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Not Fox, Not Wolf, But the Wildcat

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“Democrats are for the poor, and Republicans are for the rich.” My parents first told me this when I was maybe three or four. There was some kind of uproar about a rigged election then, in which George Bush won the presidency I think. I was small and I ain’t understand why my parents and neighbors were mad, but as soon as my parents linked our economic struggles to the interests of the Blue party, it instantly made sense why they was upset. They wanted the party whose platform would extend to us as working class folk.

My parents were the first people to discuss class with me. Much of my childhood was in the shelter system, so they often spoke about how poverty came from a structure of neglect, and how the economy was set up against us as poor people, and how it intentionally put us in a cycle to get sent to jail or get killed.

But I was not convinced of the equation, this schema that they were tryna teach me about which political party could help the poor out. Could the Democrats truly have been for the poor when the majority of the poor I was seeing—myself included—were Black

and most of the Dems, like the Republicans, were white? It just seemed to me like both parties actually had a shared interest in white power.

My mind was on a racial wavelength at that age. My parents would play recordings from Martin Luther King, Jr., and so discussions on segregation were beginning to take deeper shape in my mind. While King was from decades ago, though, the issues he talked about still seemed real to me. Because all the white people I saw were not in my neighborhood; they lived in big houses with lawns and stuff, while we were in infested buildings. What had the Dems, who supposedly support the poor, done to help people who look like me from being trapped in shelters like I had grown up in, or in smelly projects, or underfunded schools?

My mind was on a racial wavelength at that age. My parents would discourage us playing outside with toy guns because the police could think it was real, assume us criminals, and kill us. All the cops I saw were white. What had Dems, supposedly on the side of the poor, done to help people who look like me from being trapped in a cycle of poverty that put us in contact with police and prisons?

My mind was on a racial wavelength at that age. Everyone was bullying me for my gender nonconformity by telling me to 'act Black' instead. I got into fights and suffered deep psychological scars, and became aware of the harassment that other gender variant Black people had to face. What had, for example, the Dems, supposedly here for the poor, done to help the houseless Black trans kids who were often abandoned by queerphobic family members, the jobless Black trans folk who employers refused to hire because of their sexual/gender biases?

My mind was on a racial wavelength at that age. I was reading about pollution in my mother's science encyclopedias and then finding out that industrial toxins were both ravaging plant and animal species' bodies, and making members of our species sick. What had the Dems, supposedly here for the poor, done to assist

*”Left wing, right wing
Keep the warhawk afloat.
Not Fox, not wolf
But the wildcat (the GOAT)*

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Keep the warhawk afloat.
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*So get off the grind,
get on the prowl,
be the wild thing
Man cannot house!*

*Said get off the grind,
get on the prowl,
be the wild thing
Man cannot house!”*

- Street Queer Anarkata Defenders (SQuAD)

(In loving memory of El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, the beautiful man also known as Malcolm X)

the masses of Black people suffering from asthma or lead poisoning because we couldn't afford to not have industrial waste and poison dumped into our environments like the whites could?

Nearly two decades after I asked those questions, New Afrika (“Black America”) is still having to make the same inquiries. At this point, though, we done had a Black president, we done had Black mayors, we done had Black police chiefs, we done had Black principals, we done had Black entertainers and business folk. And yet our economic and social position is still pretty much the same (if not worse) than it was just before the passage of Civil Rights legislation that MLK helped fight for.

”Surface level changes in the laws/politics and even cultural consciousness of global society have failed to fully guarantee us freedom, even if we have a few measures of safety. Over the last few decades, we have begun to experience a wider and wider gap between rich and poor all over the world, and mass environmental destruction, as well as steady genocides against our people through the corporations, prisons, police, hospitals, schools, and the military. Representation of our people within white systems/media has not promised us anything worthwhile at all, and often times our representatives betray the interests of the collective for their own benefit. And xenophobic narratives continue to be sown in our communities in order to divide us so we can throw our most vulnerable siblings under the bus and betray each other. Many legal protections are often denied anyway and even being rapidly taken away.”

- *Mapping our Legacy: The Narrative of Black Freedom Struggle*

All of this cannot be blamed on Trump and the resurgence of fascism under his presidency. Certainly, the Republican takeover had superficially made things more difficult for us, bringing credible dangers with regards to public education, LGBT+ rights, hate crime protections, welfare programs, and more. Yet, when had liberalism and the “diversification” of American institutions truly served us?

I remember back under the Obama presidency, I had tried to give liberalism a chance. I had hoped that things could change for us in due time. Watching a Black man finally hit the highest office, I thought that if there were the right kinds of Black faces in high places, something would change. Then, Obama had served not one but two terms. Nothing happened the first time, but maybe it would shift the second time around. I sincerely believed that if we were patient, by then, things would change with him being in the chair, because he was Black and that must have meant he shared the same interests as the average Black person.

But that did not happen. Instead, there was a recession, caused by the same greed and predatory housing practices that had underserved Black people for generations already. And then, in places like Ferguson and Baltimore, we had uprisings against police, because Black people were still being treated unfairly nationwide. And Obama had the nerve to condemn the Uprisings. Then he had the nerve to act like the reason why we suffered at the hands of the cops was because of parental absenteeism, as if crime and poverty wasn't a structural issue, but was a result of the fact that Black people were not “pulling ourselves by our bootstraps.” Seeing this from him made me realize that Obama was actually part of something called a Black misleadership class. He was a neocolonial figure. He did not share the same interests as the poor, struggling, Black masses and those of us on the margins. As such, there was no hope for the Democrats in my mind.

I began to think about something Malcolm X once said:

Black cops, or say perhaps the cops just need racial bias testing, or say maybe we need body cameras to catch “individually” racist cops in the act and hopefully get them fired. No, the Wildcat understands policing as a residue of slavery, and teaches that policing/prisons/courts serve to enforce and protect the interests of the ruling (bourgeois, colonizer) class who dispossess the masses through their ownership of property and the means of production.

When you boil it down from a radical standpoint, you understand that yes, conservative wolves may defend or deny racism, but the liberal foxes who like to critique racism actually downplay racism. They water things down. They pander. But they ain't about real solutions. They care about empty symbolism and pandering. And they working real hard to convince us that our only hope is to remain subject to the very system that violates us and our cousins overseas. They refuse to let us put in that work toward the abolition of the system which produces and is enhanced by racism — its material basis, which is a Euro-capitalist, ableist cis-hetero patriarchal society.

But the Wildcat asks us to do as Fannie Lou Hamer and Angela Davis say: to start grasping things at the root. We say that the poor, queer/trans, disabled, Black masses have no allies in the white/bourgeois power structure, even if the powerful is ‘melanated’ (or has been given an honorary ‘Black card’ by petit bourgeois skin-folk). We must listen to wildcat wisdom. We must study Black radical traditions (Pan Africanism, Queer/trans liberation, Afro-anarchism, Black feminism, Abolition, etc). And build concrete networks of solidarity and study and mutual aid with our Black siblings both domestically and across the world. Join a revolutionary organization or some other formation of freely associating radicals. Develop a culture of consciousness raising, movement building, militancy, and care work. Realize that there is no savior within the Amerikkkan Empire. We alone are our magic hands, as Fanon once said, and so it is on us to protect ourselves, by ourselves, for ourselves and for our planet.

twice as hard to get half as far'; we call into question the existence of a social ladder and hierarchy of access in the first place. We recognize that that is what forces us to scramble at bottom of the barrel for mere crumbs, all while leaving countless mostly disabled Black folk treated as disposable, worthless 'drain on resources' for being unable to work at the pace and in the behavioral standards white society imposes.

Furthermore, the Wildcats do not just condemn the broader racial exclusion of most of our people from participation in the economy that white people can enjoy with no problem. We are also against the modern economy itself because we understand that it will always exclude us, since it fundamentally and continually relies on the global exploitation of our people's labor and lands for the material gain of the capitalists and colonizer nations.

The Wildcats are Black radicals, neither liberals nor conservatives. We do not teach people simply to 'respect' and 'include' Afrikan/Black cultures and social formations. The foxes do this, all while refusing to 'go too far' in terms of advocating and fighting for African societies to more fully inhabit the earth in place of these hegemonically imposed European ones. Meanwhile, as a Black radical, the Wildcat demands *both* respect for our communities *and* she fights toward actual decolonization and the right for Afrikan autonomy over our communities' food, health, education, defense, and other infrastructure needs by any means necessary.

Similarly, since we are Black radicals, the Wildcat does not ask people to simply acknowledge that the US and its institutions are founded on slavery and genocide. The foxes will do this, but they refuse to admit that this violent basis is not a thing of the past but is an ongoing mechanism of oppression. Black radicals, the wildcats, say we must immediately and unabashedly destroy Amerikkka and prioritize decolonial self-determination for Indigenous people in its stead.

Lastly, as Black radicals, the Wildcats will never see policing as a problem of just race — will never say that there just aren't enough

“The white conservatives aren't friends of the Negro either, but they at least don't try to hide it. They are like wolves; they show their teeth in a snarl that keeps the Negro always aware of where he stands with them. But the white liberals are foxes, who also show their teeth to the Negro but pretend that they are smiling. The white liberals are more dangerous than the conservatives; they lure the Negro, and as the Negro runs from the growling wolf, he flees into the open jaws of the “smiling” fox. One is a wolf, the other is a fox. No matter what, they'll both eat you.”

Now we have a new president, and another election has passed. And similar ideas about the Democrats as the ones my parents told me years ago are being echoed again, since the Democrats now claim to lead a pallid 'resistance' to neofascism. But Malcolm X's words are still applicable, to both white Democrats and Black ones. As we speak, Democrats are trying their best to appeal to us on racial/cultural lines, by quoting our ancestors, wearing kente cloth, claiming our movements on a surface level, all so that they can look like they are on our side. Smiling.

This especially became true after the huge protests of 2020, in the wake of the death of George Floyd. The rebellious energy had been growing in Black communities' hearts even before the wolves in this country took the white house, and the foxes are seeing that. Just like they see how we are beginning to understand that capitalism is environmentally unsustainable and genocidal against our people. They are aware that governmental neglect, racist health disparities around the pandemic, and the fact that if someone plays them at their own game, they will rewrite the rules for their benefit, all have exposed to the world just how vile the bourgeois economic and State system is. They are scared, and so to protect their material interests, the master has to convince us to believe what we

know deep down just ain't true: that their structure can protect and affirm us if we just reclaim it.

Again, they are foxes. Behind all their smiles, there is actually a voracious thirst to trap us in their jaws. Behind their promises for relief and respect, there are policies that are just as anti-immigrant, just as carceral, just as anti-sex worker, just as imperial and neocolonial—which is to say, just as anti-black, just as violent to the most marginal in society—as the stuff the conservative wolves call for. This is why they will say “happy Black History Month” all while still moving to escalate war against African people, deporting Haitians and supporting dictatorships that violate the interests of the common people. The dems want to pacify us so we can quietly let them devour us, in contrast to the Amerikkkan Right, eager to consume us openly and proudly. The only hope for the Negro is to realize this: that we are not a passive sheep caught in the US' political teeth, but a wildcat who must fight with every snarl and claw against Massa's house, and prevent the Man from forcing us into a domesticated, servile state.

The Wildcat, not the fox or the wolf, should be our go-to symbol for political activity. Such activity is the politics of the unruled, the ungoverned, the indomitable—of the revolutionary, even the anarchic—which New Afrika must turn toward more deeply if we are to free ourselves of our conditions. The wildcat represents the legacy and undying cultures of radicalism, rebellion, subversion, waywardness that have threatened Europe since they first encroached on Afrikan lands. Where the fox is US liberalism and the wolf is US conservatism, the wildcat is the global Black/Pan African revolution. We do not have to and should not depend on ballots and billionaires when we can turn toward Black radical traditions.

It is Wildcats (Black radicals) who feed us while the foxes (liberals), even Black ones, allow our people to starve; it is Wildcats (Black radicals) who arm us or ride for us while the foxes (liberals), even Black ones, allow us to be shot by pigs and blame us for it.

It is Wildcats (Black radicals) who burn plantations, who get racist bosses fired, who protect sacred lands, who hold down natural sites from capitalist toxicity, who educate our kids when the school system fills our heads with lies or throws us in jail, who send letters to our prison fam and work to get books and medical care to us too. It is Wildcats (Black radicals) who house trans street queers when no one else will, who box fascists over the head when the cops show up to defend them, who offer free therapy sessions to those of us who need it and couldn't afford it otherwise, who hold down gardens and grow plants and herbs for us to nourish ourselves with when city infrastructure leaves us locked out of food or medical access. It is Wildcats who toppled slaveocracies and colonial governments time and again over the course of the last few centuries, whether in the Haitian Revolution or the various decolonization movements of the 20th century. It is Wildcats (Black radicals) behind why progress throughout the world has not yet stagnated, all while the foxes (liberals) give Black folk empty promises that only lead to them filling their pockets and jailing or killing us once we rise up in recognition that we keep being played.

The Wildcats (Black radicals) do as we do because we understand that Black oppression is not just because of racial discrimination or racial exclusion. The Wildcats say that we cannot just be opposing 'white supremacy'; we have to fight the Western imperialism which births and grounds white supremacy. The Wildcats say we cannot just be angry at gender-based stereotypes against Black people, we cannot just point out the racist implications of these narratives on Black love and Black kinship structures. We have to also call into question the source of these racist ideas: the Western scientific model of gender itself, which reinforces both a binary (only man, only woman) and hierarchical (man is superior, woman is inferior) understanding of kinship and love and also of who is human/civilized (European) or isn't human/uncivilized (African).

Again, the Wildcats do not just call attention to the unfair health and career impacts of the idea that Black people 'have to work