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-Identity Politics are fundamentally reformist and seek to find a more favorable relationship between different subject positions rather than to abolish the structures that produce those positions from the beginning. Identity politicians oppose “classism” while being content to leave class society intact. Any resistance to society must foreground the destruction of the subjectifying processes that reproduce society daily, and must destroy the institutions and practices that racialize and engender bodies within the social order.

-Identity Politics are deployed by, inherently refer to, always valorize and are in and of themselves the State.

IDENTITY CRISIS

Identity, Politics and Anti-Politics



An Excerpt from Queer Ultra Violence Bash Back! Anthology

Note from the publisher:

This text was retrieved from *Bash Back! is Dead; Bash Back Forever!* which is part of a larger anthology called *Queer Ultraviolence*. We find these texts to be an exceptionally valuable contribution to queer nihilist theory and practice, and so we felt compelled to make this particular text more accessible as a stand alone zine. In our opinion, the problem of identitarianism embarrassingly continues to plague the anarchist movement (or what's left of it) even today as we publish this zine. As a queer nihilist project ourselves, we whole-heartedly relate to the authors perspective and find tremendous affinity with queerness as a lifestyle of negation rather than a mere academic politic. - *Warzone Distro*

people who hate gendered-capitalism and heteronormativity. Our position is hyper-attuned to our lived experience. Our understanding of ourselves and our position names our enemies!

In a crucial point of emergence long ago, woman established herself as existent rather than plunging the monist world of Man into the void from which she came. In another, the proletariat struggled to secure its autonomous liberation from the bourgeoisie rather than destroy the bourgeoisie and itself entirely. On the stage set by the present order, the queer force is making itself busy with the proliferation of identities rather than the utter negation of them.

preliminary notes on modes of reproduction

While outsider perspectives may only be able to understand Bash Back! through the logic of identity, I understand it as a series of experiments toward identity's undoing. In the same way that the Oscar Grant Riots in Oakland, CA created unlikely alliances against the racial order, so too did Bash Back! result in a sequence of material attacks against all the subject positions within the hetero-normative identity matrix. Many who began their engagement with the project found themselves seduced by its way of war. Straight people found themselves destroying gender alongside gender-freaks of all stripes. Many found themselves unburdened of their previous subjective attachment to Straightness. Queers and all those assigned-victim-at-birth, engaged in a practice of refusing victimization, and in doing so refused the foundational principle of their role in this gendered society.

Insurrectionary theory tells us that an insurrectionary process is based on attack and experimentation to open up the way to society's undoing. Queer theory tells us that queering is a verb, a process which eternally problematizes and undoes normative roles. I locate Bash Back! at the intersection of these processes and understand them to be the same.

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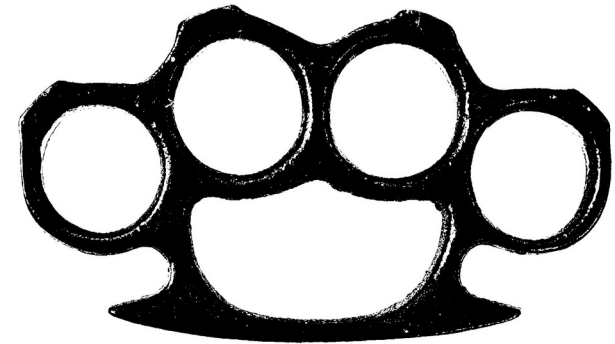
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Taking this analysis to heart, Bash Back! can be seen as an attempt to forge a resistance practice of lived experience outside the logic of Identity Politics. Though not authored by participants in Bash Back! we’ve included a text by anarcha-feminists in San Francisco entitled “Anarcha-Feminists take to the Streets”. This piece, published concurrently with the identity crisis of Bash Back! offers an outstanding and unique way to conceptualize patriarchy and resistance to it. To quote:

Ironically, despite our critiques—and sometimes hatred—of identity politics, we find ourselves coming together around a (somewhat loose) identity: We are some people who no longer want to be victims of gender tyranny and misogyny. Within this grouping we are hoping to circumvent, to a certain extent, our gender and what that means for us when we are living our lives in this Man’s World so we might gain some insight as to what it might look like to not have gender dynamics influence every interaction. We come together to fight for a reality where identities such as “man,” “woman,” and “trans” are logical impossibilities.

I’ll follow the author(s) of the Anarcha-Feminist communiqué as they understand themselves to be unified in their desires and dispositions, rather than their identities. Without reference to a shared or stable subject, the authors of this piece offer a starting point for the construction of an anti-essentialist, anti-identitarian force to combat patriarchy. In the context of the re-emergence of second wave feminism in insurrectionary anarchist/communist circles, this way of thinking is beautiful. It offers a roadmap to how we might build the type of war-machine that can destroy gender. This is why I do not conceive of Bash Back! as being rooted in queer identity. Rather, I understand it to be an experiment in building an offensive constellation of queer positions.

We are the people who aim to destroy the social order from which we’ve been excluded. We are the people seeking to end our imprisonment. We are the



For those who don’t already know...

Bash Back! originated as a haven for queers already involved in anarchist struggles, and it intended to carve a space for those often disenfranchised from direct action-oriented straight anarchist space. Bash Back! arose in a context in which patriarchy ran rampant in anarchist circles. While comfortable, white college kids dominated the so-called radical queer scene, political correctness was an epidemic illness among the potluckgoing, craft-obsessed queer “radicals.” It was this frustration with the straight anarchists and queer so-called radicals that gave way to the unique anti-identity politics form of separatism that became rooted in Bash Back!

Bash Back! was not just a group or organization, but a militant tendency on the part of queer individuals. While Bash Back! was occasionally public and campy, bashing back was more of an everyday evolutionary occurrence than any sort of activist entity. Most of what can be attributed to the Bash Back! period never made it onto the internet or into newspapers. Bashing back meant bar fights, outrunning lynch mobs, glamdalization, attacking the homes of heterosexual murderers, outright chaos, alleged lootings, theory discussions, self-defense tips, social gatherings, beatdowns, the acquisition of large quantities of pepper spray, and attempts at sexual liberation. It was a temporary counter-culture amongst friend groups and peers that called for nothing short of direct confrontation with the (mostly) straight, (mostly) white and always normative society: the ultimate queer propaganda by queer deed.

- Introduction from Queer Ultra Violence: Bash Back! Anthology

It is clear that, because identities shape our experiences, we cannot write off identity as unimportant. However, it is equally clear that we cannot afford to maintain the identities imposed upon us. Thus, an apparent contradiction arises between the necessity of recognizing socially constructed identity while simultaneously trying to destroy the class society that enforces those identities. This contradiction proves difficult, with a range of responses from a disregard for the destruction of class society to a disregard for identity, and many other arguments somewhere between these two positions.

Identity, Politics and Anti-Politics

After certain circles within Bash Back! had thoroughly rid themselves of liberal-pacifist tendencies, future conflict would be staged between militants or insurrectionists who differed in regard to the question of identity. Though the above conflicts over violence often played out in ways that were parallel to discussions of identity, I concern myself with those discussions of identity that take violence as a given. This will serve to illuminate a set of questions and conflicts that emerged as unique to Bash Back! A way to view this conflict is to understand the partisans as, on the one hand, Militants of Identity Politics – and on the other, anti-identitarians. One side takes identity as a given and a precondition that must shape our organizing and struggle, the other locates identity as the enemy itself. Positions within this conflict were not stable – individuals and groups within the Bash Back! tendency could embody either of these positions or both at once. I’m going to avoid a lot of the specifics of these conflicts, as many of them need to remain abstract, and others are not mine to tell. Rather I’ll focus on the theoretical grounding of this confrontation and will leave space for those who experienced it to locate themselves within this reading.

This problem within Bash Back! is quite fitting insofar as it is a queer problem. Queerness itself is a contested territory, open to endless debate and critique. For a certain camp of people, queerness is a positive project, with its own set of norms and community-forms. For others, queerness can only be conceived of negatively, as that which exceeds or fails to meet a set of norms. In this way Queer comes to be a catachresis, or a name wrongly given to that which cannot be named. A label given to that which cannot be labeled. Positions within Bash Back! took their starting points from any number of positions within this complex theoretical matrix. There is an argument to be made that one’s position on the debate was often directly descendent from one’s own (anti-political) background. Those who came to Bash Back! from gender studies tended to conduct themselves as the militant shock-troops of whatever doctrine they picked up from their professors. Those enmeshed in insurrectionary anarchist circles tended to have a strong (if at times perhaps too harsh) aversion to identity-based struggle, focusing instead on locating points of conflict within

identity. Those who came from established queer scenes brought with them a whole range of expectations in regard to people’s behaviors and language – expectations that were often alien to those not familiar with such cliques. What is so queer about the set of conflicts at play within Bash Back! is that each of these positions was permeated with the other, and a wide array of perversions emerged.

I’d like to offer that a certain synthesis emerged out of many of these conflicts that could prove beneficial for anarchists in coming struggles: experience must be the basis of struggle. If we expect to engage in material struggles against the social order, we must begin from the ways in which we experience that order. This means that those who share a set of experiences under capitalism will have a natural head-start in forging alliances against society. This is the kernel of truth at the heart of identity. Sadly, this kernel is obscured by layer upon layer of abstraction and mystification produced by identity politics. Any effort to build autonomous power based on one’s position within and against society must begin by disillusioning itself of the baggage of Identity Politics.

Here is a quick sketch of certain anti-identity politics positions distilled from Bash Back!.

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