

Transsexuals Against Empire

Trans Women And The Fracturing Of Whiteness

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Kersplebedeb received this article by Valerie, who explained that “it was written in the context of a local collective attempting to organize trans women specifically to struggle for our liberation as part of the broader struggle against capitalism-imperialism and settler colonialism in the so-called USA.” We are happy to publish it and feel that it constitutes a valuable contribution.

The trans liberation movement in amerikkka finds itself increasingly at a crossroads. Facing open hostility, murder, and criminalization in numerous states on one hand and the liberal drive towards assimilation into the settler state on the other, we as euro-amerikan trans women are faced with a choice: we can become the new soldiers of neo-colonialism, colonizing the broad expanse of non-conformist gender expression for the settler state, or we can make a decisive break with neo-colonialism and whiteness, betray the settler state, and set ourselves on a new path towards liberation in solidarity with neo-colonized peoples across the world.

What amerikkka Offers: Assimilation Or Repression

Sparked in the late 60’s by trans revolutionaries Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson (amongst numerous others), trans liberation began gaining ground in the 1990s with figures like Leslie Feinberg (famed Marxist theorist of trans liberation and member of the dodgy-at-best Workers World Party), Kate Bornstein, Riki Wilchins, and others breaking out of the rapidly stagnating women’s and gay movements to demand rights and recognition of trans people. Submerged and unknown to the broader settler nation, the trans liberation movement built momentum for over two decades before bursting into the mainstream around 2014 with the so-called Transgender Tipping Point. Black trans actresses like Laverne Cox and Janet Mock were suddenly household names, euro-amerikan queers were electrified by the coming out of anarchist-ish punk musician Laura Jane Grace, trans male porn star Buck Angel toured the talkshow circuit, and the reported murders of trans women, almost entirely New Afrikan trans women, increased year by torturous year.

The trans liberation movement has spread rapidly in the seven years since, rife with its own contradictions and dialectical motion. While general awareness of trans people and our superficial issues (it is now normal for neo-colonial politicians to state their pronouns in their social media bios) has increased, the level of violence and legal repression against trans people has also increased. Your average pig knows what “non-binary” means and might drive a rainbow printed pig car in June, all while still brutalizing New Afrikan gender outlaws. Target sells naive queers tacky rainbow printed “pride” gear (oh, the shame!) while donating hundreds of thousands to anti-trans politicians, and our own sellouts like Charlotte Clymer prostrate themselves before imperialist war criminals like Joe Biden and Kamala Harris as if we can beg and backstab our way to liberation. All the while, the broad masses of trans women, even euro-amerikan trans women, still face poverty, denial of access to medical care, alienation, and violence on a daily basis.

See, trans women are still a broadly outcast section of settler society. While there are obvious wealthy exceptions (celebrities eager to stand on our necks to sell us out to the imperialists), by and large euro-amerikan trans women have not yet been fully assimilated into settler society in the way cis women and gays have been. In motion above us, within the ruling class of amerikkka,

is a struggle over how to properly assimilate, neutralize or annihilate us. The Democratic party, eager to continue mis-leading oppressed peoples through neo-colonial puppets, dangles so-called trans leaders in front of our eyes, trying to lull us into believing that the pigs (who brutalize their own loyal women on a regular basis) have any interest in stopping (their own) anti-trans violence. The right-populist Republican party on the other hand has sponsored numerous bills criminalizing trans people, barring us from accessing healthcare and even bathrooms, in some cases requiring businesses with gender neutral bathrooms to display signs proclaiming as such. Both parties feed into the genocidal impulses of their settler bases, one attempting to recruit us into becoming footsoldiers for amerikkkan genocide against neo-colonized peoples, the other trying to turn the guns on us and force us back into submerged hiding and suicide.

Few of our sisters can be expected to sign on with the growing anti-trans reaction. The bigger danger, to both trans women and the world, is that the trans liberation movement will be fully co-opted by the neo-colonial amerikkkan state. The seeds of this have been sown, euro-amerikan trans women still benefit from our status as “white” in amerikkkan society and some of us have developed a taste for blood, driving New Afrikan trans women out of queer spaces with our racism. Like the gay movement before us, there is a very real possibility that the *entire* trans liberation movement will be focused on attaining full settler privileges for trans people, rather than on overthrowing the settler state and abolishing neo-colonial capitalism and domination once and for all. As Butch Lee and Red Rover state in *Night Vision*, “the oppressed have to break with parasitism — which means dis-unity with everyone who can’t give up parasitism or won’t. *By any means necessary*” (pg. 244). This is the goal that faces trans revolutionaries today: break with the parasitic unity of the settler nation (the trans movement for white equality) and join our oppressed siblings in the coming revolutionary jailbreak.

White Equality: The Graveyard of Women’s Liberation

This has all happened before. Women’s liberation, inspired by the New Afrikan liberation movement kicking up in the 1960s, faced similar questions and dilemmas. Initially pulled in numerous directions, both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, women’s liberation was eventually co-opted by the state, stripped of its revolutionary potential and put to work aiding in genocide against the New Afrikan nation. *Kill The Kids First: The Coming of Black Genocide* [<https://kersplebedeb.com/posts/kill-the-kids-first/>], an essay published anonymously in the revolutionary Amazon journal Bottomfish Blues [<https://www.leftwingbooks.net/book/content/amazon-nation-or-aryan-nation-white-women-and-coming-black-genocide>], described the situation thusly:

If the just-starting women’s liberation movement had survived it would have divided white society, and would have seriously endangered the plans for Black Genocide. Born out of the sparks from Black Liberation, with its own revolutionary pulse, women’s liberation might have sabotaged the machinery of genocide...[but] radical feminists believed in the unity of white women just as much as their liberal sisters did. While sisterhood demands the disunity of white women...

The largely euro-amerikan pro-state line that won out in women’s liberation not only did *nothing* to liberate women as a whole, but also reinforced amerikkka for its counterstrike against

the New Afrikan nation after the revolutionary upsurge of the 60s and 70s. *Kill the Kids First* continues:

Like Black Genocide, male violence against women can only be stopped with a 9mm, with political-military methods. ...But the women's movement for white equality can't lift a finger to stop male violence, because it wants to join the patriarchy as junior partners, not abolish it. There is no way to have "career advancement" while risking your life to end oppression.

The trans liberation movement faces these same problems, the same necessity of revolutionary armed struggle against the sickly sweet draw of assimilation, the same call of "Amazon Nation or Aryan Nation" that Bottomfish Blues put out 30 years ago. We have to look back over the paths our forebears tried to walk and avoid their mistakes. The lesson of Radical Feminism, which burned itself out working with the Reagan administration and ignoring the AIDS induced genocide in the 80s, should be obvious. The amerikkkan state is our enemy: it can't be trusted for even tactical alliances, much less strategic ones. If amerikkka had its way we would have been annihilated by the decades of institutional abuse, sterilization, and police-sponsored murder. We have proved to be resilient, so now the state must find new methods of pacifying us. We have to recognize this new "tolerance" fad as merely a shift in tactics towards the same end, not some long overdue progress tossed at our feet by our settler cisters in Washington. Settler amerikkkan so-called "feminists" can't be our inspiration, even when we find use in parts of their analysis. We have to turn to the most oppressed and most revolutionary for inspiration, "go lower and deeper" as that old rev said.

New Afrikan trans women face the brunt of cissexist patriarchal violence and, as such, have participated en masse in the New Afrikan-led rebellions of the last decade. They are not offered the same steam valve out that we are. There is no question about their loyalty and service to their people and their revolution. The late revolutionary New Afrikan nationalist and communist Sanyika Shakur wrote in 2012:

We are against homophobia. But deeper still, We are about combating heterosexism. See, homophobia—the irrational fear of someone because of their sexual orientation—is but one side of the equation. One can be "in fear" and use this to run away, or avoid the natural in order to make themselves feel better, but this will only give rise to homophobia's evil twin—heterosexism. Which is not just fear of, but oppression and exploitation of someone based on their sexual orientation. It points to a degenerate set of politics, for it always comes back to our politics. Our politics are revolutionary, naturally against oppression and yet here We are oppressing someone based on their natural self. If We kept our politics in command We'd know better. We'd do better.

We need to be clear and focused here cause people will try to get by on this. If We are going to be the message We bring then We have to stand firm on our politics. People, collectives and orgs will profess that they are not homophobic—have no fear of gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transgendered people—and yet go right on to practice staunch heterosexism by having not one post in their orgs held by gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transgender people. All those in any position of power are so-called

“straight” people. To us, any org claiming to be revolutionary or representative of the people, that doesn’t actively recruit, promote and cultivate gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people/cadres, is not really pushing a revolutionary line for change and freedom—let alone socialism. They are perpetuating the backwardness of the bourgeoisie—hell, We can hardly say that anymore since even reactionaries have repealed their heterosexist policies.

We are concerned about a person’s character, politics, practice and the company they keep. Not their complexion, gender or sexual orientation. The question is—and should always be—are they down for revolution? Are they with us or against us? Do they overstand that We are about armed struggle? We are not those to sit-in, love-in, cry-in or hold hands and sing “We shall overcome.” That’s not us. We are about armed struggle.

So, in our writings We don’t just condemn homophobia—We also shine the light on heterosexism. On so-called “straight” domination of things as if being hetero is any indication of being always right or somehow real. Give us a break! What’s going to guide us is revolutionary consciousness, informed by our political line. And the fact of the matter is if you’re not ready to let consciousness guide you —truly, you’re not ready for revolution, i.e. for complete change. (“On Correct Terminology and Spellings” [<https://kersplebedeb.com/posts/on-correct-terminology/>])

While Shakur was not trans, this is notable for showing that revolutionary New Afrikans were years ahead of the curve as far as analysing trans oppression and organizing for trans liberation. There can be no question about where revolutionary New Afrikans stand. It’s us, the euro-amerikan trans women who currently reside in one of the deep fault lines in the ever-shifting tectonic plates of whiteness, who have a drastic choice to make, who have to learn who we are and decide who we’ll be. We can either be the mortar that seals the break, that holds up this murderous settler society for another generation, or we can be the bomb that goes off and helps to shatter it apart. If our New Afrikan sisters can struggle through such severe brutalization from all sides to throw their weight behind revolutionary action, what the fuck is our excuse?

Trans Amazons or Trans Aryans?

In the middle of all this, euro-amerikan trans women have found ourselves pulled from two internal class lines. On one side we have the aforementioned sellouts, those bourgeois sisters so desperate to be cisters, who demand entrance into the imperialist amerikkkan military, who run for public office, who become cops in Seattle, who make six figures filming youtube videos or writing software. On the other, we have the broke white trans woman as radical, as revolutionary, so common as to be a stereotype. Any given anarchist affinity group, nascent Maoist party, or revolutionary feminist collective is full of these sisters, and any attempt at jailbreak out of euro-amerikan settler society is inevitably crawling with us. This is not a coincidence, it is only natural that alienated proletarian gender outlaws would turn on the system that crushes us. We have to nourish this revolutionary sentiment, feed it, build on it, and develop it into a weapon or otherwise be subsumed into the machinery of genocide.

Butch Lee states that Amazons are women who fight for all womankind, against capitalism-imperialism, settler society, and against the cult of white womanhood that has thrown its weight behind the machinery of genocide in exchange for patriarchal favor. So, with that definition illuminating our path, the choice can be simplified as such: will we be proletarian Trans Amazons, those revolutionary women and non-men who wage war against all oppression, or will we be bourgeois Trans Aryans who fight for our place within neo-colonial racial capitalism? In order for the revolutionary strands of our community to win out, we have to set ourselves against settlerism, against those “sisters” of ours who refuse to break with parasitism, and wage war on the settler state. Right now we are little more than a despised wing of settler society, alienated within it but still *within* it. So what do we do, where do we go from here, how do we break out?

Sanyika Shakur, in his piece *Get Up For The Down Stroke*, describes the role of euro-american communists as such:

The greatest “support” the settlers who are “committed” can offer the New Afrikan Independence Movement is to organize their nationals and start taking the fight to their bourgeoisie. That’s their responsibility. Not uniting with us, or any other national liberation struggle. They have to build their own and handle their business. We’ll run alliances when necessary, but their obligation is to not be “Good Americans”—not be like the Germans who were “Good Germans” during the Nazi era, just going right along with their government’s genocidal programs because they were beneficial to them.

What clearer instruction could we be waiting for? What euro-american community is more connected and simultaneously more ostracized than we are? We have an opportunity, a responsibility, to refuse to be “good amerikkans” who will help colonize the now widening expanse of gender rebellion for settler amerikkka, and instead to *break* from this sick settler society that simultaneously hates us and demands we fight and die for its expansion.

There are so many places we could start. Do you have somewhere your battered sisters can sleep for a few days, somewhere abused or rejected trans youth can post up safely without fear of getting further fucked with? What about our comrades who do street level sex work? They look out for each other to be sure, but do they have the space and firepower to do so effectively? Are there sisters defending these spaces and groups with their lives? If the answer is no then get moving. Even a basement and three revs is a start. We need a transsexual communism, not in some hackneyed academic way but in the *literal* sense of a communism that is by and for proletarian trans women. We need safe houses, people who can put together warm meals, militant defense of our community and offense against the pigs, capitalists, abusers and sellouts, and we need a truly revolutionary communist politics in command of it all. Right now we have nothing of our own, which might seem daunting at first but also means we have nothing to lose, which means we have a distinct historical advantage. Dare to struggle, dare to win right?

All liberation movements face similar dilemmas to the ones we face; must respond to both the forces of co-optation and repression. We are born into a rotting settler-colonial society and we can only detox from empire and become liberated women through protracted struggle against that society. The forces of reform and co-optation will never liberate us, only break us down into shadows of ourselves so we can comfortably fit into the amerikkkan oppressor nation. Neither will other liberation movements carry our weight for us. The principle of self determination

demands that we take our liberation into our own hands. It's in this crossroads that we have to answer that age old question asked of all liberation movements:

Which will you be, hammer or anvil?

–Valerie

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