stay alive creates conflict and confusion. In regards to anti-gay attacks, large sections of the population who feel they benefit – socially, economically, or psychologically – from the system see being gay as a danger to their status and the old system itself. These people want to attack the enemies of their way of life. What’s even more confusing is that large sections of the population see pro-gay popular culture as being part of the current ruling class and the Democratic Party. The conservative reaction sees the Government as endorsing gay culture. Loads of people feel that the current ruling classes are part of the destruction of traditional societal values.

And as the system faces a growing social-economic crisis, and more and more people feel abandoned and losing out on what they think of as being a more stable (and often mythologized) past, anti-government sentiment gets wrapped up with hatred of anything and everything seemingly associated with it. This is the popular danger.

As the crisis deepens and we see more anti-government opposition, a major section of it will take on a reactionary, racist and anti-gay character. It’s not anti-government ideas we’re opposed to, just the opposite. What we’re for is an anti-government, antisystem politics and program that is fighting for justice, dignity and freedom. What we are against are politics, ideas, and movements that are racist, antiLGTBQ, patriarchal or national chauvinist. On this you better bet we’re serious and we don’t cringe or cower at any would be oppressor’s fists and bashings!

So what is some of the thinking behind these anti-gay attacks?

An incomplete view is,

1. It is an out and out defense of the System’s long held values and practices. As society changes it throws the old order into a type of chaos. Being against LGBTQ folks is seen as a defense of the old order.
2. It is a way to enforce hierarchy. Being gay is seen as non-masculine. Attack, rape, and murder are ways to terrorize people (gay, perceived gay, and even straight folks) into hetero-sexist social structures. There is a long history of “straight” men raping and sodomizing other men as a way to enforce a hierarchical discipline. This rape is based in macho traditions and happens in various hazing within sports, gangs, fraternities and military institutions. Male culture is part of a gender-sexual binary: men and women. Male culture is ego driven and prizes a dominant and domineering masculinity. Femininity is considered its opposite: submissive. Rape is used to enforce this binary and establishes a hierarchy.

3. It makes the individual homophobes feel somehow reassured, that they are fine and normal and not somehow less of a “man” (or “woman” for those female identified homophobes).

Carson’s murder is part of a larger more bloody history. From big cities to small towns, from the streets to the classrooms, anti-gay thinking is still here. Through coercion, threat and force those of us who are gay or don’t conform to society’s expectations of love, sex and heterosexism, have been forced to hide and mask our true selves. We have had to pretend we are someone else because to be open and honest has risks. In the past these risks could be government sanctioned attacks like laws banning homosexuality and queerness. This has resulted in the locking up of gay people in jails or institutional facilities. Or as is often the case, anti-gay violence is independent of the official State. Whether alone, or in mobs, gay people have been the targets of violence. Many gay people have been assaulted outright or living with the threats, have succumbed to these pressures. Mental health issues and suicide are real risks for LGBTQ people. The overall issue is that for a long time in the United States, being gay was a crime. And when the laws changed, the conservative reaction didn’t. As the laws change here, we must expect a backlash.

Needing to be put in to the bigger picture as well is the international attacks and repression of LGBTQ folks. From mob attacks on Gay Pride marches and celebrations in Russia and Macedonia, to Uganda’s proposed “Kill the Gay’s” legislation which calls for life in prison, and in some cases death, for people with “the intention of committing an act of homosexuality,” there is a violent campaign against gay people and their allies.

In France this past month, the Far-Right conservative and quasi-fascist, National Front, has staged protests and riots against legislation that allows for same-sex marriage. A French fascist committed public suicide at the historic Notre Dame Cathedral saying that homosexuality and same-sex marriage would destroy French national identity. Several days later, French neo-Nazi’s attacked and murdered a 19 year old antifascist organizer, Clement Meric. Clement was a dedicated antifascist, student activist and had helped organize recent LGBTQ solidarity actions. He was also affiliated with the French section of the international anarcho-syndicalist (union), National Confederation of Workers/Confédération Nationale du Travail (CNT). Clement’s death brought thousands of striking workers, students, radicals and everyday people into the streets in his memory with the vow to fight the fascist and anti-gay movements.

In another high profile case, an attack was met by defense! CeCe McDonald, a Black Transgendered woman, was attacked outside of a Minneapolis grocery store. A group confronted CeCe and her friends for being Black and Trans. CeCe’s attackers shouted racist and homophobic slurs and then smashed a bottle across CeCe’s face. Attempting to defend themselves, someone in CeCe’s crew pulled out a pair of scissors (because of the risks and history of anti-gay violence many working class and poor LGBTQ folk carry any number of items to defend themselves). During the fight, one of CeCe’s attackers was stabbed and later died. Unfortunately, CeCe was arrested and charged with her attacker’s murder. CeCe was subjected to a biased, transphobic prosecution. CeCe accepted a plea deal in an attempt to escape spending decades in prison. Her case is ongoing. Despite her unjust imprisonment, CeCe is alive! That she and her crew defended themselves and fought back is a big example of what we need! SelfDefense is No Offense!

There is only one answer, Organize and Fight Back!

There has to be maximum resistance to anti-gay ideas, ideologies, attacks and violence. The solution isn’t in gay cops or a pro-gay government. The police and the System they serve are perpetrators of institutional violence and injustice. We have to be in the struggles for LGBTQ

freedom and equality. Whether as LGBTQ folks or as allies, we must be connecting with the millions of people who are fighting for personal and social dignity and justice. As attacks and murders are committed, we must work to either highlight and encourage or organize ourselves those initiatives and projects that mobilize and act– whether in outright street based self-defense or in mass organizations that confront government and social laws! We need to make it rough for anyone who thinks they can bash us!

We need movements that fight for independence, autonomy, self-organization and freedom! We need broad based social movements based on solidarity, defense, and resistance! LGBTQ folks have to rely on ourselves and forge active and organized relationships with any and all who can be allies. In the schools, workplaces, the clubs, and on the streets, we need to bring together and create a diverse, militant and uncompromisingly pro-gay movement!

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