

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright



Femme Queen, Warrior Queen

Beyond Representation, Toward
Self-Determination

Nsambu Za Suekama

3 April 2021

Nsambu Za Suekama
Femme Queen, Warrior Queen
Beyond Representation, Toward Self-Determination
3 April 2021

Retrieved on 13 December 2022 from redvoice.news

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

This piece comes after the International Transgender Day of Visibility and is born from discussions I have engaged in about gender/sexual variance in Black and Indigenous cultures. It takes on the idea of “centering” Black trans women and transfemmes, and asks us to move from a politics of “representing” our identities toward a politics of self-determination and Third Worldism. It draws on insights from the Street Trans* Action Revolutionaries, Claudia Jones, the Combahee River Collective, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, and more. It emphasizes how liberal reductions of Black QTGNC identity will always, inevitably, lead to both transmisogynoir and bourgeois treachery in movements, thus hindering freedom for all.

Bear in mind that this text is like a rant or read, so some of the sentences are run-on, full of words. The content is an expression of frustration with how overlooked the material and structural positions of Black trans women and transfemmes is. There are resources at the end to help one get a context for

all the topics raised here. Please engage this document with honesty, good faith, and without co-option. It is an ongoing project, not a static piece. The aim is to push Black liberation as a whole to a more developed phase. If you do not intend to engage in a culture of revolutionary learning and movement building while engaging this piece, move along.

"Look for me in the whirlwind

With the bow in the cloud

My light will appear

In ribbons all around.

I'm the angel of grace

Not greed nor guile.

I'm the promise of life

As the fire rains down."

Elegy for the Dolls Who Could Fly, prof.Ound

In Black Trans struggle in the United States, there are intramural issues that have exploded around the idea of who should be at the "center." In today's climate, the discourse has become divisive, although it did not begin that way. Rather than suggesting that the notion of 'centering' be discarded, I want to revisit it, and ask us to basically 'go back to the drawing board,' ideologically speaking. There is too much exclusion and expression of pain happening among those of us of trans, nonbinary, gender variant experience; and yet, the concept in question did not come into our history for no reason. I am here to make a critique, as well as an offering.

William Dorsey Swann
 OluTimehin Adegbeye - Men can be wives
 A Third Sex Around the World - global gender variance
 Beyond Binary Definitions of Gender
 Hortense Spillers - Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe
 Oyeronke Oyewumi - The Invention of Women
 Claudia Jones - An End to the Neglect of the Problems of
 the Negro Woman
 Jim Crow and Jane Crow concept
 AID Feedback Loop - Anarchy, Intersectionality, Decolo-
 nization
 Autonomy as a Revolutionary Tendency
 Clout Culture
 Transphobia is a Respectability Politic
 Look At the Material
 Mapping our Legacy
 Kwame Ture and Molefi Asante - Revolutionary national-
 ism (Pan Africanism) versus cultural nationalism (Afrocentric-
 ity)
 Sylvia Wynter - race, gender, consciousness, colonialism
 Pan African Revolt for a New Century - Haiti, Nigeria, the
 US

Let us start by first differentiating reactionary versus revolutionary criticism. A revolutionary criticism moves us to higher unity, both practically and ideologically. It seeks to help us advance movements that radically transform the material conditions and internalized antagonistic ideas, relations, and behaviors we have. A reactionary criticism, however, only adds to the divisiveness and theoretical unclarity. It seeks to have movements simply preserve, cosmetically alter, maintain some or all aspects of the current material structures, and the related antagonistic behaviors, relations, and thinking we internalize. A revolutionary criticism is also expressed tactfully whereas a reactionary criticism is not. There is a time and a place and if one is aware that a certain population is currently under attack, then critiques of their movements should not be publicly aired right at that moment unless it is done in a careful way.

These are principles I learned from my Anarqa-Pantherist background, based on how the Panthers spoke of proper criticism of national liberation movements and socialist movements that are often being attacked by the United States. Anarqa-pantherism is a trans- and disability centered expression of the "Autonomist" and feminist legacies that were present in the history of the BPP, despite its cishetero-masculine and top-down structure. We combine socialist and nationalist insights with transfeminist, disability justice, abolitionist insights. That's the perspective I come to this discussion with.

There are alot of reactionary criticisms of how the "centering" of Black trans women and transfemme struggles looks. These criticisms punch down at the gurls, and do not help us understand our conditions better or resist them more effectively. Some people look at these criticisms as "Oppression Olympics," which means that people are essentially clambering to see who is most oppressed. In my opinion, the reactionary nature of these criticisms of 'centering' is not really about people com-

peting to see who is more oppressed. At its core, the issue is people clambering for supposed discursive or material power in movements, by throwing daggers at other people of trans and gender variant experience. What we see is competing visions of the "proper" way to represent or include or name our experiences in movement spaces, because ultimately folk are vying for resources.

This issue is inherently liberal. And it is transmisogynoir because it means people are not understanding something all Black people should know full well: visibility isn't privilege, neither discursively nor materially.

Transmisogynoir is a term coined by writer Trudy. It builds on the notion of "misogynoir" coined by Moya Bailey which describes antiblack misogyny (sexism faced by Black women both from outside and within the Black community). With misogynoir, Black women undergo "complete dehumanization as a "contradiction" to White womanhood." This is done oftentimes through a hypersexualization that comes from the history of enslavement. Misogynoir means that since antiblackness and slavery shapes modern definitions of what it means to be human, then to be properly woman (i.e., she who isn't animalized or criminalized, but civilized) is to be white.

Transmisogynoir as a concept moves the discussion of antiblack misogyny to an analysis of media portrayals and the structural position forced onto women of trans experience. The Transgender Law Center outlines that transmisogynoir is about cultural attitudes and interpersonal violence as well as institutional oppression (including at the hands of the State). In transmisogynoir, the convergence of antiblackness and misogyny is complicated by the "set of beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes that cis people's gender identities and expressions are superior to those of trans people," known collectively as *cissexism*.

Cissexism comes from social formations and structures such as the nuclear family, medical industrial complex, and the

Let's fly away, fly away.

Follow me into the storm

Let's fly away, fly away."

prof.Ound

Suggested Resources

Defining transmisogynoir - Transgender Law Center

Defining misogynoir - writer Trudy

Mary Jones

Huey Newton on Feminism and homophobia

Frances Thompson

Reversion back to savagery trope

Merricattherine - On Social Capitalism

Lilith Asieo - on the Infomammy

Feroz Anir - on political idolization

The Combahee River Collective Statement

STAR Manifesto

STAR zine (please bear in mind that the publishers of this zine have been called out for transmisogynoir [see link])

STAR history

More information on STAR

Tourmaline - Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P Johnson

Che Gosset - on Black Trans Feminist Thought

Captive Genders - Trans anti-carceral struggle

Malcolm X - from civil rights to human rights

Malcolm X - on Black women

Dr Martin Luther King Jr - New phase of struggle

Frantz Fanon - Pitfalls of National Consciousness

Message from the Whirlwind

most stark conditions of quadruple jeopardy will require the most developed politic.

When we put priority on studying and deepening the revolutionary traditions being advanced by the most vulnerable working class Black trans women and transfemmes in particular, we elevate the revolutionary capacity and consciousness of Black QTGNC people as a whole. When we move in this way, we will also, finally allow the gurlz to be "levelly human" in community and struggle, freeing us from the snares of tokenism and voyeurism and disposability and queendom and infomammydom and pedestals and walking ten paces behind and proving our personal/political worth. We will finally begin to *address the material conditions* under colonialism, capitalism and the carceral State that continue to leave the gurls "defined by proximity to death." And Black trans women and transfemmes will then be able to take up full participation in revolutionary struggle like STAR demanded. Without this, none can truly shake up the patrix of interlocking oppressions under capitalist-imperialist modernity as Combahee emphasized. But through a true understanding of how to "center" Black trans women and transfemmes, we advance both Black women's liberation as well as the universal freedom of all African and oppressed people.

"Follow me into the storm

Let's fly away, fly away.

To a world beyond the shore

Let's fly away, fly away.

So the world caint do me wrong

church. Through cissexism, these institutions reinforce a very rigid, binary, and biologically reductionist understanding of gender. Their purpose is to control our relations and behavior through legal and extra-legal means (including violence) to ultimately divide our labors in a way that serves capitalism/colonialism and enslavement. It complicates the discussion of misogynoir because it allows cisgender (especially heterosexual) Black women to legitimate their gender at the expense of Trans and gender variant Black women, even as all of us face a common dehumanization, animalization, criminalization under antiblack logics. Therefore, if the racial figuration of humanity means that to be properly woman (or man) one must be white, well, to even approximate whiteness in the first place (which equates to not being seen as animalistic, criminal, and uncivilized), one must be cisgender or heterosexual and fit the mandates of the church, nuclear family, and biomedical institutions. Anyone who fails to do so is, according to the Anarkata Statement, "scapegoated as the quintessence of negro depravity," and this is the position that Afro-trans women and Afro-transfemmes confront.

Due to this, Black trans women are not just dehumanized in contradistinction to white womanhood, but also specifically demonized as "treacherous" (like Trudy implies) to manhood/patriarchy. We are painted as *predatory* or *threatening* to all Black people, including cis women. We are seen as a "stumbling block," so to speak, in the way of Black people's quest to be given humanity and civilized, non-criminalized status. This *demonization* and *scapegoating* is rationalized by religious beliefs and pseudo-scientific ideas about human gonads, chromosomes, and other phenotypic/genetic characteristics that are marked as "biological sex" according to the West. More than just considered inhuman, Black trans women and transfeminine people are painted as essentially *monstrous* (please see the story of Mary Jones), and the premier evidence of what is wrong with Black people in the history of evolution.

Along with the ascription of monstrosity, there is the *pathologization* of Black trans womanhood and transfemininity, which can be traced back to the colonial accounts of many forms of African gender/sexual variance. The Europeans who witnessed and documented these experiences often marked them as either profane or as symptoms of mental illness. Doing so allowed them to rationalize their invalidation of African self determination *across the board*. Pathologization of Afro-transness and Afro-queerness helped the Man create an excuse for their "civilizing" mission and cultural imperialism, and ultimately the robbery of land and bodies and labor.

Transmisogynoir is not just a specific kind of discursive project (a way of framing Black trans women and transfeminine people). Transmisogynoir is a specific set of *material struggles* under capitalism and colonialism, that position Black trans women and transfemmes at the crossroads of multiple forms of domination: national oppression, gender exploitation, ableist suppression, and class war. It's for this reason that transmisogynoir is used to delegitimize Black liberation as a whole.

One example of this is the story of Frances Thompson. After the US Civil War, Black people in the South established a radical set of changes to society known as "Reconstruction." In response to these political, economic, and cultural advancements in Black life, our people were met with increased waves of violence from white people. Media narratives abounded at the time which implied that because slavery was over, Black people were "reverting" to our savage/heathen ways. In Memphis in 1866, the police and fascists raided a Black town and committed unspeakable atrocities against Black people, especially women. One of those women, Frances Thompson, was Transgender/gender variant. Frances Thompson was also physically disabled. She helped testify in the legal system about the violence done to her and other Black women, and against her community as a whole. However, doubt was cast on her story, and this skepticism was used to call the entire

taken as the grounds for identity politics qua the promise of access and redress. All while the real politics of Black trans/queer *power* is overlooked. In neglecting Black trans *power*, Black queer *power*, our capacity in the United States to effectively liberate ourselves and build in solidarity with our Black QTGNC cousins worldwide will be greatly diminished. This is dangerous. The State, religion, civil society, and capitalism are all working at faster rates to have Black TGNC people and marginalized genders criminalized and in danger (see: Nigerian and Ghanaian QTGNC struggle for example). The same forces suppressing our siblings overseas are also increasing waves of transphobic legislation, particularly in the Southern United States, on our soil. These things are connected. We cannot effectively analyze or organize against these developments if our approach will, instead, rely on a Rainbow Afrocentricity, a Queer Hotepism, Black Essentialism, and a transmisogynoir that essentializes and idealizes Black relationships to precolonial gender/sexual identities; and we cannot keep competing with each other for claims of 'proper' inclusion or "naming" of our identities within this discursive economy.

What we really need is a Third Worldist (anti-colonial, anti-capitalist) mode, whether it is socialist like that of Combahee and STAR or even an autonomist politics like that of Kuwasi Balagoon and the Anarcha-pantherists. We will understand this once we go beyond the Civil Rights framing to the international framing of our battle with the carceral state. We will look at the hybridly de jure and de facto 'Jewel Crow' experience of transphobic criminalization and discrimination, understand that it is a fascist suppression of Pride to uphold imperialism, in a way the old school anti-segregationists began to realize about their human rights struggle at the time. But we will only know to move accordingly because we start truly centering the margins, because all revolutionaries are shaped by their conditions (according to Assata) and so the

But these same elements sow competition among us about claims to discursive "privilege" in our movement spaces. They create a political atmosphere of contestation that is ultimately about clambering for the limited resources of the "nonprofit-advocacy-clout chaser-academic-entertainer-think piece-podcast-speaking gig-content creator-youtuber-social media influencer" industrial complex. They, like the national bourgeoisie of Fanon, will stop at nothing until they can cement these posts for themselves. Their movement is not grounded in collective interest; it does not extend the national interest it claims on the surface toward its most fully liberating horizons. This is why they use the term 'Blackness,' to center a *solely cultural* understanding of our queer/trans/gender variant identities; and they neglect a *Black radicalism* that is class-conscious, intersectional, anti-hierarchical.

As a result, their approach does not serve everyone, especially the most marginal, and therefore it will divide us. Being simplistic and reactionary, it will not account for the manufactured scarcity and trauma created by colonialism and capitalism that affects all Black QTGNC people. Lacking an orientation toward the transformation of these conditions, the neoliberal "Blackness is Queer; Queerness is Black; Queerphobia is un-African" milieu will, however, exploit the material impact of said scarcity and trauma, which ultimately benefits the class pursuits of anyone pushing representationalist, integrationist, reformist, cultist, or otherwise reactionary approaches. Finally, because, like Malcolm X said, the most unprotected and disrespected are Black women, of course it means Black trans women and transfemmes are most underserved and left at risk by this toxic movement infrastructure, and will get blamed for the existence thereof. Even despite the claims of "centering" the most marginal.

In conclusion, so long as "centering" is being done through a neoliberal representational mode, hypervisibility will be mis-

project of Reconstruction and radical Black freedom into question. It is a strong possibility her transness was used as an example of the "reversion back to savagery" that white people had said required their violent suppression of our communities. What enables this narrative is the historical legacy of transmisogynoir: how cissexism, misogyny, and antiblackness intersect to dehumanize, animalize, criminalize, demonize, pathologize and scapegoat Black disabled trans women.

"She's giving me fierce

She's giving me proud

She's giving me wild thing

Man caint house!

She's giving me fierce

She's giving me proud

She's giving me wild thing

Man caint hold me!

giving me fierce

giving me proud

giving me wild thing

Man caint purrrr!"

SQuAD chant

It serves the capitalists to throw Black trans women and transfemmes under the bus. Transmisogynoir is a fascist and imperialist strategy. From that perspective, we must assume that the recent waves of visibility given to some of the gurlz is not liberation but a *bourgeois* project. It is not according Black trans women and transfemmes uneven power or "privilege" in any way, whether in the broader society nor in organizing spaces. The murders of Black trans women and transfemmes are becoming hyper-visible only because of a *certain profit oriented version* of 'centering' that *makes a resource* out of us and our histories for others' gain. The framing of trans issues around these murders is a tokenizing and voyeuristic project run by opportunistic forces: whether the media, various liberal trans and non-trans led nonprofit/advocacy organizations, and even some individualistically minded trans folk (gorls included), who use this discursive edifice for clout and for their coin. The "centering" here does not translate to addressing the *material conditions* that put working class Black trans women and transfemmes at risk. And in fact, the movement spaces taking up this project tend to be absent of Black trans women altogether; or they exploit the labor of the very few gorls who are present.

One of the main ways transmisogynoir exploits us in movements is that Black trans women and transfemmes are reduced to what a Black trans woman radical I know named Lilith Asieo calls the *infomammy*. The infomammy, according to Asieo, is a "beacon of subversive information." It is like the general Mammy trope from slavery, where the sexual logics of white supremacy are used to deny the so-called "Mammy's" agency, positioning her on behalf of someone else's interests. The Infomammy is a specifically trans relegation that blends with hostile attitudes about Black trans women and trans-

be the framing of LGBT movements as a "gay agenda" by neo-colonial forces who want to hoard power, resources, wealth for themselves by criminalizing and invalidating QTGNC progressive vanguards in their nations. Another example would be the transmisogynoiristic Gay Assimilation movement or even the transphobes in mostly white expressions of lesbian feminist movements, all of whom betrayed Marsha and Sylvia because they wanted crumbs from the State. We can include in this all the homophobic Black straight bourgeois feminists/womanists who continue to throw lesbian feminist socialist traditions under the bus, too.

What I'm arguing is that we as Black QTGNC people are also popularizing a gender/sexual (rather than just ethnic/religious) xenophobia and divisiveness *among ourselves too* that mirrors all these toxic, divisive precedents. Like the ethno-religious conflict that Fanon was critiquing, like the ADOS movement, like the "homosexuality is unAfrican" line, like the "love is love" gay assimilation line that centers monogamy, like the pseudo-feminism that upholds either cissexism or the nuclear family or both: our nascent gender/sexual xenophobic *infighting is resultant from the same crude, neoliberal empty shell of a radical politics*. In our case, it is framed in a false anti-colonialism and false anti-capitalism that is masquerading as "Abolition."

Thus, in the modern Black QTGNC context, we have people vying with white queers for political terrain and visibility. We have Black QTGNC people cornering positions of visibility and power and control in certain industries. We have Black QTGNC people waging bitter struggle against anyone who assaults our dignity as a QTGNC "Umbrella," and they do it all in the name of Black liberation. They even oppose the myth that "homosexuality is un-African"; they denounce the "gay agenda" narrative too. And they are even critical of TERFs and homophobic "marry up"/"boss girl" feminists.

in the Black/QTGNC movement come with transmisogynist vitriol to protect their integrationist pursuits and erase our anti-imperial traditions.

The bastions of the discourse I am making a criticism of are removed from the masses (and the margins) and operate on an ideological inertia, and should not be seen as radical or revolutionary. Periodt. Returning to Fanon, "the unpreparedness of [these] educated classes, the **lack of practical links between them and the mass** of the people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give **rise to tragic mishaps.**" They say what they say and do as they do because their material interests is different from that of the masses and especially those of us on the margins.

Fanon goes into what their class-derived political mishaps can be. He says that these bourgeois nationalists use "[their] class aggressiveness to corner the **positions formerly kept for foreigners...** violently **attack[ing] colonial personalities:** barristers, traders, landed proprietors, doctors and higher civil servants... fight[ing] to the bitter end against these people 'who insult our dignity as a nation' ... wav[ing] aloft the notion of the nationalization and Africanization of the ruling classes." He then emphasizes that "such action will become **more and more tinged by racism**, until the bourgeoisie bluntly puts the problem to the government by saying 'We must have these posts'. They will not stop their snarling until **they have taken over every one.**"

Now, mind you, all the examples that Fanon looks at are ethnoreligious tensions between various distinct African faith/cultural communities. The closest analogue we have in the US today would be the anti-immigrant ideas pushed by movements like ADOS/FBA, which water down the conversation on reparations (which was originally a partial demand within a Pan-African framework) in order to divide Black communities over the question of winning material gains from the State. Another analogue we see throughout the African world today would

femmes' supposedly dangerous nature, to then say we are valuable as people only in terms of how much "information" or inspiration we can provide (how much people can be educated by us).

The infomammy trope is almost always shaped around appeals to the memory of Black trans women radicals like Marsha P Johnson. Marsha's life, class politics, her humanity, the experiences she was responding to, her journey as both a person and a revolutionary, her creativity, her spirituality, are often flattened when people talk about her. She is turned into *merely a touchstone for the political and intellectual inspiration of everyone else*. That is Infomammy. This trope is forced onto many other Black trans women and transfemmes, whether they are radical or not, and creates a standard to which we must be held, as well as an essentialist understanding of Black trans womanhood and transfemininity.

Then, due to Marsha P Johnson's relationship to other militant trans women of color like Sylvia Rivera, a similar form of political idolization as the "infomammy" trope is projected onto all colonized trans women (as Feroz Anir makes clear), violently and reductively. This further marginalizes Black trans women and transfemmes, because it is used by certain radical spaces to adopt a "TWOC" (trans women of color) framework as a form of political minstrelsy. Here, real or feigned *proximity* to Black trans womanhood and transfemininity is used to move resources to non-Black QTGNC people while still *claiming* to "center" and include or represent Black trans women and transfemmes even if that is not the case. This is *not a relationship of material solidarity* in the way Marsha and Sylvia operated.

This political minstrelsy operates alongside the general *cultural* minstrelsy in which people of all genders and races (including straight people) who aren't Black trans women and transfemmes are more increasingly adopting the gurls' aesthetics, lingo, practices, ideas, historical references, and more in their everyday lives, for social capital, and in their careers for

actual clout and coin – all while disrespecting us. The general society treats Black trans women and transfemmes as nothing more than a cultural resource; a lot of movement spaces are doing the same regarding our intellectual and political contributions and history. The more this trend heightens, the more danger is brought to us in the broader world as cis/het people continue to bemoan the moral state of the world and serve segregation-nostalgia teas in their desires for a world before Pride.

On the heels of this reaction, waves of police repression, interpersonal violence even at protests against our oppression, and transphobic legislation converge to endanger all QTGNC people, both in the US and abroad. Meanwhile, in movement spaces transmisogynoir in the form of an "Infomammy" experience means that whenever Black trans women are being included in so-called radical settings, the voices supposedly being "centered" are again only heard on *someone else's terms*. We are never allowed to step into our own revolutionary destinies to address what is affecting us. And our past is often weaponized against our interests. For example, the memory of Marsha P Johnson is decontextualized in a similar way to how liberal multiculturalism has watered down Martin Luther King, Jr (or how white leftists water down Fred Hampton): it is used to uphold chauvinism and further deny Black trans agency under the guise of "centering." We are not allowed to discover our mission as a generation on our own authority; all we can do is that which fits other folks' interests, or else we are invalid. And this is because people want to exploit our histories and political praxis for their own ends. There is no actual, unconditional respect just for who we are as people, periodt, without strings attached.

This is the subtext for even Huey P Newton's famous speech in which he critiqued homophobia, and sexism in the Black Panther Party. And such chauvinism therefore shows up in many (often straight led) revolutionary Black

better ways to represent the Umbrella of QTGNC experiences, but really it's about mystification (again, it's a smokescreen). If you avoid centering us, you avoid looking at how we are structurally positioned, and you can sideline *revolutionary transfeminist* politics emerging from, still paraphrasing Claudia Jones, "the responsibility of caring for the needs of the [Negro] family, of militantly shielding it from the blows of Jim Crow... of rearing children in an atmosphere of lynch terror, segregation, police brutality, and of fighting for an education for her children." These people know that, as anyone can attest, it is Black trans women and transfemmes who have done exactly what Jones describes, who have mothered the QTGNC community, who have provided the blueprint for every political, spiritual, and cultural infrastructure under the QTGNC Umbrella that we have.

They understand that, for example, in the US records, the first reports of Black gender variant people are all self-identifying women, queens, and mothers like Mary Jones or Frances Thompson or William Dorsey Swann, each fighting cops or resisting the State in other ways or testifying against racist violence enacted on the whole Black community. The bourgeois QTGNC nationalists also know that, again borrowing from Claudia Jones, the girls fight "against the Jim Crow ghetto existence which destroys the health, morale, and very life of millions of [our] sisters, brothers, and children," and our nonbinary siblings included. Our movements have shown this, and not because we just dropped from the moon in this way, but because of the *material conditions we respond to*, which in the words of Assata Shakur are what shape all revolutionaries. Viewed in this light, paraphrasing Claudia one more time, of course while the bourgeoisie intensifies its oppression not only of Black people in general, but of Black women in particular, they "display and cultivate" a "callous attitude" (Jones) toward Black trans women and transfemmes especially. Basically, middle class and boujie wanna be elements

In other words, anyone who essentializes Africanness (including Afro-queerness/Afro-transness) theoretically will push (trans)misogynoir practically because they have to find a way to mystify the bourgeois gender institutions which don't ever serve the gurlz. To reiterate: they must cast a cultural or naturalistic smokescreen that prevents us from critically examining and actively resisting bourgeois/hierarchical gender relations and infrastructures, so they can continue not being accountable to revolutionary struggle and liberation for all. Bad theory and bad practice are always linked.

"Assimilation is not our liberation

Integration is not our liberation!

Assimilation is not our liberation

Integration is not our liberation!

*F**k the State, nigga*

I said liberate, nigga!

*F**k the State, nigga*

I said liberate, nigga!"

SQuAD chant

So now, bourgeois movement leaders come and ask us as QTGNC people to stop looking at the crisis facing the gurls: the "quadruple jeopardy" of racial oppression, gender exploitation, ableist suppression, and class war. They claim that this is about

left movements. While it is possible that Newton made this speech after meeting Sylvia Rivera at some point and was speaking in good faith and with good intentions (for example, he acknowledged his own prejudices and he was emphatic that the mistakes of individual women and gay people should not be used against our movements as a whole), his views echo a precedent where QTGNC people are often positioned as *always already needing to prove* to cis men and to others that our movements are not a threat to their liberation, a sentiment that stems from transmisogynoir.

To reiterate: political fetishization, especially in the form of an Infomammy trope, means respect for Black trans women and transfemmes' lives, labors, and liberation is only ever framed around demonstrating how much our politics benefits someone else's political values, interests, sentiments, rather than it being valid *simply our own terms*. Due to this, whenever Black trans women and transfemmes try to assert *our* own political legacies and *our* political agency in many radical settings, we are ignored or even villainized and cast out, framed as aggressive, controlling, manipulative, even abusive, dangerous, power hungry... all because we push things that don't align with the interests of those claiming to "center" us.

To make matters worse, the more unagreeable you are, especially if you are dark skinned, fat, or disabled, and if you do not fit limited standards of femininity that are often used to police the boundaries of womanhood – then if your politics don't conform to or if they challenge the interests of the tokenizing/voyeuristic discursive economy disguised as 'centering,' on top of that – the likelihood of you being first Infomammied then ignored, demonized, blackballed, shaded, or disposed of is raised. In all, this creates a milieu where in order to be somewhat believed or somewhat included, Black trans women and transfemmes must be subject to respectability politics and the dehumanizing experience of 'pedestals, queenhood, and walking

ten paces behind' (to quote from the Combahee River Collective); constantly proving our worth in order to supposedly be represented in the space. And this is while retriggering ourselves constantly, because we have to navigating a discursive arena that amounts to nothing but trauma porn in its hyperfocus on our deaths; and while our innovations and insights and theorizing are coopted on the regular, and our every move is regarded as potentially threatening or malicious in some way.

None of this serves Black trans women and transfemmes. Who benefits are often so called 'allies,' especially cis gays (including cis queer women) who use proximity to the gorks for clout, and through the pretense of 'centering' us can hoard power and limited resources for themselves. Oftentimes they abuse other trans folk, both women and other maGes. Some of them will frame these practices as a feminist project and create language like "women and femmes" to push others out like trans men and trans masc folk and even so-called "AMAB" TGNC people. Some of them will throw around the language of 'male socialization' or 'toxic masculinity' to castigate any Black QTGNC person across the gender spectrum who doesn't fit their standards of behaving, and to police the political discourse present. Some of them will justify this (bio)essentialist pseudofeminism under the guise of "sisterhood" with trans women defined as a so-called 'femmeprimacy,' that forgets that masc women, including TGNC women exist; and forgets that manhood and masculinity are neither synonyms nor completely wedded to the dictates of cis life/practice/culture; and forgets that femininity and womanhood are also wrought with the contradictions of internalized patriarchal and misogynistic standards; and forgets that biological sex alone can not be used to explain the existence of trans/nonbinary people who still need to unlearn cisheteronormativity; and ultimately neglects to understand that class and hierarchy provide the material context for the toxic and oppressive things each QTGNC person must unlearn.

are never just wrong intellectually. They are also wrong politically and ethically too: because their theoretical errors correlate to ways they have historically thrown women's liberation under the bus.

Theory and practice is always intertwined. Black feminism holds our people, especially straight/cis people, accountable for their theoretical naturalization of cisheteronormative institutions (like the nuclear family, which they want to reclaim). Black feminism is therefore not just theory; it *practically* threatens the material interests in maintaining capitalistic relations and hierarchical quests for power among members of our community who *don't* want liberation for all. To paraphrase Claudia Jones, the capitalists know better than most progressives that once Black women undertake action, the militancy of "the whole Negro people" (borrowing her words), "and thus of the whole anti-imperialist coalition is greatly enhanced." Translation: anyone not opposed to imperialism, who isn't interested in anti-colonialism or anti-capitalism, will no doubt advance misogynoir and anti-feminism. They will use the focus on purely cultural and representational smokescreens to uphold it.

Keeping that in mind, once bourgeois nationalism (and its "womanist" junior partner) comes into the QTGNC context, folk erase anti-colonial/anti-capitalist queer and trans identity politics and self determination. They get focused on the purely cultural affirmation of gender/sexual identity. Not surprisingly, there will be a hostility to Black trans women and transfemmes and our revolutionary traditions and issues. This is because our movements threaten theoretically idealist understandings of queerness (which are the flip side of the same coin as naturalistic accounts of cisheteronormativity). Our movements also pose a *practical* challenge to certain liberal class pursuits and hierarchical investments maintained among those who have no actual interest in revolutionary struggle.

These women's ideas are sometimes twisted, however, to mean that *only* Western gender/sexual norms require discussions of *material struggle* and societal interests. This misappropriation of Wynter and Spillers is so that people can avoid discussions about the way Black folk across genders/sexualities have internalized bourgeois/Western relations, as well as to avoid conversations on precolonial forms of hierarchy and class vis-a-vis gender relations. The watering down of Spillers and Wynter allows folk to imply that we must not establish new institutions, infrastructures, modes of being through *self-determination*. Folk go further by creating a sort of "Black Essentialism," where the structural exclusion of African gender by the white world is misunderstood to mean that basically all African lifeways are either inherently genderless, or inherently queer, and that Black people are "always already" outside of any and all modern gender struggles. This allows people to then ascribe labels from the modern LGBT+ framework to our ancestors that they themselves may not have used, and it is purely as a stunt for a *sense of cultural affirmation/uplift* for the sake of a neoliberal representation politics. Even more insidiously, it can allow people to paint both ancient and modern day African life as a gender/sexual utopia, in a way that mirrors how "hotep" thinking and Afrocentricity treats the African past in general, vis-a-vis the modern construct of so-called Blackness. This allows them to push a "race first" political logic and avoid any other aspect of struggle.

Now, yes, this all might sound like it is purely an issue of historical accuracy and argumentative rigor. But it actually has great relevance for the more immediate concerns of this piece. I'm not just being a nerdy stickler for facts: because transmisogynoir will always come from an idealistic, monolithic, essentialist approach to Africans. "Hotep" bourgeois 'Afrocentric' nationalists (and their "womanist" counterparts) often focus on cultural reclamation or "self naming" for its own sake alone, and not on decolonization/anti-imperial struggle. They

Though they claim this neglectful project is about protecting Black trans women and transfemmes from violence, really it becomes about bourgeois self-interest: about punching down at trans people to hash out their issues with cis/het men and develop social clubs that benefit their interests.

All around, a toxic organizing culture ensues: now, trans folk who are not nonbinary will punch down at nonbinary folk by projecting their issues with greedy, bourgeois, transphobic cis people onto the whole nonbinary community. Then, nonbinary people who are not also trans women, in turn, instead of seeing the broader context of tokenization and voyeurism happening, will punch down at the gurls because they don't feel 'represented' in a discursive arena built around supposedly 'centering' those who are dying.

In the end, this is divisiveness that harms the whole community, but because, as Malcolm X said, "the most disrespected is the Black woman," the divisiveness ends up falling at the feet of Black trans women and transfemmes as if we are to blame, as if we are at fault, and as if the risks of violence facing the gurls is something to be clambered for.

"Get off the grind!

Get on the prow!

Be the wild Thing

Man cannot house!

Sis, get off the grind!

Get on the prow!

Be the wild Thing

Man cannot house!

Sis, get off the grind!

Get on the prow!

Be the wild Thing

Man cannot house!" - SQuAD chant

I want to espouse a revolutionary criticism of how "centering" is currently being practiced. In order to do this, we must revisit our understanding of identity politics. Let's start with the Combahee River Collective. The women of the CRC were Black lesbian/queer feminists. They had been involved in the Civil rights movement, the Black Power movement, and they were socialists. In all these movements they kept being pushed aside because, again, as Malcolm X once said, the "most unprotected is the Black woman." This erasure was true then and is true now.

It's the 60s/70s though, one of the most revolutionary periods in modern history, so the women of the CRC were not going to let themselves be pushed out of radical struggle. They came together and decided that they needed to take the various revolutionary understandings and frameworks being developed, and ground them in an analysis of the *particular material conditions and histories that Black/queer women face*. The women of the CRC identified that *because* these conditions kept being ignored, a *fuller understanding of the whole* totality of capitalist and imperialist oppression was severely limited. This was an analytical assumption that Black feminists from before their time, such as Claudia Jones and Frances Beal, have acknowledged. As a result, the CRC espoused the idea that "[i]f Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else

Therefore, more explicitly now than ever, we are reclaiming a *national* context for our QTGNC experiences, and naming how it diverges from the white/European often "biocentric" and "binary" frame of reference for gender and sexuality.

But while we remain stuck in a "civil rights phase," and neglect internationalist/anti-imperial approaches, bourgeois thought predominates, and the national concerns are limited. At the theoretical level, the accounts of our indigenous and precolonial African gender/sexual variance often rely on idealistic, monolithic reductions of the Continent. This causes folk to ignore the *existence of class contradictions in even the "queer" past and present African traditions*.

For example, in many precolonial African societies, gender/sexually variant people show up as cultural workers, specifically as priests and shamans and spiritual leaders. This is obviously a labor division, but bourgeois nationalist thought in the QTGNC movement causes people to essentialize these legacies rather than question the material realities connected to why so many precolonial gender/sexually variant people had to occupy those roles. This is often reinforced by a reductive understanding of the thought of Sylvia Wynter and Hortense Spillers, who teach us that modern gender/sexuality correlate to Western cultural and material interests. Wynter and Spillers' work serves to explain why white people often exclude African people from comfortably occupying the social formations and material benefits associated with "proper" gender norms. Spillers in particular actually calls straight people toward *embracing* this exclusion, in the name of Black liberation, as opposed to trying to find inclusion within Western gender systems. Wynter implores us to understand that our experience of both racial dehumanization and its ties to gender exclusion means we should act on a *distinct* cultural and material interest than that of Man, suggesting that we reject the narrative that Black people get free when we reclaim Eurocentric notions of humanity and gender.

In our case as Black QTGNC people today, we have some degree of national consciousness: more of us are naming the fact that throughout Black radical and cultural history there has been a Queer presence and that throughout Queer history, Blackness has been at the fore. We are naming that the mother of Blues, Ma Rainey, was queer; we are naming that the earliest depictions of homosexuality in human history were on rock paintings in Africa; we are naming that Queen Nzingha, the *minon* or so-called Dahomey Amazons, Kimpa Vita of the Congo, Romaine-La-Prophetsse in the Haitian Revolution and other spiritual leaders and militants in African history often stood outside of modern Western gender norms; we are identifying various precolonial and present day indigenous African labels to describe so-called gender/sexually variant experience, from the "Sekhet" in Kemet, the "jimbantaa" of the Kongo, the "Mangaiko" among the Mbo people, the "Mashoga" in Kenya, the "chibados" of Angola, the "Ashtime" in Ethiopia, the "lagredis" in Dahomey, the "uzeze" and "kitesha" of West-Central Africa, the "ikihundu" and "ikimaze" of Burundi, the "yan daudu" of Nigeria, the "ngor-jigeen" of Senegal, the "esenge" among the Ambo people, the "mwaami" among the Ila people, the "inzili" of Tanzania, the "mugawe" of the Meru people, the "wandarwarad" and "wandawande" among the Amhara, and others; and we are naming that modern Black figures, like Claude McKay, a Marxist and member of the African Blood Brotherhood, and Bayard Rustin, an organizer in the Civil Rights movement, and Billie Holiday, the famous singer, and Langston Hughes and many other participants in the Harlem Renaissance, were also queer; and we are naming that homophobia and transphobia only became globalized because of a legacy of European religious demonization, colonial-era buggery laws, and other anti-queer legal dictates and forms of criminalization, as well as the modern collaboration between religious movements and neocolonial government leaders visavis anti-LGBT legislation.

would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression."

This was never, and has never been an attempt to develop a discursive hierarchy built on essentializing Black women, but rather to upend the hierarchies that already exist through advancing class struggle from the margins. Their analysis helps us fight the convergence of "interlocking" oppressions through "centering" the struggles that are forced to experience and theorize around those intersections yet get overlooked. Centering was never about inverting the exclusionary discourse of the cis male and white led movements at the time. It was about "stretching" class analysis, like Fanon did, through attention to often "invisibilized" aspects of the material conditions, labor exploitation, control over bodily autonomy, and other features of capitalist/colonial domination.

In conclusion, Identity politics was about taking a revolutionary anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics and grounding it in the struggles of the most marginal, period. The emphasis was on anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics, because the women of the CRC were Third Worldists. We need to apply this to how we talk about queer/trans history of struggle too.

Let's look at the same time period, 60s/70s. Now everyone talks about Stonewall. The uprising against the police. I want to highlight that at Stonewall, a similar thing was going on as to what led to Combahee. You had trans and gender variant folk who were also in the Civil rights movement, and the anti-war movement, and other movements. Sylvia Rivera talks about this. She was in the Young Lords Party. Marsha P Johnson had a "Gay Power" sign because they were both involved in the Black Power movement, but from a trans centered standpoint. She co-founded the Gay Liberation Front that supported the Black Panther Party materially (this actually caused a split in the org between more liberal, white queers, and the more radical, non-white, often gender variant activists).

Marsha and Sylvia eventually co-led a whole autonomous revolutionary formation known as the Street Trans Action Revolutionaries (in response to liberalism and white/cis exclusion in even the GLF). STAR put out a manifesto. What we see in this Manifesto is a Third World outlook: an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics. When they talk about trans liberation, they use the term "self determination." Self determination means when a community has the right and the material structures or material power to control their collective destiny. It is an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist concept central to Afrikan liberation movements. The STAR gurls were defining it in a trans and gender variant context. They start out the Manifesto by naming STAR as part of the "revolutionary armies" of that day, referring to the various anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles of that time period. They end the Manifesto by demanding a people's government, which was, again, a Third Worldist concept; and they literally say that trans people should have "full participation" in revolutionary struggle. The STAR gurls were therefore practicing something very similar to what the women of the CRC were doing: they were grounding revolutionary politics in the experience of the most marginal. STAR, in their outlook and praxis, focused on the various *material conditions* the QTGNC working class community faced, from medical apartheid to the carceral state and its violences, to workplace discrimination, and more. From a completely different angle then, without necessarily using the term "identity politics," STAR developed a revolutionary framework from the same kind of approaches as the Combahee River Collective.

This was true across the 60s/70s when it came to organizations led by women and other marginalized genders. From their contributions we "stretched" revolutionary traditions, so that we would address both the contradictions of labor and land exploitation that anti-capitalist and anti-colonial movements battle with, as well as the contradictions of love, the lived bodily experience, and even the hierarchical praxis in our liberation

We are starting to sound like who Fanon called the "national bourgeoisie" in "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" (*Wretched of the Earth*). This is true even though our Abolitionist spaces call themselves radical, and name drop anti-capitalist and anti-colonial theorists. When Fanon spoke, he was observing that bourgeois elements were present in national concerns, so that the focus was on, as he said: "ending certain definite abuses: forced labour, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, etc."

Again, this is the phase we as QTGNC people are in as we wrestle with various forms of violence and discrimination. It is a phase that Fanon says characterizes all colonized people's struggles, by the way. Don't let anyone tell you that only QTGNC people are doing this; the whole Black community is, and has been for decades. Anyone who makes it seem like only QTGNC Black folk are currently stuck in bourgeois consciousness is a chauvinist or a pick-me, framing QTGNC/feminist movement as treacherous to Black liberation (and assuming that cisheteronormativity in movements is not bourgeois). If even Huey Newton warned against conflating bourgeois contradictions with the whole QTGNC/feminist movement (despite his own self acknowledged biases), then surely anyone else can remember not to do so.

That being said, from Fanon's words, we learn that the initial approach of *all* colonized people's national concerns is something that "leave[s] the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge." This neoliberal outlook takes the place of an anti-colonial/anti-capitalist outlook. In this context, as Fanon says, "national consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been."

supposed material or discursive "privileges" that people mistakenly think trickle down to the most vulnerable of Black QT-GNC people when "proper" representation and self-naming is achieved.

If we do not change our orientation toward gender/sexual liberation, and abandon this neoliberal and representation politics; if we do not revive a STAR-inspired self determination approach, Combahee inspired identity politics, we will see a new precedent under the QTGNC Umbrella: increasingly violent forms of divisiveness and transmisogyny in particular. We already see this a bit. So many people want to claim that they have "maGes" (short for "marginalized genders") in their organization but they never include trans men or trans masc folk in that category. Already we see so many people project cisness onto certain nonbinary people to gatekeep movement spaces. And already we see people continue to tokenize trans women and transfemmes for clout and coin, only to then discard and dehumanize the gurls, keeping our experiences caught in a voyeuristic economy of hypervisibility that denies our agency. In all these cases the most marginal of TGNC folk are not being liberated, and Black trans women and transfemmes are catching hell for it. This is transmisogynoir and has to end.

When the Civil rights movement got to a certain point, Dr King realized that the campaign against the old Jim Crow (segregation) was integration into a burning house. We have to realize that the neoliberal approach to addressing the new Jim Crow (carcerality) is doing the same. Unsurprisingly, we are beginning to adopt the master's tools, even while claiming to dismantle the master's house, which Audre Lorde specifically warns against because it creates new forms of xenophobia. We are fighting among ourselves with static, reductionist understandings of identity when really we need to be addressing *neocolonialism*.

movements themselves. This allows us to understand what exactly are the five general spheres of contestation, that make up the iron fist by which the Man maintains a hold of the earth and of our people. And so now we affirm that what we must transform from the root are these affairs of land, labor, love, lived bodily experience, and liberatory struggle. This is so the material structure of our societies can be chirally re-oriented in a revolutionary fashion: from the right to the Left, from domination, integration, and exploitation to autonomy, intersectionality, and self determination. That's how Anarkatas roll at least.

However, today, when trans, gender variant, queer identities are discussed, the approach being used is not the dialectic between Third World (anti-colonial and anti-capitalist) politics and the material conditions faced by the most marginal under the QTGNC Umbrella. It is not a CRC "identity politics" approach. It is not a STAR "full participation"/"self determination" approach. The focus isn't on addressing the contradictions of the Man's world in a conscientious, intersectional, even anti-hierarchical fashion. What we see instead is a neoliberal representation politics, where people insist on simply being able to show up as they are in whatever label/community under the Umbrella they occupy, and that is enough. This is true even though many trans and queer organizations practice the politics of Abolitionism.

Now, I'm not here to shade abolition movements. I am an abolitionist. The development of Anarcha-pantherism would be impossible without Abolitionism because it is in the prison struggles where the Panther and other Black Power era autonomists and feminists synthesized their critiques of cisheteromascularity and hierarchies in the revolutionary movement. This is especially true as the carceral state was eventually used to decimate Black radical movements and suppress their impact into today. Anarcha-pantherists affirm abolition from an autonomist standpoint because we believe that our people must understand that in terms of community

defense and the arbitration of disputes, addressing interpersonal violence and abuse: we must rely on our own means, not that of the master's government system and technology of suppression. We build safety when we provide for our people materially.

But Anarcha-Pantherists also taught me abolition from a feminist perspective, by pointing out that it is disseminated in the political movements led by QTGNC people for valid reasons. STAR's praxis was Abolitionist too: in an interview, Marsha P Johnson makes clear her and her sisTars' concerns with the experiences that working class TGNC folk had with the legal system, prisons, police, and the economic oppression it all operates in. The STAR manifesto explicitly demands an end to police repression, and at the end of the day, STAR came out of unrest that had exploded at Stonewall (a riot against the police). To this day, Black QTGNC communities in particular are on the front lines of both criminalization and poverty. This is due to the hybridly de jure and de facto "Jewel Crow" segregation structure that raises our risk of facing the police. It takes the form of exclusion from families, religious communities, and radical movements, as well as denial of access to housing, employment, healthcare, civil liberties, physical safety, and more that are reinforced by people's biases. Abolition is a central part of what it means to fight for Black trans liberation because of these material conditions.

However, when we are starting from an anti-carceral politics *first and foremost*, this can limit our political vision. It often pushes aside an analysis of the colonial and capitalist contradictions that the *carceral state is a function of*. "Jewel" Crow, which is to say the legal and extra-legal suppression of our Pride, and the exploitation of "star people" as Marsha called us like we are diamonds mined in blood to be held, is an imperialist project. Compare this to the Civil Rights struggle. This struggle also contends with the legal- and extralegal forms of racial violence visited upon Black people under colonialism and capi-

Colonization

built this nation

*Burn down the f****n*

plantation!

Colonization

built this nation

*Burn down the f****n*

plantation!"

SQuAD chant

If we merge today's Abolitionist/anti-carceral movement in this Third World approach, we reframe the violence against trans women and transfemmes as well as all the ways QTGNC people are oppressed. No longer is it about the media attention or narratives we can create in our think pieces, magazines, verbose academic analyses, bite-sized reformist and procedural projects, single-issue campaigns, social media platforms, YouTube videos, artistry, and podcasts – all of which ultimately benefit bourgeois institutions and allow clout and coin to go to opportunists, agents of counterinsurgency, and to the Man himself.

Instead we will identify that all of these things and the so-called power they claim to afford, the benefit they claim to provide, are a strategy of cooption, distraction, disruption, division, tokenization, voyeurism, pandering; all buttressed by the promise of "representing"/"naming" our experiences and the

Malcolm X was asking for folk to move to a Third World politics when he said that. He wanted folk to see racial segregation in terms of anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism; I'm asking us to see our racialized gender/sexual oppressions in the same light. Malcolm X spoke about this right before the Black Power era came along, before CRC and STAR came on the scene. He was observing the fact that many Third World movements could use the appeal to the United Nations to bridge anti-apartheid and anti-imperial struggles, and advance their struggles for self determination. He wanted Black folks in the US to move accordingly. Martin Luther King, Jr also reached a point where he saw the need to shift from just a civil rights phase to anti-capitalist and anti-colonial revolution, and used similar language as Malcolm X in terms of asking folk to look to a "new phase" of the struggle. James Baldwin called the civil rights phase a "slave revolt," in line with a Du Boisian and Cedric Robinson-style outlook, and so he was also interpreting racial oppression of the time from a broader, anti-imperial/anti-capitalist standpoint.

By the time the Black Power era was under way, by the time the CRC and STAR and other organizations had formed, Black folk, including Black QTGNC folk, had been moving on this same idea, and that is why the 60s/70s period was so impactful. That is the legacy we need to see our gender/sexual oppression in as QTGNC ppl: a revolutionary anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics.

"Colonization

built this nation

*Burn down the f****n*

plantation!

talism. It was/is a response to segregation, which served imperialist interests. Yet, rather than the struggle against the old Jim Crow being a revolutionary project, it was often about human rights. Today, Abolitionism is a struggle against the new Jim Crow; especially for QTGNC people in particular, due to the unique kinds of criminalization we continue to face across the colonial and capitalist world. Yet, it is not necessarily a revolutionary movement. And so, just like integration was often the face of the struggle against the old Jim Crow, today we continue to see reformists lead the anti-carceral movement, with their focus on policy and Trojan horse- style proceduralist, pseudo-militant reclamation of allocated resources...rather than focusing on class struggle, autonomy, and decolonization.

"Kitty kat, kat-kat

kat-kat-kat

Power!

Kitty kat, kat-kat

kat-kat-kat

Power!

Kitty kat, kat-kat

kat-kat-kat

Power!

Kitty kat, kat-kat

kat-kat-kat

Wild thing man caint purrrrr!" - SQuAD chant

The neoliberal angle is the context for why our movement spaces get focused more so on which labels under the TGNC Umbrella is 'represented' in an organization, or "named" in a movement, rather than on the *context* for that representation and self-naming. But, more insidiously, it is why conflict over discursive "privilege" in this economy of representation, or more specifically over limited resources and power, starts to get waged. This means, the fact that the deaths of Black trans women and transfemmes are becoming a point of media attention and visibility, the fact that spaces are claiming to "center" us with that in mind, is seen as material/political power or access, even though these spaces are not revolutionary enough to be truly guaranteeing that power to the most marginal. The representation of Black trans women and transfemme issues, presumably eclipsing the representation other issues under the TGNC Umbrella becomes the main focus and even a site of anger and competition, as if representation or visibility is saving the gurls, or is Black trans power, or is a substitute for revolutionary analysis, or is synonymous with the model that STAR and the CRC was using.

Now, we all know that nonblack people of color seeing the media cooption of Black death as "privilege" is idealistic, its own form of antiblack dismissal and trivialization. Why would we then subject Black trans women and transfemmes in particular to the same erasive, immaterial, and completely baseless line of thinking? This is what is happening in reactionary criticisms of "centering" as a concept. We have trans/nonbinary folk under the Umbrella who are not trans women and transfemme trying to vie for represented space within what the gurls know to be a tokenistic, voyeuristic, and bourgeois discursive space of visibility, on behalf of their "experiences."

These individuals direct anger or resentment at the gurls for being overrepresented here, which is a myopic view of the situation: it is reactionary, transmisogynist, idealist, and is not even beneficial to their own liberation or that of all QTGNC people.

The only people who benefit from hypervisibility are the institutions which put attention on Black people's deaths of any gender: media executives, academics, bag chasers and clout chasers, nonprofits, and other agents of capitalism and colonialism (as well as individualistic QTGNC ppl of all genders who want to exploit the discursive terrain for their gain). But to arrive at that understanding takes looking at the actual material conditions of the situation, and one cannot do that if they are so focused on representation of trans experiences in movement spaces (because their politics is informed not by revolutionary traditions, but an orientation toward reform). Liberalism is the cause of infighting and divisiveness in our community as Black QTGNC folk begin to vie over representation and limited access in inherently counterrevolutionary discursive and political projects.

The only corrective is to consolidate our Abolitionist resistance to the new Jim crow (carceral violence) and shift toward a revolutionary phase. We need a Third World (anti-colonial, anti-capitalist) approach such as that espoused in the gender/sexual politics of the CRC and STAR. This means we will focus on addressing the material conditions affecting the most marginal through *revolutionary movement building*. Representation and self-naming will, of course, happen (because there is no sense in organizing around our radical traditions and not letting marginalized people step into and define these legacies by our own participation), but the context of that representation and self-naming will be truly radical, not liberal. The maneuver I'm calling for is similar to what Malcolm X called for when encouraging folk to move from just a civil rights phase to an international focus.