To black anarchist men

A short reflection. Nothing here is a new insight.

Emon Azmi

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NOTE: For an understanding of black anarchism's development up to our moment, check out the book *Black Anarchism and the Black Radical Tradition* by Nsambu Za Suekama and Atticus Bagby-Williams.

i remember at a get together / open discussion with a bunch of us in VA, elder JoNina Abron-Ervin noted how few men were in the space and i thought to myself, "Yeah, that is crazy. We really do be sparse out here."

i mention this moment a lot when chatting with brothers. What i pose to them when doing so is that (cis-het) men usually don't show up in 'social justice' or radical spaces with knowledge that the space doesn't put men at its center. And we don't wanna be real about why we feel like we gotta be at the center (or central in whatever way) nor how that pull towards the center most often turns us into an implement for neocolonialism draped in "progressive" or "radical" garb.

A sister of mine has pointed out to me a couple times how this dynamic plays out in the sphere of black anarchist discourse (online especially), along with the problems the dynamic brings. There've been numerous other maGes i've seen name this, highlighting how patriarchy is shaping what black anarchists are most visible and what black anarchisms are legible as such in black radical discourses broadly. i've experienced a number of leftists' and radicals' preference for platforming the perspectives of black anarchist men. Or for equally distributing (between men and maGes) the perspectives being foregrounded from the tendency; as if that would be properly representative of black anarchism today, or even the majority of time since it was first articulated as such.

This slick drawing of men to the center, this further sidelining and overlooking of queer and women BARs, is a major reason why black anarchist men are able to gain more social capital (read *A Discourse on the New Petty Bourgeois Soil* and *Social Capitalism*) through our platforms — even if those platforms are small relative to the broader 'leftist' sphere. And in all this, with some exceptions like elder Ashanti Alston, the people most passively confronting the Man in the room (patriarchy) are the men. (surprise surprise!)

i take issue with the outsized attention myself and other men are getting in discussions of black anarchism (and black radicalism broadly). It is obscuring where the bulk of labor shaping the tendency is understood and projected out as being located.

Working-class and under-class maGes are, and have been, the cutting edge of the black radical tradition since the tradition first emerged out of our struggles against patriarchal-colonial oppression. The work and insights of queer and women BARs are, and have been, the primary driving force behind the development of black anarchism as it is today (in theory and in practice).

The external imposition of and internal reproduction of patriarchy among our people and within our spaces/movements is what displaces these facts — concealing the material and structural conditions playing into them. This makes these conditions appear as something to just "let them (women and queers) figure out over there", fueling counterrevolution and reaction in moments of radical political possibility like ours at present. We saw this on under recognized Chattel Enslavement, as well as in the Reconstruction period, as well as in the Civil Rights / Black Power era. The *Combahee River Collective Statement*, Butch Lee *Jailbreak Out Of History,* andNsambu Za Suekama *To The Ones Who Can Fly* provide crucial insights on why this is.

No amount of popularity for anarchism in black radical spaces will stop this imposition or reproduction in itself. Black patriarchy will make black anarchism function as a front for neocolonialism, just like it has with so many other tendencies in the black radical tradition, if black anarchist men keep holding the center in our discussions and understandings of the politic and the praxes springing forth.

This is a major reason i point people toward anarkata politics (read *Anarkata: A Statement*) so heavy. There's no ducking and dodging confrontation with patriarchy in the framework. For men this forces us to reckon with how narrow a lens we are taught to have in our politics and in our conceptions of self and community, where anarchism on its own doesn't directly confront this. Sanyika Shakur *The Pathology of Patriarchy*, the speech *Transphobia is a Respectability Politic*, Zoe Samudzi's talk *On Black Feminist Anarchism*, and *A.I.D. Feedback Loop* are all really good to engage on this and share.

At every turn for me in tryna make things shake in real life, maGes have been the primary ones providing interventions and getting me to ask questions that really pushed the work being done forward (intellectually and practically). Yes we need brothers organized if we're gonna get free. But if the brothers don't "reject the Man" then they'll wind up being organized by, and organizing for, the Man. And that's the exact formula that's been whooping us and roping us into the maintenance of settler empire since its inception. That's why in conversations offline, especially in spaces with lots of young men, i bring it back to patriarchy and how "that (i.e. patriarchy) is some white shit" so much.

We hear it all the time, and it bears repeating: men have to get good at stepping back, at not occupying the center, at sitting down and being level, at getting real about our ignorance and where/how/why we fail our queer and women siblings in movement and in personal contexts. That is, if we're actually tryna be brothers and commit to the struggle we need to get free with our people. Black anarchism is a tendency that should make this responsibility more clear and pertinent, not make any of us feel absolved.

COMMENTED ON SUBSTACK POST: *"Some names of 21st century Black anarchist voices online who aren't cis/het men include: edxi betts ; Estelle Ellison (abolish time) ; g or (g)ender fugitive (disruptthehuman) ; merricattherine ; elany (wildpunk manifesto)"*

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