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So Long As the Father Is the Law, Mothers Must Be Outlaws

**What does the rise of pro-natal fascism demand of
radical mothers and our communities?**

Sarah Harpy

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mothers and our communities?

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Heights, Brooklyn recently a mob of zionists, mostly men, hounded anti-zionist protesters out of the neighborhood while chanting “death to Arabs” and calling young women “wastes of semen.” In the footage, teenage ultra-orthodox Jewish boys are seen jeering at Black trans women, calling them slurs and threatening them with sexual violence.

Ultra-orthodox men used to be an extreme example, but this kind of religious patriarchal domination is now ascendant in this country. The flavor is different in the whitest house, Christian instead of Jewish, but they’re brothers in arms at this point. So that’s what we can expect of young men in a society that gives them everything they want at the expense of women. It’s not enough to raise men to be feminists, because patriarchy will always be calling to them, ready to accept them into the fold. The daily violence against women will still benefit them. We have to go further and refuse to teach children how to be men, how to relate to systems of domination, how to rape. This requires strong feminist community, support, and experimentation. All things we must build from the ground up and on the fly as our patriarchal states restructure themselves again.

This essay isn’t any kind of instruction manual, not any kind of delicate tool for building the movement we need but hopefully a sledgehammer to break open the door to the tool shed. More will be written on this, points hammered out, ideas discarded or refined. If we want to be more than breeding stock for the hetero-settler empire it will require a political-military theory and a revolutionary culture. A revolutionary way for us to structure our lives and to raise our children. Our future, and most importantly the futures of our children, depend on it.

“I love my four kids equally, but that last little boy just hits different,” she continues, “When I think about my daughters getting married, I get excited. When I think about my son’s wedding I wanna cry.” There are no repercussions when her kid slaps or punches his sisters; she tells her girls that he must be having a rough day. Joly, grinning, concludes the TikTok by stating that she and other toxic mothers “gotta realize we are the problem.” Despite this assertion, Joly’s profile includes numerous videos where she treats her son as her favorite and refers to him as such.

This boy-mom attitude of “boys will be boys” is exemplified by other TikToks. Many of them depict sons acting inappropriately—smacking their mothers’ behind and engaging in other rude actions—or imitating their fathers. “Tell me you’re a boy mom without telling me you’re a boy mom” is a common caption for the films.

The boy mom cult online seems to think it’s normal for boy-children to be tiny, destructive psychopaths. I say there’s no such thing as boy-children unless we construct them as such. Even then, biology and socialization are never destiny. I know from childhood a pair of sisters, both trans, whose mom was obsessed with being a “boy mom.” She made it her whole thing their entire childhoods. Then, by the time they were in their 20’s they were both transitioning, both turned out to be women and lesbians. How cool is that?

So-called boy moms have been around forever, but this emotionally incestuous online subculture around the mothers of male children is on the rise right now. Part and parcel of the insurgent male reactionary wave coming down on all of us. Boys raised in heavily patriarchal cultures eagerly participate in personal and mass violence against women. In Crown

I see it every day. Feminist advice for the current regime. Don’t, under any circumstances, have children right now. No matter how the regime tries to bribe you, no matter the social pressure, no matter what the vice president says, no children. I have no argument against this, it’s perfectly sound advice. With patriarchal fascism once again taking on a decidedly pronatalist flavor it’s any solid revolutionary’s duty to sabotage production.

But some of us have children already. Hundreds of thousands of women right now in america have young children and we have to figure out how to raise them. How to teach them who to be, how to treat others, and that their worth isn’t tied to any kind of state enforced hetero-settler political regime. This is a massive undertaking, one that many of us are making in isolated and lonely situations with little or no help. Doing this right requires a full program for revolution, something i can’t draw up by myself. Here are a handful of ideas for places to start though, taken from my experience as a mother, a transsexual woman, and a long time communist-turned-lesbian separatist.

End the Isolation of Motherhood

In both heterosexual and queer life it’s not uncommon for raising a child to be the kind of thing that’s said to end your social life. Caring for a little one is a full time job, reproductive labor, with no days off and no vacation time (unless you can afford the outrageous cost of childcare in this country). This all but ensures that anyone who is the primary parent for a child (usually a mother) is cut off from the regular day to day lives of their friends without children. This isolation is something that the male right wants to venerate, it’s something we have to smash.

It's even worse in political spaces. I've only seen childcare offered at two revolutionary events or meetings in my 15 year organizing life. If a real revolutionary movement is what we want then we have to be able to not only involve mothers in our organizing but we have to be able to collectively care for children. Socialized childcare was at one point a standard plank of socialist and communist programs. Aside from the impressive children's breakfast and school programs run by the Black Panther Party, the left in america has struggled to actualize this practice on any kind of scale.

But this is exactly the kind of thing we need if we're going to parent in a radical way. I tell my friends who want kids that they should have a minimum of four parents. Not to advocate polyamory or something but simply to have any chance of distributing the labor of raising a child equitably. The standard heterosexual relationship can't do this, being designed to oppress women and extract their labor. Our parenting teams or families have to be anathema to the heterosexual family.

In *Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Mariarosa Dalla Costa says "the struggle of the working class against capital has always been a struggle over time: the time of work versus the time of life." The struggle of mothers since the inception of the nuclear family is the struggle for time. By building collective family units we can force that door open a little wider, in our own ways, allowing mothers time to organize, educate themselves, engage in art, or simply do nothing. All the diverse building blocks of a fulfilling life. Things that the vast majority of mothers are deprived of.

In the essay "We Made a Village for the Kids: Reflections on the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee" for Viewpoint Mag, Mickey Ellinger says:

For much of recorded history, children have grown up in villages or towns with tight-knit social relationships, where everyone knew them

my kid is great at sharing, loves spending time with other kids, but begins to refuse to share when boys come around and take things from them without asking. Which happens even more than i expected.

In that same vein, no more raising girl-children to be demure, quiet, seen-and-not-heard shells of themselves. Kids, regardless of what patriarchal civilization would say their gender is, run the full gamut of personalities. We teach them sexual distinction from an extremely early age, it isn't natural. That observation is a century old (Magnus Hirschfeld wrote about it at length). We can't avoid patriarchy entirely when raising our children, it is a world-spanning civilization after all, but you would be surprised how much you can do with the right community around you. That's that revolutionary responsibility i keep going on about.

Raising our children without gender means running headlong into the "groomer" accusations that the fascists are constantly hurling our way. There's no sidestepping or weaseling out of them. Only confronting them headlong. It's not grooming to give our children a choice in who they want to be, to refuse to assign them strict roles from the time they're infants, to refuse to crush their spirits when they want to do things outside of what's typical for their assigned gender. The only real antidote to the cis state and hetero-settler attempts to seize control of reproduction is full autonomy for women and children. This means doing whatever we can to strip gender out of childhood.

This is the dead-sprint opposite direction from what people are doing with boy-children now. In an article for The Pace Press, Sheila Rafizadeh writes:

In a single TikTok, self-described "Toxic Mom" Anna Saccone Joly exemplifies the "I'm In Love With My Son" subgenre of male mom culture.

arrival of his firstborn. Moreover, there is only one context where heterosexual couples with children will begin to approach parity: when she works full-time, and he is unemployed. Even here, the operative word is “approach.” She will still do a bit more by way of domestic and childbearing labor, on average.

If feminist revolutionaries want to make this break a real possibility we have to set about building the kinds of communities and organizations that can support mothers who have split off from hetero world. We can’t demand that women already burdened with childcare step out into nothing. An abusive prick who at least pays some bills is more comforting than the total unknown of an isolated life without him. That reality is unacceptable.

Stop Raising Boy-Children

Don’t raise boys. I don’t mean refuse to birth children who would be assigned male at birth, nor do I mean forcing would-be boys into stereotypical girlhoods. I mean don’t teach your children to be boys and men. None of this “if you’re going to be a man be a good one” shit (save that for your trans guy friends), no men. Raise them to be self sufficient, confident, caring, kind, empathetic, adventurous, curious, all the things that kids are but that men aren’t.

Ask anyone who has boys or who has dealt with self described “boy moms” and they’ll tell you that (specifically white) boy-children become weird little nightmares the moment they realize that they’re entitled to more of the world just by nature of who they are. Raising your child without gender isn’t actually all that hard, if you have the right support. But boys who are subject to patriarchal socialization treat other children differently, in a general sense. Just anecdotally i can tell you that

and had a role in their upbringing. The kids knew the boundaries, and expected to be supported and chastised by everyone. The myth of the idealized nuclear family, two parents and one or two children, was widely propagated in United States after World War Two.

“It takes a village” is a cute saying but very few people ever apply it. Children need a diverse community to care for them, as many adults that they’re safe with as possible. Children really can grow up to be anything if they have a community’s worth of examples to learn from and no pressure to make their parents look respectable to hetero-settler society. Ellinger again:

Child care teams were organized for every family, and every member of PFOC participated. Our practice evolved over the two decades of our organizational existence, but the basics stayed pretty much the same. A child care shift, usually weekly, could involve picking up one or more kids from school or after school activity, helping with homework, making dinner, overseeing bath and bedtime. The teams usually had from three to five members depending on the adult/child ratio at the time, which meant that parents were free three to five times a week to go to meetings or other activities of our lives. We helped manage weekend activities; when we had programs or activities we always provided child care, not only for ourselves but for anyone who participated.

The childcare teams were our effort to create a village for the kids. When I picked up my charge from school or day camp I would joke that I was part of her “vast entourage.” We wanted the kids to know

that they had people they could call on, talk to, ask for help. The testimony of the grown children confirms that most of them felt that support, felt welcome in the world. They criticize us for our shortcomings, but also recognize that they had more support than most of their peers. They are a pretty confident, competent bunch, most have warm relationships with their parents and have kept friendships with many members of their child care teams for more than 30 years.

Better yet, they grow up knowing that they're more than just the product of a nationalist project to reinvigorate a dying empire.

Abolish the Father

The men in your family are the single greatest threat to your children. We all grew up with warnings about stranger danger but, statistically, it's a male family member or family friend who is most likely to sexually and physically abuse your children. Most likely to abuse you, too. In the era of the tradwife and rhetoric about men as protectors (owners) of their families this truth is vital to remember. In the family as everywhere else, men are the enemies of women and children.

The political divide amongst women and men has been noted internationally. In country after country young women are moving left and young men are moving right. Who can blame men when the right offers them the chance to own women as property again? That's a deal no prick can resist! This divide happens amongst heterosexual married couples all the time. The women lean progressive, the men move more and more conservative.

I remember a handful of years ago i was working on a moving crew for a young woman who was going through a divorce.

She confided in me that she was leaving her husband because he had gone all Joe Rogan during the first year of the pandemic and now didn't want to vaccinate their children. She couldn't stand the thought of that so she was leaving him. Taking the kids too. That sister is leading by example.

Want to raise your kids in opposition to the pro-natalist state? Kick your husband to the curb. Chances are he's not doing anything for you anyway. Husbands and boyfriends are resistant at best to doing their full share of the labor of raising a child. It's not in their gender-class interests to do so, and this opens them up to misogynistic political lines pushed by people like the vice president or any number of online grifters. Why should they have to take care of a child? That's women's work anyway.

In her piece *Don't Have Children*, Kate Manne says this about male partners:

Men do not help nearly enough, and having children is why and when women find themselves with a second shift problem: The majority of women who have children will do so with a male partner (which is not to erase, of course, the significant number of people who have children by themselves or in queer families, among other possibilities). And, despite flattering perceptions of involved fathers, the second shift problem hasn't budged in twenty-five years: where, on average, he will do less than half the childcare and housework compared to a female partner when both partners work full-time. Tellingly, this disparity in domestic labor tends to begin upon the birth of the couple's first child. Whereas women acquire vastly more in the way of household responsibilities after having children, many studies show men somehow doing *less* after the