

MILITANT QUEER
INSURRECTION!



*Had respect for Milwaukee's Mary Nardini gang,
from whom I plagiarized mercilessly.*

***Queer* does not mean “gay”,**
and it doesn’t mean “gay and lesbian”, either.

***Queer* does not equate “homosexuality”.**
It means more than “non-heterosexuality”, too.

***Queer* isn’t “LGBT”, “LGBTI”, “GLBTI2A”,**
nor any of the many other acronyms we’ve had thrown at us over the years. These terms try to be inclusive, but even the longest and most awkward of them are ultimately limiting. There are far more genders and identities out there than you could ever fit in a cozy little acronym – and how do you include those who’ve moved past gender and sexual identity altogether?

(Not to mention the fact that an alphabet-soup terminology, clinical and boring, fails to convey the same sort of passion, the same desire, the same *sexiness* that one single dagger-to-the-heart, fist-to-the-anus syllable can.)

***Queer* is not just another identity,**
nor is it even the sum of all identities.

...but, then, what *is* queer?

*"The realm of the queer
is the realm of tension."*

The **NORMAL**, that hated spectre, dominates this society. This is the thing that determines who gets to navigate through the streets of cities without getting harassed by cops or bigots – and who will. It's the thing that determines those who don't have to worry about whether their own behaviour confirms particular stereotypes about their gender, race, sexual orientation, whatever – and those who do. Almost all of us clash with the question "what is normal?" every single day:

- *will it be normal for me to wear this kind of clothing in public?*
- *is it normal that I don't want to spend my life at school, then work, finally retirement?*
- *is it fucking normal that I have never seen even a glimpse of something worth living for in this culture of work, consumerism, and spectacle?*

As for those who don't ask these questions, I'll offer a quote from Michael Parenti: **"You don't know you're wearing a leash if you sit by the peg all day."**

The Normal, which is valued and appreciated, is contrasted to the abnormal, which is rejected and scorned. While every culture and community has its own norms, the Normal as a moral absolute and/or a hegemonic standard across communities is extremely dangerous. Across colonized Turtle Island, or the "civilized world" more generally, it is considered *normal* that you should speak a certain way, that you should look a certain way, and that you should desire certain things. You can be different, of course – but only to a degree. If you violate certain norms, the repercussions can be severe: you may not get a job you need to feed yourself; you may be subjected to harassment; you may even be killed. In this sex-negative civilization, violating a sexual norm will often bring the harshest kind of consequences down on the so-called deviant, as the victims of queerbashing and other forms of violence can attest.

It's dangerous to be considered "sexually abnormal" in all societies (even though the norms may differ), and that's doubly true if you're already facing stigma for other reasons (queer wimmin, queer people of colour, or queer poor folks, among many others). In the eyes of many religious ideologues, being queer and/or trans is enough grounds to kill a persyn – and we might like to pretend that things rarely go that far around *here*, but the fact is that being queer or being trans is definitely still grounds for someone to be rejected by their family, kicked out of their house, beaten up in a dark alley.

The problem is the Normal. To be perceived as normal is to grant an individual certain privileges in this society, but privilege can only exist where others *lack* privilege – and the Normal can only exist if there are some people who are *abnormal*. In response to this dilemma, many have tried to expand the definition of normalcy to include "same-sex relationships". With same-sex marriage as the primary objective, many groups have tried to appeal to the straight world that they are *almost* straight themselves, and that they can as be as good a soldier, politician, or cop as any heterosexual. In what can be called the assimilationist school of LGBT advocacy, values like monogamy are emphasized, frank discussions of sexuality are avoided (buying into hegemonic sex-negativity), and a lot of time is spent talking about the great contributions that homos have made to civilization – starting with Alexander the Great, one of Antiquity's finest mass murderers with an itch for world domination. It's evident that assimilationists tend to be white and middle-class, and that many (though not all) LGBT advocacy groups are dominated by men – that *none*, as far as I know, adequately represent trans folks or their issues. It would appear that otherwise privileged "non-heterosexuals" want to ensure that said privilege won't be compromised by their sexual orientation or their gender identity.

Contrary to LGBT advocate politics, queer (anti)politics do not seek to expand the Normal to include us. The only way for the Normal to exist is to exclude those who don't meet the proper criteria; even if some us can get a degree of tolerance from this society, many others will never have that. Therefore, **we seek to destroy the Normal altogether** – and thereby emancipate *all of us* from its tyranny. Our project, then, is a negative one: to kill what kills us and, more than that, kills what constitutes *who we are*.

WE ARE AT WAR.

Civilization and all its manifestations – patriarchy, capitalism, empire – have, since they first emerged, constituted a **total war** on the individual liberty of every sentient creature on this planet. Many of us don't see this war playing out everyday, and that's because many of are protected by various kinds of privilege – but for those who suffer its effects, the war on the poor, or the war on indigenous peoples, or the war on autonomous communities *everywhere* is very real.

What is the logic of this war? Progress; that is, the belief that we are “headed somewhere”, or that the “next stage” will be better than the one we're in right now. Whether it's expressed in Marxist, religious, or other kinds of language, it is the logic of death. The experience of the present is less valid than that of the future, whether that future is capital-C Communism, Heaven, or anything else. The only common denominator is the belief that we will achieve perfection in society – but only after we're dead, having used our lives to this end.

So what are the implications for queers? Well, frankly, most visions of perfection just don't include us. This means that one of two things will have to be done before the next stage: we have to be exterminated, à la Mr. Hitler and his merry gang of butchers; or we have to be reformed. The Victorians subjected lesbians (and similarly “sexually deranged” wimmin) to hysterectomies in order to “cure” them. The labour camps that Che set up in Cuba during the 1960s were used to “make real men” out of effeminate dudes that the state considered to be homosexuals. Today, conservative Christian ministries run a network of “gay rehabilitation” camps that parents can send their kids to. From the sounds of what goes on in those places – the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse – I'm not sure whether or not I'd prefer Hitler's gas chamber. At least it'd be quick.

What are the real motivations behind this war? Greed; that is, the desire for as much wealth and power as can possibly be obtained. Our would-be masters want everything: the land we walk on, the water that falls from the sky, maybe someday the air we breathe. Capitalism has spread to every corner of the world: most markets have been opened up; most resources have been tapped. But they don't have *everything* yet, and this war won't be over until a) they do or b) they are destroyed.

Autonomy is a direct threat to ruling-class megalomania. If any sector of existence remains outside of their control – even humyn desires – then the potential profits of that sector aren't being extracted and, perhaps even worse, it brings notice to the fact that survival is possible without the parasitism of social hierarchy and scarcity economics.

At one time, the ghetto constituted an autonomous zone in the middle of the city: a safehaven from the rigid, sex-negative, heteronormative, violently repressive culture that surrounded it. Queers, trans folks, poor folks, homeless folks, racial minorities, anarchists, artists, sex workers, and many others formed communities and mutual aid networks in which they could feel safe, and which they knew would back them up if they got in trouble. A good example for queers: New York's STAR House, founded by Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera in 1970. STAR (that is, Street Tranvestite Action Revolutionaries) existed to provide queer and trans kids – teenage runaways, homeless youth – a free and safe place to stay. The "House Mothers" hustled for the rent, so that the kids wouldn't have to, and the kids scavenged for food, making sure everyone could eat.

The ghetto was not unique, of course. Basic anthropology will teach you that, at one point, the majority of humyns lived in collective communities with one another: nomadic bands, communal villages, etc. It could hardly be described as utopian: life was difficult and often short; there was little recourse against the onslaught of Nature. That said, humyns were supporting one another in this business of being a living being on this planet; they didn't fuck each other over.

But there were no humyns in any position to exploit others at that time. Today, the ruling class is at war with the class of workers and other would-be (wage) slaves – and the name of their war is *civilization*. Civilization is not merely the means, though; it is an end. It is the image that members of the ruling class impose upon the world: an image of endless expanses of concrete, glass, and steel encircling the planet, trampling over rainforests and villages, populated by efficient and emotionless workers that have been sanitized of desire. Whether or not individuals have made the actual *decision* to side with civilization, it is the image that their actions reflect.

Civilization and the ruling class that propagates it are the enemies of the queer.

Civilization is a domesticating force: it is a force that, through a process of careful selection, renders forms of life reliant on – as well as accustomed to – the direction of authority. This is, generally speaking, to the advantage of the authority. There are few benevolent dictators, after all, and even where there are, the properly anarchist position is that the individual knows best what her own interests are. As Roland Chrisjohn said of the Anglican Church in the Americas, "Even with the best of intentions, you can commit genocide."

Many humyns have been domesticated. The ruling class domesticates itself just as much as it domesticates the workers. Our desires haven't been exempt from the phenomenon, either: certain desires are cultivated because they are useful, while others – say, the desire for authentic liberty – have been repressed with arguments like "that's unrealistic!" or "people would kill each other en masse!" Even queers, who rebel in the realm of sexuality, have not been exempt. Community spaces (cruising areas, hangout places) have been taken from us; advertising has sold us an image of what is desirable (white, blond gay men with abs); collaborators have sold the rest of us out.

On one summer night in 1969, riots broke out during a routine police raid at the Stonewall Inn, considered the gay bar in New York City at the time – it was the only place where men were allowed to dance together. A standard raid, which happened roughly once a month at every bar in the city, would see transvestites subjected to “gender verification” by female cops. Having a dick and wearing a dress would get you arrested.

On June 28, 1969, the transvestites decided that they would not simply comply with their oppressors; the police had to force them into a room at the back of the bar. People refused to produce their ID. Some of the lesbians present at the mostly male bar were molested by the pigs. A crowd started to form outside. To quote an anonymous rioter, there was a general attitude that “Tuesday night was [going to be] the last night for bullshit”.

Outside the bar, one lesbian arrestee, complaining that her handcuffs were too tight, stood up to the police; she fought against them for ten minutes and wrestled herself from their custody four separate times. Before the pigs finally threw her in the back of the paddy wagon, she yelled to the crowd,

“Why don’t you guys do something?”

It was the last straw. The crowd metamorphosed into a riot faster than the slow machinery of the state could account for. That night, sodomites, bulldykes, and all the other moral degenerates finally got to tell the authorities – from the pigs to the priests – that “we’ll fuck who we want to, we’ll love how we want to, and if you don’t like it, then you’d better just fuck right off.” And, knowing that words are just air by themselves, the spontaneous queer insurgency backed their words up with fire and rocks.

Despite earlier explosions of queer rage in postwar America, Stonewall is, today, considered the birth of the modern LGBT rights movement in Turtle Island (North America). Silver-tongued liberals like Barack Obama pay service to the rioters – but what does the defender of capital see of value in property destruction and utter disrespect for the state? Is this not a further domestication: a taming of our history, or a recasting of insurrection as palatable “civil disobedience”?

The only reason that queers enjoy any “rights” in this society is because they proved themselves a *threat*; they needed to be pacified. Wherever it’s more cost-effective than applying force, the master class has always been willing to throw a bone for its enemies to chew on. If you’re happy with the bone, then this zine isn’t really for you. If you want more than they can possibly offer – that is, authentic *freedom*, for yourself and for others – then read on!

For some, the fear of camps is too much. In certain cases, this may even be understandable: for example, in certain communities, the threat of violence against queer folks is high enough that it makes no strategic sense to publicly declare oneself attracted to members of the same sex – but that's just the reality of the (patriarchal, capitalist, civilized) world we live in. We can't resign ourselves to the inevitability of suffering, repression, and punishments for deviance from authoritarian interpretations of acceptable sexuality. We can't say that this is the way it always was and always will be. The anarchist position is that our desires are worth something, that they are not impossible, and not only that we *can*, but we *will*, experience them in our lifetimes! We have to fight!

Bash Back! and its many predecessors – the Gay Liberation Front, Gay Shame, ACT UP – are indicative of the fact that queers are not going to go willingly to camps, are not going to stay silent when pharmaceutical companies or Christian ministries interfere with their ability to stay healthy and happy, and are not going to let anyone fuck with the essence of who they are (whether that's repressing sexuality or repressing certain mannerisms, expressions, etc.).

Those liberals who moralize about Bash Back!'s tactics either fail to understand that queer history is one of people *taking action* (from activism to riots and insurrection) to ensure that the people possessing queer desires (perverted, subversive, exciting desires) – and the folks who don't fit neatly along the gender binary, and all the folks who've been made to suffer for past decisions, for being perceived a certain way, for doing what they felt was the right thing to do – all *continue to exist*, because the social war is a total war: the advocates of progress don't see us in the future, and thus threaten us with no less than annihilation.

Those who question the efficacy of the tactics are closer to the point. A critical dialogue about strategy is always valuable, after all. However, Bash Back! has proven itself effective: it empowers queers to know their own strength, brings them face-to-face with their enemies, promotes the idea that fucking with queers is not a consequence-free exercise, brings radical queers together for actions and convergences, and is, at the very least, a step in the direction of confronting and even taking down the state, its police, queerbashing churches, and corporations that have colonized our ghettos and coopted our culture.

We are in the midst of financial collapse, and arguably on the precipice of commercial collapse. As the prospect of maintaining the status quo becomes more desperate, more people are taking to revolutionary action, choosing sides, getting more collective or adopting paranoid survivalism. So, depending on how things go *now*, we could either win or lose the social war in a matter of years (or, failing that, Gilles Dauvé's warning will go unheeded, and the enemy will convince us that the time for revolution isn't here yet, and we'll wait and miss our opportunity at liberation; we'd do well to remember that a real revolution is premature by definition). Anarchists need to confront, occupy, reclaim, and emancipate; for the first time in a long time, anarchists *everywhere* have the opportunity to go on the offensive. We can't hide in our little subcultures any longer; we need to finish the social war, to attack and *destroy* our enemies. Siding against insurrection indicates a position of ill-gotten privilege in this society, as well as an essential cowardice: the fear of liberation.

A Brief, Very Incomplete Array of Enemies

Fundamentalist Christianity. Christianity, which came to dominance in ancient Rome for political reasons and which was imposed on the pagan peoples of Europe (and, later, elsewhere) through genocide, has always promoted revulsion and violence towards "the people of Sodom". On Turtle Island, powerful churches are leading the fight against desire, love, and sexuality, and while many individual believers are real decent folks, we cannot deny the fact that many major Christian organizations are wholly committed to our eradication in preparation for the Rapture, the Second Coming, the End Times, or some other millenarian bullshit.

The state. In George Orwell's magnum opus, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, sexuality and erotic passion have been replaced by passion for the State and Big Brother; love has been replaced by patriotism, a hollow "love" of the abstract totalitarian system. It's "sex gone sour," as the character Julia describes it. Love is the most powerful force there is, and that's more than flaky hippy rhetoric: love for the land is what inspires us to torch new housing developments and fight Franco; love for each other inspires us to de-arrest comrades and break our friends out of prison. States have come to understand the power of love, unfortunately. As the most blatant face of civilization – the force that seeks to process our world into commodities and products – states have given themselves the task of processing our greatest resource – our boundless, infinite love for one another, ourselves, and our land – into nationalism, patriotism, and other means to the sick end of the state's continuation. Genuine love is not a means; it is an end unto itself.

Corporate power. The forces of capital have colonized our spaces and our communities. They have largely succeeded in commodifying queer sex, in reducing it to a pay-and-fuck situation: picture the gay bar, where you pay for cover and cruise, looking for the perfect one-night stand. Without any actual emotional connection, you seek a persyn who matches certain ideals of hegemonic beauty, the ideal images sold to us in the form of mainstream gay porn, in commercials geared towards gays. When you're buying sex, when cruising costs money (and it does, since the forces of capital and empire have evicted us from our traditional, cost-free cruisy spots, like public washrooms and parks), you feel the stress of seeking out the correct product for your money, of getting the perfect, most cost-effective fuck. This is not healthy. Our spaces are controlled by the same institutions that promote a heteronormative vision of society elsewhere, that purposefully make fun of fags and trannies to appeal to the attitudes of the homophobic asshole market. We need to take our spaces back. Queer sex shouldn't be something you buy. We can't exclude the street kids who can't pay cover; we can't exclude coloured folks, trans folks, chubbies, or anyone else. *The corporations will be taken out.*

Assimilationist queers. When a queer guy describes himself as "straight-acting", he implies both that self-described straight guys act a certain way, and that the group of which he himself is a part generally act another way. He very often derides "effeminate" guys, claiming that he's gay because he's "attracted to men, not girls". But for all his (hegemonic) masculinity, he is often closeted, even proudly so. When he isn't, he derides "those gays", distancing himself from those with whom he holds common cause. Instead of making the legitimate claim that the queer community doesn't accommodate his interests or his desires, he rejects the entire thing, fearing manifestations of effeminate behaviour in himself even more than a straight guy. He is the homosexual homophobe.

Of course, there are the other assimilationists: the champions of LGBT capitalism, the ones who market gay energy drinks and gay underwear brands, the ones who sell the liberal straight world the kind of queer they want to buy: interior designers and sitcom clowns. They are queers without bite, without sex. They are the miserable and neutered pets of the straight market, always at the mercy of the hand that feeds.

Campaigns like the ones for same-sex marriage and the acceptance of queers in the military are not only wastes of time and energy, but an actual attack on the thing that makes us what we are. For the time being, let's not even mention the essentially patriarchal roots of marriage or the fact that saying queers can kill Taliban as good as straights can is hardly a move towards some kind of liberation. Let's see these campaigns for what they really are: attempts to "normalize" queers, to make them the same as everyone else.

When a persyn experiences and acts on queer desires, they come in direct conflict with the doctrine of sin and guilt, one of the chief doctrines upon which this Western society is built. Having broken with the tradition there, it gets easier to break with it elsewhere. This doesn't necessarily prevent us from becoming jerks, but it makes us question the taught values of what is or is not "normal". Insofar as more and more people are "coming out" as queer and buying into the established gay market and the liberal LGBT political complex, it becomes necessary to "normalize" the realization of queer desires, to turn this revolutionary moment into one as banal as any other.

Fear. Our enemies are cowardly and weak. The essential cowardice of Hitler and the Nazis was that the National Socialist program, for all the rhetoric of revolution and historical purpose, constituted nothing more than the ruling class' desperate attempt to prevent a genuine reordering of the capitalist order. As dangerous as today's growing fascist movements are, their pretense of courage is a screen: they are motivated by simple fear of their desires, of sin, and of *us*. We have nothing to fear.

Starting sometime in the latter half of 2008, maybe – at different times for different people in different places, as with all the great moments in history – a lot of folks started to think, “This is it. This is Endgame. Now, it’s liberty or it’s death.”

This has been reflected in the anarchist press: a surplus of zines dealing with social war, with insurrection, with various tactics and strategies, with analyses of recent events in Greece, the Bay Area, across France, everywhere. It’s hardly a bad thing: there will continue to be arguments over the specifics of liberation, and the quality of the writing is bound to suffer with greater quantity, but it’s basically indicative of the fact that we’re back on the offensive.

So, this zine is a part of this new trend. Now that it’s come time for me to make some actual strategic recommendations, I find myself echoing other anarchists: occupy buildings and establish autonomous spaces; build networks of mutual aid; attack what’s keeping us from freedom. It’s nothing new. A real recommendation would be for you to read all the stuff on the strategy of insurrection that existed already, and to apply it to the militant queer struggle.

But the purpose of this zine was not simply to show queers the benefits of anarchist doctrines, tactics, and (anti)politics. Having conflated queers and anarchists throughout – having used the word we rather haphazardly – I want to show that, while anarchy offers queers the prospect of living healthily without being fucked around with by a homophobic society (from the state and its police to anti-queer churches and high school bullies), the liberation of desire – the *queer project*, if I may call it that – offers everyone (including, or especially, anarchists) a world in which joy is pursued as an end unto itself.

And, so...

A Strategic Recommendation

Have sex.

Be tactile. Don’t be afraid to hug, to touch, to wrestle. Don’t be afraid to ask for consent first!

Be naked. It’s seriously not a big deal.

Be open to your desires. Sex is healthy, fun, and brings folks together. If you’ve been taught to be afraid, it’s time to kill the cop in your head and go forward. Fear is the mind-killer. Without desire, we have no fight in us at all.

There is nothing revolutionary about lifestyle, some folks say. In terms of getting food, dumpster diving, Food Not Bombs, and gardening will never topple government, capitalism, and civilization by themselves. But without food, we die. I would never claim that Food Not Bombs is a project of insurrection, but it very well may fuel and facilitate insurrection.

The same can be said for desire, sex, and love. Alone, they can do nothing to liberate us. But, to paraphrase Lizzie Holmes, we have to enjoy life even as we are fighting against that which would kill us. What are we fighting for if not our desires? Why should we fight at all if we are never going to experience even a taste of the world we want? We can't lose touch with what we want. We can't sacrifice ourselves for "the next stage". When you've decided you can sacrifice yourself, it becomes a lot easier to sacrifice others.

When we are all deeply in love with one another, we fight a lot harder. When a Greek comrade was killed by the pigs in Athens, anarchists took to the streets out of love for his memory, and out of a desire to make sure that it would never happen again. Love and rage have a strong mutual relationship.

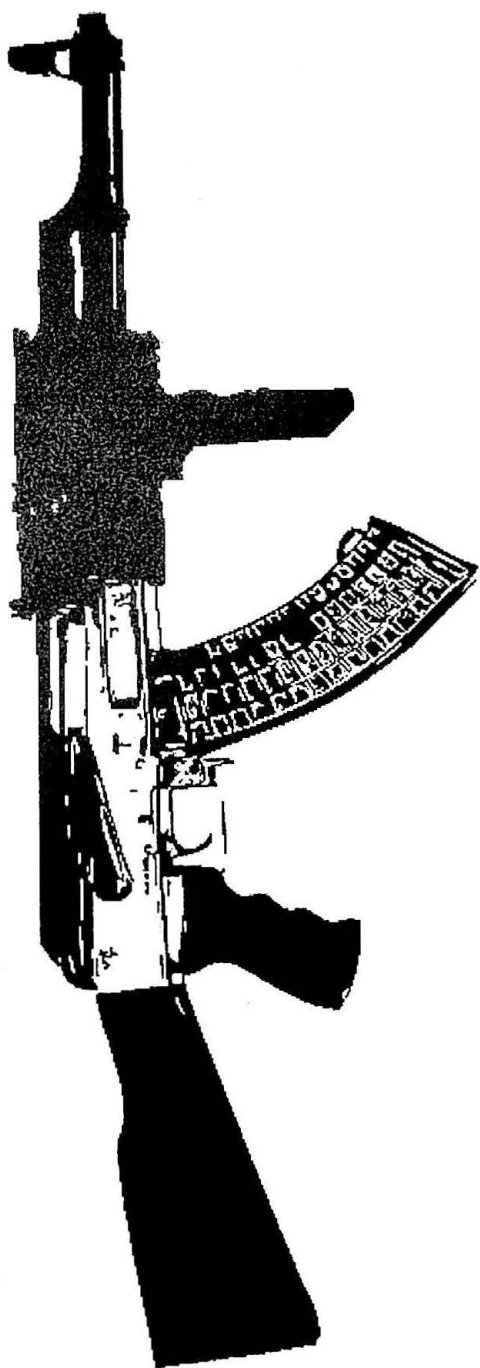
We all have to liberate our desires. Most of the time, queers have already taken an important step in that direction: they've come out of their closets; they've dealt with the consequences and moved on. But just being openly queer doesn't mean you're now liberated entirely. We must apply the same sort of logic as we do to the other avenues of liberation: identify objectives, identify obstacles, then proceed without fear. This is the philosophy of insurrection – and, again, the *ultimate* objective of insurrection must be the liberation of our desires, of our inhibitions, of our hesitancy. We can't live afraid.

To act on momentary, fleeting desires – booze, drugs, video games, candy – is to try and satisfy desires with cheap substitutes. Though sex can become an addiction, it's generally one of the funner things you can do, it's good for your health (mental, emotional, physical), it establishes connections between people.

So, tell your comrades that you love them, wear whatever clothes you want to, fuck the way you've always wanted to fuck. Do what you want to do. Get decadent!

When you find out what's worth fighting for, what you desire more than anything else, all obstacles to it will be as nothing.

“LET IT BE KNOWN, we are not backing down, we will not retreat! If you threaten us we will BASH BACK! If you fuck with us in the bathroom, we will make it a place where YOU no longer feel safe! Time for a taste of your own fucking medicine! Your time of power is over! We are the menace now; give us our space or we will fucking take it by ANY means necessary.”



**let's get
decadent!**



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