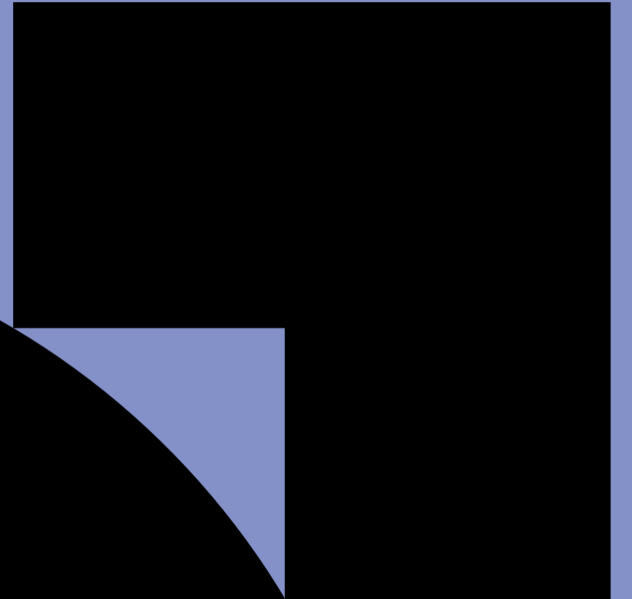
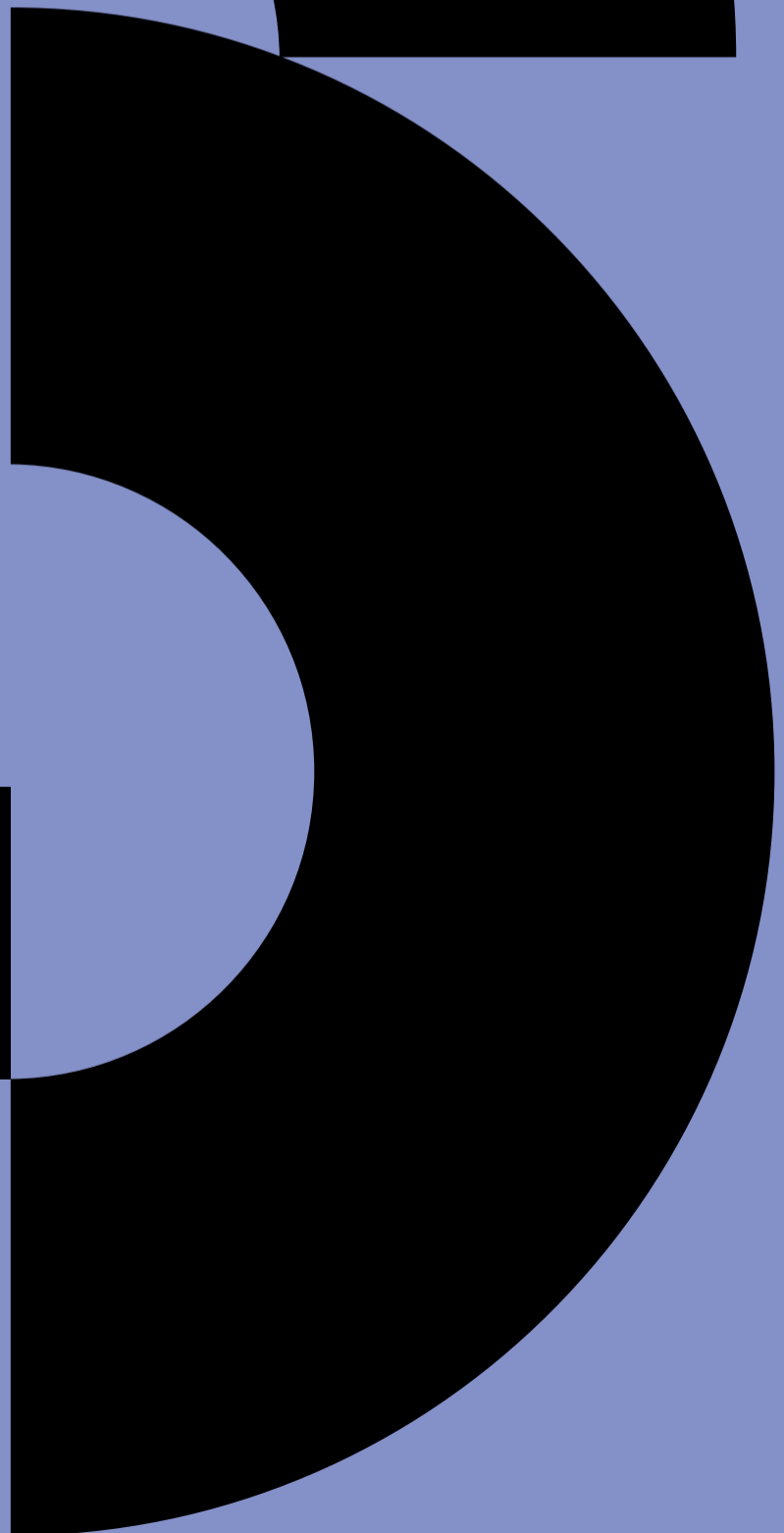
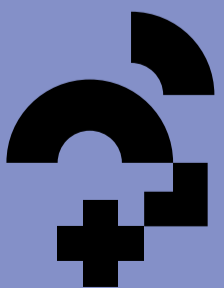
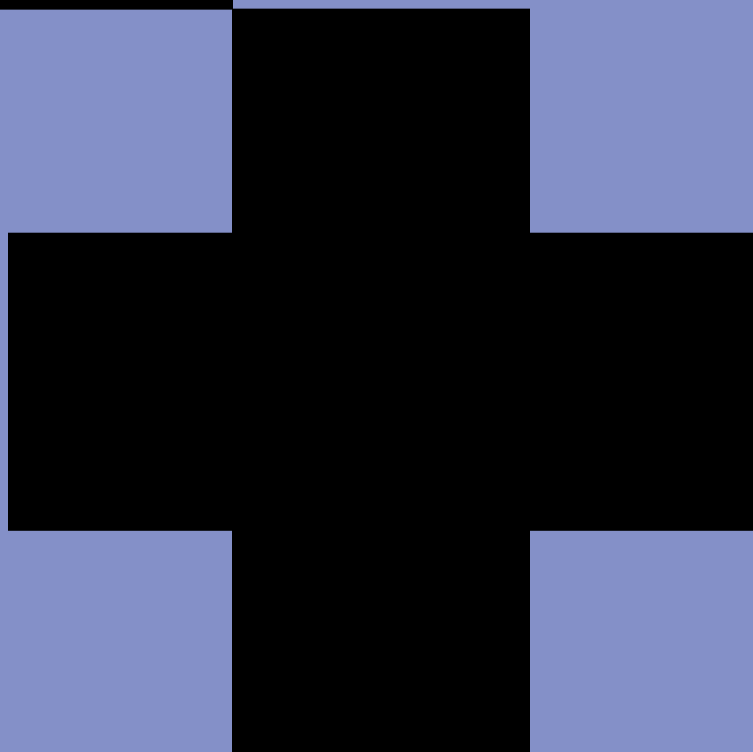
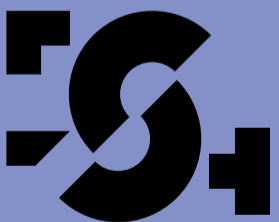
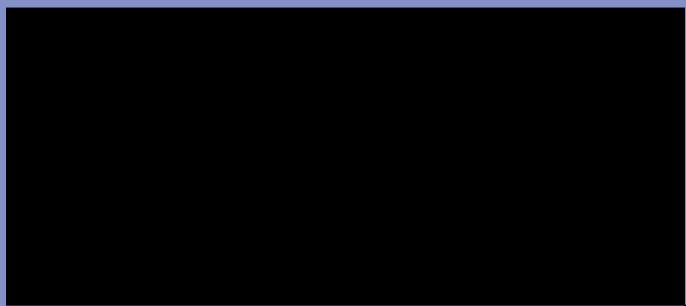
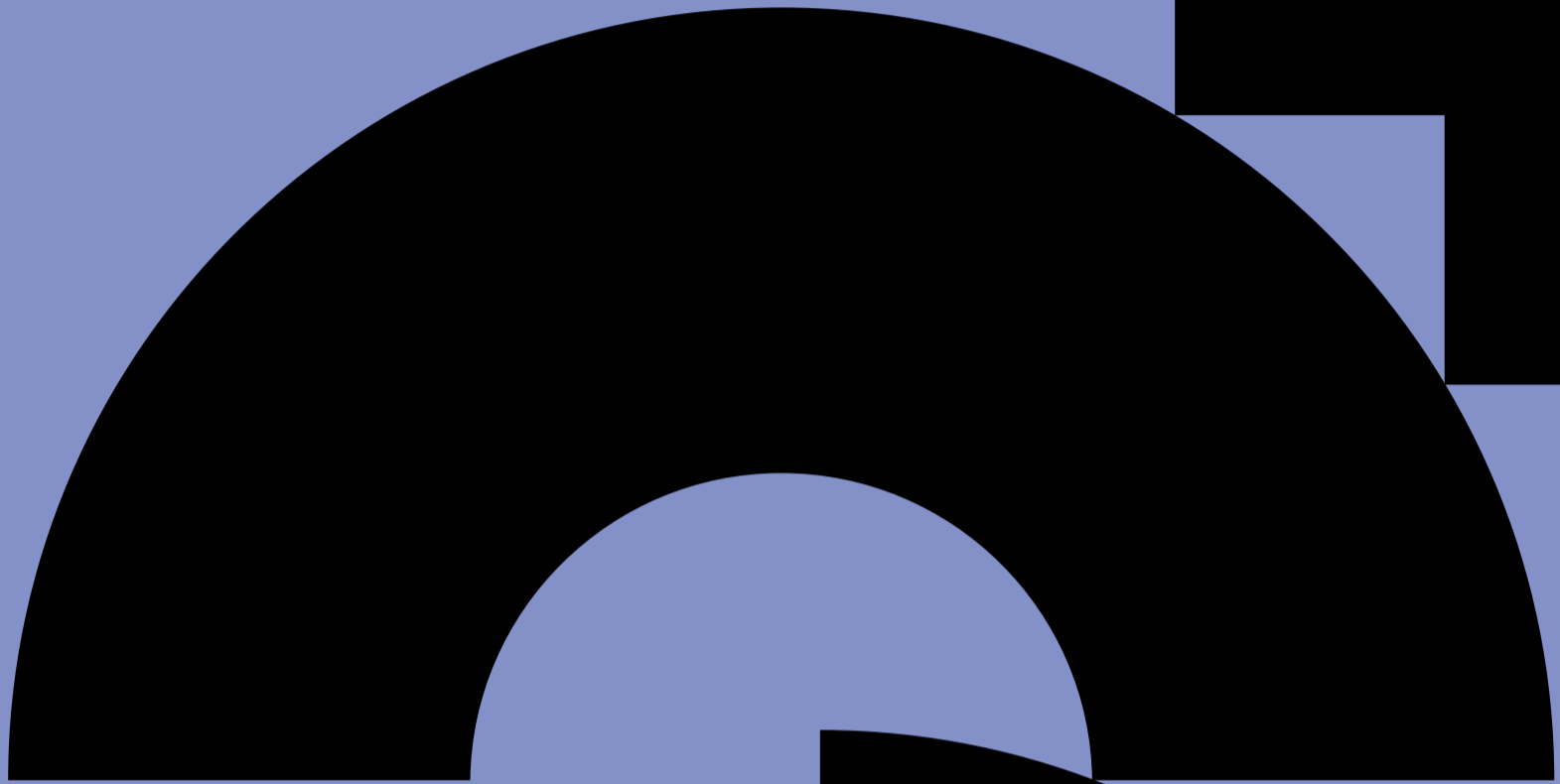
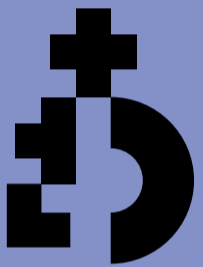


THE OCCUPIED TIMES OF LONDON

#20

MAR2013

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Editorial

Since October of last year, The Occupied Times has offered a high-quality alternative to corporate media. Our publication features articles by activists, citizens, thinkers and academic experts from the UK and around the world, and we have published 30,000 papers full of critical analysis, opinion, features and news, without printing a single advert.

The paper is totally non-profit, printed on recycled paper with vegetable inks at favourable rates by a sound and community-minded printer. It is sustained by the voluntary efforts and enthusiasm of its writers and editors, and the donations of its readers. Please help us continue. A donation of £5 funds the printing of 15 copies, and every penny goes into our current monthly print-run of 2,000.

If you would like to help keep us printing the news and views that we feel need to be heard, please make a donation by paypal to occupiedtimes@gmail.com or visit our website at: www.theoccupiedtimes.co.uk.

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In recent years, feminism has been made to feel like an exclusive concept, one reserved for 'leftists' and academics. As a result, gender politics is regularly dismissed as being of relevance only to this minority. There's also a worrying attitude that feminism was something from the past, that came and went. But we need only look at events in the last year to see that this isn't true: the defences of Julian Assange that carried more than a whiff of rape apology, the kangaroo courts hastily erected by the SWP to 'investigate' rape allegations at the core of the party, and the recent bout of transphobic hate speech printed in the Observer. It becomes clear that the issue of gender isn't something that ought to be locked away in the back rooms of universities; it is a tangible, key relation in contemporary politics.

Societies controlled by capitalism have been fundamentally defined by patriarchal relationships throughout history. From birth, we are conditioned to behave according to socially normalised standards - gender, sexuality and race are all imposed on us, determining our identity from the outset. The philosopher Gilles Deleuze asserted that forcing a fixed identity upon "subjects" not only isolates and divides us, it becomes a way of pacifying our desire for freedom. We are forced to inhabit stereotyped identities and gender binaries, which not only stifle society's revolutionary potential, but divide our struggles.

The division of gender roles predates capitalism, but the significant economic changes which have come to constitute the capitalist model have served to both reconstruct and further reiterate divisive gender binaries. Capitalism enforces arbitrary gender norms which we feel obliged to live up to; triggering our inner-most insecurities, isolating us and encouraging consumerist behaviours. We buy into these gendered identities for various reasons, but among them is the desire to belong, which we're told will happen if we 'strive' towards the unattainable (and undesirable) lifestyles that glossy magazines, sensationalist advertisements and politicians tell us we must crave.

By creating and establishing normative genders and linking them to biology, as if they were natural and inevitable, people (aka the "subjects") become more easily exploitable. However the way in which gender-roles mutate across time and cultures demonstrates the arbitrary nature of how female/male identities are constructed under different social systems. For example, up until the 1800s the idealised female figure was extremely curvaceous. In Ancient Greece both cross-dressing and homosexual relations were widely practiced among men. As a matter of fact, whilst homosexual relations have been common throughout human history, it is only over the past 100 years that we have witnessed the birth of a globally standardised 'gay identity' - "the gay international".

Indeed, womanhood has changed over time in the global north. Women now form the spine of the global workforce; having been mobilised to accumulate capital, acting as a major pool of labour for capitalist expansion. But, under post-fordism we also have the contradiction that Donna Haraway has described in that gender binaries become both intensified and eroded. Many females will still seek out 'productive' labour, but it will be "pink-collar" work, from clerical roles to beauty therapy to care work where the stereotypes of femininity are a marketable asset.

Assigning arbitrary emotional traits to femininity (e.g. irrational, hysterical, weak) is one of the most subtly violent forms of oppression. It is also a debating tactic David Cameron is all too comfortable with, made famous by his unremarkable "calm down, dear" jibe in the House of Commons. Not only are these "humorous remarks" oppressive to women, they also feed into a wider spectrum of prejudice, which seeks to undermine any behaviour that is deemed non-conformist, such as the desire of a man to wear a dress or the struggle for social justice. For this reason, it is no longer acceptable for the left to regard gender as a charity struggle, or an isolated academic concept. As the poet Percy Shelley once put it: "How can man be free if woman is a slave?"

The movement has also changed: from suffrage and the fight for basic rights (largely for middle-upper class white heterosexual women), to the recognition of cultural role inequalities that are so easily taken for granted. Postmodern versions of feminism have often turned to conceptions about womanhood and gender identity.

Once gender roles become fixed and standardised they are not only another terrain for capitalist exploitation, but also a potent weapon deployed by nation states to justify sanguineous colonial wars. Historically we have seen how sexual freedom or feminism is often used to manipulate popular opinion against Islam, migrants or any other culture deemed "inferior" to the West. One example of this was the media coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were repackaged by broadcasters and tabloids as something akin to a "feminist mission". On the contrary, the implementation of a particularly gender-oppressive form of Sharia law in Iraq was a direct consequence of UK and US invasion.

Gender dominance is so intrinsically violent that "war rape" is often used in ethnic conflicts as a way for attackers to perpetuate their social control and redraw ethnic boundaries. From the Bosnian conflict, where women were raped so they could give birth to Serbian babies, to the estimated 200,000 women raped during the battle for Bangladeshi independence in 1971, and the rapes during

the 1937 occupation of Nanking - the past century offers too many gruesome examples.

Though gender stereotypes and identities have been and are constantly used as tool of oppression, gender politics has simultaneously been the epicentre for social change in many struggles. Though the contemporary gay rights movement is currently utilising much of its resources for marriage rights, it is a movement that has rebellious, even revolutionary roots. Multiracial, mostly working class, transgender and gender variant people played a crucial role in this history. From the riots which kicked off in Compton's cafeteria, San Francisco and the Stonewall Inn, New York City in the 1960s - which gave birth to Western LGBTQ movements - to the famous Zapatista "Mujeres con la Dignidad Rebelde" (Women with Rebel Dignity) to the vast mobilisations against rape apology across India and many other parts of the world.

Social and political connections between queer communities and the police have been at the forefront of the LGBTQ agenda as street youth, gay and lesbian people of colour, sex workers, drag queens, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people face disproportionate police violence. While the mainstream LGBTQ movement continues to lobby for the inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation in state and federal hate crimes statutes, there are numerous examples of grassroots efforts to challenge homophobic and transphobic violence whilst lessening our reliance on police, prisons, and courts.

As the policing of Muslim communities in the name of gender equality is now a globally organised phenomenon, queer and feminist resistance in colonised countries is becoming all the more prominent. For example, the Palestinian self-defined queer group, alQaws, seeks to challenge heteronormative oppression as well as the colonisation of Palestine.

This publication does not seek to provide an all-encompassing guide to current debates on gender. The idea behind the theme for this issue is to tease out some of the current debates on the topic; to facilitate a narrative in which gender inequality is no longer a mere afterthought, but rather the centre of our methodology, the point from which we develop our strategies and tactics, both within activism and outside of it. As long as the sole purpose of having women quotas (especially within activist groups) is to pay lip service to the idea of equality, proposals for radical change will remain couched in the delusive language of neoliberalism. We do need more women, queers and trans* within activism, but not simply to appear to be addressing cosmetic notions of equality, but to help us radically rethink our tactics. To misquote Flavia Dzodan: "My revolution will be feminist, or it will be bullshit."

Contents

02	Editorial
03	Announcements
04	International
08	Gender
11	Society
12	Interview
14	How to Crack a Space
15	lulz
16	Placard

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G8

THE WORLD'S GREED IN ONE PLACE

On 17-18 June 2013 world leaders will be attending the annual G8 summit, this year hosted in a luxury hotel in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland. Representatives from the world's eight most powerful capitalist nations will set the global agenda for economic, environmental and securitisation policy for the year ahead.

This meeting is one of the most prominent forums for irresponsible greed, overwhelming inequality, and ruthless exploitation of people and natural resources. Opposition towards the G8 goes far beyond contesting this individual event and what it represents. The meetings and actions, which will take place over the next few months will serve as an extremely important catalyst to unite different opposition groups and revitalise the global justice movement.

The Stop G8 network are hosting a number of meetings across the UK to prepare for a week of action taking place in the beginning of June, currently between the 10th and the 18th. The week will feature major days of action, infrastructure for autonomous organising, plus a cultural and "educational" programme of discussions, workshops, films, games, and more on capitalism and resistance.

Freedom Press Reopens

The oldest anarchist publishing house in the English-speaking world was firebombed in the early hours of February 1 2013. Fire services arrived at around 5am and took around two hours to extinguish the blaze, which according to the London Fire Brigade damaged around 15% of the ground floor of the shop. No injuries were sustained as there was nobody on the premises when the attack took place but a significant amount of stock was destroyed. Freedom tweeted on the day: "Not sure yet whether archives survived - we had one of only a few sets covering almost the entire printed history of the paper boxed in shop."

Over the following two days, more than a hundred people flocked to Freedom Bookshop to help clean up the downstairs space, scrub the blackened walls and try to salvage as many books as possible. Thanks to their momentous efforts, Freedom opened the following Monday, just three days after the attack. People were clearly shaken by what had happened but the overwhelming feeling was one of quiet determination and positivity about the scale of a response that has

seen people rush to help clean up, send messages of solidarity and donate funds from around the world.

Set up by a group of friends in 1886 (including the great anarchist theorist Peter Kropotkin), Freedom has been at the heart of London's anarchist community for over a century. In 1993, the building was similarly attacked by neo-fascist group Combat 18. At the time of writing, the perpetrators of this attack are unknown and the police have said "the incident is being treated as suspicious and that inquiries into the blaze's circumstances are under way." There has been little reporting of this in the mainstream media, politically-motivated arson in the nation's capital having not been deemed newsworthy.

Freedom Press will need solidarity and contributions over the coming weeks and months - the insurance on the building had expired recently. For more info follow them on Twitter (@freedom_paper) or visit their website: www.freedompress.org.uk. Cheques or postal orders made payable to Freedom Press can be also be addressed to Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.



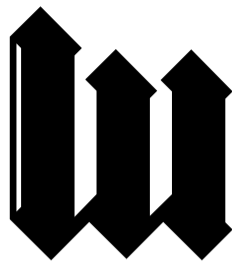
Greek Solidarity

The Greece Solidarity Campaign was established early last year, in response to an appeal for solidarity with those resisting austerity measures in Greece. Amongst their many aims they intend to provide information on the situation in Greece, which includes debunking the myths about the causes of the crisis. They oppose governmental attempts to weaken trade unions and destroy collective bargaining, and are tying links to both with solidarity organisations of Greeks resident in the UK, and similar anti-austerity campaigns across Europe.

The campaign holds organising meetings on the third Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm. The meetings are held at the offices of Unite on Theobald Road, near Holborn Underground Station in London. The next meetings will be on 20 February and 20th March.



LATIN AMERICA AT A CROSSROAD



hat instantly captures the hearts of those brave enough to venture into the Venezuelan National Reserve, nestled in the Andes mountains, is the untamed beauty of the vegetation, the crystal waters of the rivers and their sumptuous cascades. Yet, scraping just below the surface of this idyllic scenario are the harrowing stories of the Wayúu, an indigenous community fighting to exist.

The Socuy River carries 60% of the drinkable water to the region. For peasants and indigenous groups living here in the Sierra de Perijá, it's synonymous with life. But its subsoil, rich in coal, makes this territory extremely appealing to national and transnational mining companies.

In 2007, President Hugo Chavez stood up in front of the nation and declared: "If there is no environmentally safe way of extracting coal from the Socuy, then the coal stays below the ground."

Only four years later, in June 2011, Francisco Arias Cardenas, the president of Chavez's PSUV party and a candidate for governor of Zulia state, unveiled plans to open a previously renounced coal mine, plus two more.

The coal extracted from these three mines would fuel a new carbo-electric plant, and help mitigate the severe energy crisis the country is undergoing. Besides inflicting irreversible damage to the environment, as acknowledged by the president himself, the opening of these mines would displace six indigenous communities, including the Wayúu. This situation, akin to many others across the Americas, is the result of the extractivist practices upon which the Venezuelan economy heavily depends.

José Diego a member of the community of Wayuuma'ana, which would be displaced by the opening of the coal mines said "open air coal mining is the cheapest and dirtiest form of energy. A few Bolivares [Venezuelan currency] are not worth the irreversible damages to the surrounding environment and communities- who will invariably be forced into utter destitution".

The Chavez administration has, over recent years, come under increasing criticisms by human rights activist and indigenous groups over its developmentalist policies and, in particular, its reliance on the extractive industry. Environmentalist scholar Eduardo Gudynas explains "despite the state's greater involvement in redistributing the profits, the country's reliance on the exploitation of natural resources represents an implicit acceptance of the global commercial logics, moving within its rules and parameters and keeping the Latin America subordinated to the global free trade market".

One of the most problematic consequences of Venezuela's extractivist economic model, aside from the obvious natural devastation that comes with it, is that it pits the country's working poor (i.e. employees of state-owned oil and gas company, PDVSA) against indigenous communities; communities that continue to defend their lands from the advances of national and transnational mining companies, and rich farmers (hacendados), who will go as far as hiring hit men to forcefully displace them.

These growing tensions have been exacerbated by the recent trial of Lusbi Portillo - founder of the NGO Homo et Natura and long-time supporter of indigenous rights. In July 2010, Mr. Portillo helped a group of indigenous people belonging to the Yukpa ethnic group to organise a protest outside of the national tribunal to demand justice over the constant infringement of their right to self determination. Mr. Portillo is being charged for calling on Yukpa mothers and daughters to demonstrate outside the tribunal and thus "illegally transporting them outside of their natural habitat".

Mr. Portillo said "Yukpa women have traditionally been on the front-lines; confronting the national police, hacendados, corporations and any other entity looking to forcefully displace these communities". He adds, "more generally, there is no public event in which Yukpa women do not participate".

Venezuela is by no means an isolated case. In most of the subcontinent's democratic socialist countries we can see how extractivist or developmentalist practices are hindering possibilities for real social and economic change: Evo Morales, an indigenous Ayamará coca

grower who rose to power in 2006 as a member of the socialist movement, MAS, with the specific mandate of empowering the long marginalised indigenous majority (70% of the country's population), is also facing bitter criticism from indigenous and human rights groups.

In 2010, Morales championed a new constitution that granted Bolivia's 36 indigenous groups an, as of yet, ill-defined autonomy. He promised to protect indigenous people from industry and developers. But, since winning the election in December 2005, the president has been forced to weigh development against environmental protection. His 'revolution' reached a crossroads last year when he decided to pursue a 190-mile (300km) jungle highway funded by Brazil through the Isiboro-Secure Indigenous Territory National Park, or TIPNIS, in the eastern lowlands state of Beni. When indigenous groups protested against the highway, state police broke down the demonstration in one of the most violent crackdowns seen in modern Bolivian history.

While the democratic socialist tide has plenty to learn, they are nonetheless an improvement over previous administrations. The Ecuadorian president, Rafael Correa, since taking office in 2007, has pushed for neoliberal policies, criminalised protests against his administration, and blocked indigenous movements' input in the development of extractive industries and the re-writing of the constitution. But in October 2010, when the right wing party attempted a coup, the indigenous groups promptly mounted vociferous protests against it, despite remaining extremely critical of the president.

These struggles show us that the fight of indigenous groups for self-determination is not merely an issue at the margins of Latin American nationhood. Through their demands - fundamentally rooted in the defence of their spaces and ways of life - indigenous groups are not only confronting the powerful intervention of transnational capital, but simultaneously questioning the political organization of the state.

José Diego of the Wayuuma'ana community in Venezuela said: "We want a territory where our children can grow free from the gasoline clout, pollution and general devastation that open air coal mining brings. We want self-determination not only for indigenous communities, but for Latin America."

The uncertain outcomes of these struggles outlines the story of a subcontinent at a crossroads. If development plans carry on at this pace, then indigenous groups in these countries are condemned to disappear. At the same time, these territorial struggles could represent critical junctures in the history of extractivist policies in Latin America. A gauge of people's ability to resist and even turn the tide. Will we be able to speak of the indigenous frontiers of globalisation?



Organising Ourselves to Beat Harassment

Inti Maria
Tidball-Binz

"Hollaback" is an international movement to end street harassment. iAtrévete! BA is the Buenos Aires branch, which launched in early 2011. We are one of over 50 partner sites around the world. As an Argentine feminist with connections in the UK, I appreciated the idea of a global movement with local focus and leadership. This is why I founded our local site with help from other feminists from my community.

Shortly after launching, we ran a campaign which called for the dismissal of a writer who, in response to our work, launched a direct and vocal rape threat towards me in a popular weekly magazine. I decided I could either keep my head down and let it go, or I could use it as an opportunity to show that we do not need to keep schtum when we experience any kind of sexual violence, no matter how normalised it is in our own community or culture. As womyn we are often encouraged to keep these experiences to ourselves, to 'keep the peace' for the 'greater good'. However, what 'greater good' could possibly exist when the womyn (or men, or children) who are sexually abused or harassed are expected to hide? No real revolution worth having can come from this; it is paramount that we visibly sanction such abuses.

Our campaign outed this man as a misogynist and, as a result, he lost his job at the magazine. Although he exploited the publicity and was offered a reality show on an internet TV station, we were able to show, in a public way, that it is okay to act when someone behaves violently towards you. We can use their tools against them to challenge violence no matter what forms it takes - physical, sexual, economic, psychological and emotional (manipulation, blackmail, gaslighting), and symbolic (the media playing a big role in cultivating damaging meanings which determine hierarchies of power).

A year on from launching our campaign, the term 'street harassment' (acoso callejero) has entered popular vocabulary. We have also started to focus our objectives on work 'on the ground.' In a collaborative effort with a group of diverse activists, a feminist self-defence collective has been created. It teaches emotional, physical and psychological self-defence in a trans-inclusive, womyn-only safe

space. We have discovered that most self-defence classes for womyn are led by male instructors, with the very patriarchal premise that because most attackers will be male and men are 'stronger,' we need a male instructor to teach us. This only serves to reinforce the myth of the 'weaker female' and the false premise that womyn cannot be as physically strong as men. We aim to challenge that perception by having womyn instructors - womyn who regularly fight in tournaments. They are definitely ready for action!

Our strategy is threefold. First, we have trained instructors who teach us techniques from the martial arts, for instance jujitsu (useful when confronting the Argentine police who are also trained in this), Krav-Maga and kick boxing. As well as providing a light, fun-filled environment, self-defence strengthens our self-esteem and belief in our bodies. Although some exercises can be challenging, the creative and flexible environment allows us to think up new ways of doing things. If someone feels uncomfortable with a task it is okay to sit out, and we are able to talk to each other about why something has made us uncomfortable. This makes a real difference for people who have experienced abuse. Secondly, we do trust and boundary exercises, also very helpful for those who have experienced violence. Finally, we have discussions which can range from the theoretical, to inspirational figures from history, to talking about our own experiences.

In order to defeat feelings of submissiveness or dependence, we also believe other types of practical skills are necessary, such as plumbing and electrics, managing your finances and understanding your legal rights. Almost all societal institutions are patriarchal, even supposedly progressive ones as we have recently seen with the SWP. This is why we need to create alternative, self-organised, trans inclusive safe spaces to counteract the institutional violence; spaces where we can discuss our experiences, obtain important roles and share leadership in order to empower ourselves within spheres of rebellion. We need to embrace the more dangerous, angry and confrontational sides to our nature. Let us stop being afraid of 'rocking the boat' and begin to be excited about doing so!

"Without Fear and Without Favour."

With which is Incorporated the "LONDON FINANCIAL GUIDE."

Strike Debt, Imagine Life

Nicole Hala

Why Strike Debt? Because today most debt is illegitimate and unjust. Most of us fall into debt because we are increasingly deprived of the means to acquire the basic necessities of life: health care, education, and housing. We are forced to go into debt simply in order to live. We also oppose debt because it is an instrument of exploitation and political domination. Debt is used to discipline us, deepen existing inequalities, and reinforce racial, gendered, and other social hierarchies (Strike Debt Principles of Solidarity).

How to Strike Debt? We don't know for sure. Debt resisters all over the world, in diverse contexts, are trying to figure it out. We have no choice but to experiment. Since indebtedness involves areas of experience outside the 'political,' debt resistance will too. Understanding how debt has become entangled in our everyday lives — our social relationships, our hearts, psyches, and souls — is critical. If we are to challenge the institutions of the debt system, which divides us and benefits from that division, we must become conscious of how we have internalised its rules and assumed its values. Fundamentally, debt is a promise about the future. It shapes our collective imagination; it funnels our desires. Before we can even envision alternate possibilities, we need to survey the damage already done: We need to talk.

In New York City, clusters of the 'Occupy Wall Street diaspora' and others began gathering at regular open assemblies, which evolved into what we call 'Debtors Assemblies.' The basic idea is to come together and speak out about debt. Sharing our 'debt stories,' we come to understand life under debt and to imagine life after debt, building trust in the process. In the tradition of consciousness-raising groups, a guiding strategy of second-wave feminism, the gatherings are a space for learning and unlearning; processes with cognitive and affective dimensions. The Women's Movement, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Gay Liberation Movement showed how in Western patriarchal culture emotions are a site of social control as well as resistance.

Titled 'SILENCE = DEBT,' an important talk on the student loan crisis by educator and organiser, Brian Holmes, reminds us of the catalysing role of emotion in the movement around the AIDS crisis. Well before individuals 'united in anger' to form ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) in March 1987, the 'SILENCE = DEATH' logo was wheatpasted onto walls around New York City. The poster-bombing was the work of the SILENCE = DEATH Project, a group of men who, according to Laraine Sommella author of This Is about People Dying: The Tactics of Early ACT UP and Lesbian Avengers in New York City, 'needed to talk to each other and others about what the fuck they were they going to do, being gay men in the age of AIDS?!'. While these gatherings did not produce a detailed strategy for change, they cultivated a shared vision. And the group acted to get others to see things the same way, to see that 'ACTION = LIFE' and 'IGNORANCE = FEAR' and to 'Turn anger, fear, grief into action'.

Getting others to take action on what was known as the 'gay men's health crisis' must have seemed like an impossible task at first. People with AIDS were being blamed for their disease. They were stigmatised, as were gay men more broadly. 'Coming out of the closet' as gay or as a person with AIDS was a challenge in itself. Emotion and education came together in a range of

movement activities, including militant research (in biology, clinical medicine, the pharmaceutical industry, the regulatory structure). Activists became experts in order to expose the lies of the establishment. At the same time, they helped each other survive the plague ravaging their community by listening to, grieving with, and caring for one another.

In the current face-off with finance, making the crisis visible, and exposing its immorality, injustice and unsustainability remains a challenge. Debt, as Holmes describes, is 'part of the fabric of false promises and hyper-individualised coercion that we call neoliberal governance.' Student loan debt and credit card debt, hovering at around a trillion dollars each, 'are part of a continuum that begins with payday loans, moves through the concealed robbery of the stock markets and ends in the [US] Treasury's extortion of trillions of dollars from the rest of the world to pay for bloody useless wars.' The damage wrought by financial capitalism stretches across space and back in time. As Silvia Federici observes, neoliberal restructuring has been going on for over three decades, moving from the peripheries to the centre of the global economy.

It's the same crisis that has brought women from the global South to the US, where they work as nannies, maids and sex workers, mostly informally, part of a subordinate population without rights. Women in North America and Europe who have been working an unwaged 'second shift' in the home have been living the crisis as well. Increasingly, second, even third 'shifts', have been insufficient to make ends meet. Relying on credit to make up the difference, households are now drowning in debt. Today, many college graduates, even those with advanced degrees and high incomes, fear they will never be able to repay their debts. Following the dominant cultural script, many think it is their own fault.

As Dr. Joanna Moncrieff describes: 'The social catastrophe produced by neoliberal policies has been washed away and forgotten in the language of individual distress.' Neoliberal assumptions about human nature and behaviour permeate mainstream culture, framing the news and virtually all public discussion on the 'economy.' While financial predators go on stealing our possessions and our futures with impunity, we are scolded for poor financial planning. When the subject is debt, the main concern is 'moral hazard' (often erroneously attributed to individual debtors rather than structural conditions). If the story involves people, it is in caricature: the 'deadbeat,' the 'loser,' the 'entitled kid,' etc. The mantra - 'One must pay one's debts' - usually goes unchallenged. The rules of the financial system still appear inviolable and natural to many. But the truth is that debt is a social arrangement, which can be altered, and is altered all the time for those 'too big to fail.'

The debt system relies on our thinking about indebtedness as a moral failing on the part of individuals - something to be ashamed of, kept in the closet. Breaking the silence through public testimony is a form of resistance to the rule of debt. Telling our stories helps to expose the brutalising influence of the debt system, which commands us to always be calculating and compels us to compare the incommensurable. In valuing unique lives, people are already doing what is considered impossible and continue to demonstrate that 'You Are Not a Loan.'

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Mark Kauri

REMEMBERING AARON SWARTZ

I didn't know much about Aaron Swartz before news of his death started making waves on the internet in January. At most, there was half-realised recognition of a guy who I'd heard had been involved in the grassroots campaign to challenge the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA). But in the hours that followed first reports that 26-year-old Aaron had taken his own life, I became much more familiar with the life and work of a seemingly tenacious young guy involved in a great number of game-changing projects, largely focusing on freedom of information and information culture. Many reports focused almost entirely on Aaron as a freedom of information activist, or hacker, but if we look beyond this narrow scope we can catch a glimpse of someone whose life and work should offer much more to remember and inspire.

In the course of his short life, Aaron was involved in projects including the development of the RSS syndication standard, the initial architecture of the Creative Commons licensing standard, Open Library, the creation of Reddit, the grassroots movement that prevented the passing of SOPA and the founding of progressive policy campaign group Demand Progress. More than this now well-known list of achievements, Aaron was also interested in healthcare, financial corruption, and at the time of his death was working on projects for various causes, the drug war amongst them. Terms like 'hacker' and 'copyfighter' barely seem to cut it in light of this varied tapestry of political and technological engagement. As David Weinberger, Senior Researcher at Harvard's Berkman Center, would have us remember: "Aaron was not a hacker. He was a builder."

Ultimately it was freedom of information activism that brought the full force of federal prosecutors against Aaron, setting the tone for the sequence of events that would culminate in his death. In 2011 Aaron was arrested over allegations that he downloaded millions of academic articles from the subscription-based document storage service JSTOR, supposedly as part of a wider effort to make these documents freely available. Many free-data activists had been concerned with the JSTOR system as it charged large fees for access to articles but did not compensate the authors, meaning that a great number of people were denied access to this resource. The allegations against Aaron came three years after a similar incident in which he created a program to download millions of paid-for court documents and put them into the public domain. This prompted an investigation by the FBI, but no charges were brought forward.

That all changed after the JSTOR allegations, when federal prosecutors threatened Aaron with decades of jail time, fines of up to \$1m and numerous felony counts. In an article following the arrest, Timothy Lee highlighted the extent of prosecutorial overreach in the case, claiming that the only real crime committed by Swartz was a kind of 'digital trespassing' for which any prison sentence should be measured in days rather than years. Demand Progress echoed these concerns, likening the judicial situation to an attempt to send someone to jail for allegedly checking too many books out of a library.

In the days following Aaron's death, the analysis of the situation intensified as an increasing number of journalists, bloggers and activists made greater efforts to examine what many now believe is an instance of prosecutorial abuse. An official statement from the Swartz family claimed Aaron's death was more than a personal tragedy, stating: "It is the product of a criminal justice system rife with intimidation and prosecutorial overreach." Alex Stamos, the expert witness in the case, lent further independent credence to this growing supposition, with claims that the office of US Attorney Carmen Ortiz had decided to "massively overcharge" for the offence in question. He stated: "I know a criminal hack when I see it, and Aaron's downloading of journal articles from an unlocked closet is not an offence worth 35 years in jail."

After news broke of Aaron's suicide, a report in the Wall Street Journal revealed that federal prosecutors had only recently rejected a plea bargain offer from the defence lawyers that would have taken prison time out of the sentence. Prosecutors responded with an increased demand for Aaron to plead guilty to every count, imposing a trial later in the year that would carry a bumped-up total of 15 felony counts as well as the virtual inevitability of a lengthy prison sentence if he was convicted. Just two days after this meeting, Aaron took his own life.

The scrutiny of federal prosecutors in the wake of Aaron's death has set in motion an investigation at the federal level. In the weeks

ahead, representatives of the US House Oversight Committee (HOC) are expected to meet with the Department of Justice as part of an examination into whether the extent of criminal charges and punishment pursued by prosecutors was as inappropriate as many now claim, and whether factors relating to Aaron's political activity also motivated prosecutorial overreach. In particular, the HOC is asking whether prosecutors had been considering Aaron's opposition to SOPA or his association with related advocacy groups when considering the charges against him.

The importance of further scrutiny in the broader area of prosecutorial abuse cannot be understated. Ongoing examination of federal behaviour towards US citizens today has resulted in many putting forward arguments that the state is using its stockpile of judicial tools to come down hard on political activists. Recent cases include the detainment of four activists resisting a Grand Jury investigation into anarchists. The Grand Jury system, a component of the judicial apparatus that has been abolished in UK courts, can reduce the constitutional rights of the accused, including a denial to legal counsel and a denial of the right to plead the fifth amendment to avoid self-incrimination. In recent years, the US Grand Jury has been accused of being used as a tool for intimidation. Many people hope that the increased attention and scrutiny of such judicial processes in the aftermath of Aaron's death will lead to challenges to prosecutorial abuses in the courts, but there is also much more to remember in Aaron.

I cannot speak to any effect in regards to Aaron's character, but the evidence from his prolific output speaks to a painstaking attention to detail and analysis of systems, with subsequent efforts to make contextual improvements. As his friend Matt Stoller would write of him, "He analysed money. He analysed corruption," adding, "He didn't throw up his hands lazily and curse at corruption, he spent enormous amounts of time and energy learning about and working the political system." It was a method of engagement that cut so deep in its analysis that it was almost as if Aaron was searching for the equivalent of a mathematical 'proof' at the heart of his search for justice. This method saw Aaron dedicate himself, and his life, to positive and progressive outcomes in areas including information, politics, the legal system, open access and scholarship.

In the coming months, the immediate response from this tragic death will be an examination of judicial abuses. It is hoped that the processes beginning with the HOC examination into the Department of Justice will employ the same depth and spirit of analysis that defined Aaron's engagement. Looking forward, we can also remember more from Aaron's life. We can remember, and learn from, a way to engage that is shamefully absent from popular political engagement: the will to truly analyse the systems that give rise to issues of our immediate social and political concern, and the subsequent drive to engage with these systems, on the contextual level, with the same tenacity and selflessness that defined Aaron's efforts and victories.

GOLDEN SILENCE

ON THE TRAIL Jonathan Socrates
OF GOLDEN DAWN



"I don't talk about the Party. Don't want to. Sorry."

So read the text message from my sole contact with a Golden Dawn voter. The sender, a young man in his early twenties; the recipient, my friend who had loosely arranged a meeting in anticipation of my arrival in Athens. I had heard that the voter had changed his mind about the meeting and I had asked my friend to phone him. Following a series of unsuccessful attempts to get through, my friend received this message.

The message – "I don't talk about the Party" – had a Soviet tinge to it, evoking a state of silence and paranoia. It is representative of the climate in a Greece where a neo-Nazi party holds the third-largest share of votes and journalists are treated with suspicion and, often, contempt. More specifically, the message served as a foretaste for the difficulty I would have in obtaining an interview with anyone connected to Golden Dawn.

One evening, after finding Golden Dawn's head office closed, I wandered up to Agios Panteleimonas Square, an immigrant hub and the site of many of Golden Dawn's racist attacks. The square's eerie silence was punctuated by the echoing thuds of a football being kicked around the churchyard by a group of Greek kids. The few people out on the streets stopped talking as I passed by.

I stopped to peer in through a café window. In a back section, beyond a smattering of elderly customers, a dense group of men dressed in black were engaged in serious debate. They looked up and I walked on. I subsequently discovered, from someone who had called me "stupid" for going to Agios Panteleimonas alone, that this café was a Golden Dawn hangout.

On the way back to the station I passed through the smaller Attikis Square. The word ELLAS – Greece – had been painted on the ground in blue and white at each of the square's four entrances. Greek flags fluttered from lampposts where they had been sellotaped by some DIY patriot. In the centre of the Square, Golden Dawn's swastika-like symbol was spray-painted onto the fountain. I began taking photographs when a woman started shouting at me. I approached her. "Don't take my photograph!" I put my camera away. "Where are you from? Italy? Spain? Egypt?" "London," I said, which soothed her. "Oh, okay."

As I was leaving the square, I received information that a senior member of Golden Dawn was about to give a talk in the suburbs so I headed across town to the party's Nikaia office.

In Nikaia, at the edge of the block where the party office was located, a police car was barricading the residential road. In addition to three police officers who lingered around their car, the barricade was manned by eight Golden Dawn members dressed in military fatigues and black jumpers bearing their party logo. All had shaved heads. In the middle of the street, beyond the roadblock, the rally of about fifty Golden Dawn supporters was taking place.

I approached one of the Golden Dawn members blocking the road, told him I was a journalist and asked if I could pass. He went off to the rally and came back with another shaven-headed man. I asked him the same question and he went to fetch a third person. This third man was unlike the others. In his fifties with fluffy hair, a moustache, glasses and an anorak, he had an affected air of cordiality about

him and reminded me of an old professor of mine. He asked for my press pass. I told him I didn't have one. He asked if I wrote for the left or the right. Neither, I said. I was a cultural journalist. "Do you write for the Guardian?" "No," I replied emphatically, aware of the paper's stigma amongst the Greek right following its revelations of anti-fascist protesters being beaten in police headquarters.

"Do you mind if I ask you your name? My name's Georgios," he said, placing his palm on his breast. I told him my first name in return. "And your surname?" I reluctantly told him. He went off to ask a higher authority if I could pass. As he returned, I caught him taking a photo of me. "I'm afraid it's not possible now, but maybe in half an hour, after the talk."

I decided to go for a walk. I headed up the dark street and onto a main road. I walked for ten minutes before remembering the Dictaphone in my jacket pocket. I was about to switch it on in an effort to at least record some exchanges when I turned and saw the second skinhead I had spoken to standing across the street in the shadows, watching me.

I turned around and headed back to the rally, pretending not to have noticed my stalker. As I neared the rally I realised that if, in my absence, the genial professor had searched for my name on the internet, he would have found it attached to two left-leaning publications along with photos of me modelling as Maria Callas: not the best way to ingratiate oneself with an ultra-right, homophobic bunch of thugs.

Back at the barricade, the police car drove off and was replaced by a wheelie bin and more Golden Dawn sentries. The way the fascists seamlessly took

over from the police would seem to be significant here.

"Members of Golden Dawn do illegal things every day but they are not being arrested by the police because they are friends," says Voula Giannakopoulou, a lawyer who defended four of the protesters assaulted in police custody. "Most of the police officers in Greece voted for Golden Dawn. They see Golden Dawn as doing the parts of their job that they can't do – because the law doesn't allow them to beat refugees or to kill people. But they let Golden Dawn members do everything they want."

The reluctance to talk about Golden Dawn is not restricted to the party itself. "Until recently we thought this whole Golden Dawn thing was a bit funny – just some guys thinking a lot of themselves," a musician in her twenties told me. "I've never lived in a dictatorship and I always used to speak out loud... Things are censored. It's scary." This woman, along with almost everyone else I spoke to, did not want to be named.

At a bar in the city centre I was speaking to a young lawyer whose firm has represented immigrant victims of Golden Dawn attacks. I asked if she had any stories to tell me. "Yes," she replied. "But I don't really want to say. Other people have more violent stories." During my time in Athens, this response was a regular refrain.

I put it to Voula Giannakopoulou that Greeks are becoming desensitised to Golden Dawn's aggression, that a base level of violence has become the norm. "The situation with Golden Dawn is very ugly here. They beat foreigners, refugees, every day. Or leftists or anarchists. So if somebody just gets insulted by Golden Dawn, it's nothing for them. Or if they're beaten, but not very severely injured, it's not a big thing. It's something very, very common. It happens every day."

Over the course of my stay, along with all the official routes I took to procure interviews (which proved fruitless), I came across two further people who knew Golden Dawn members who'd be willing to talk to me but nothing materialised. One of my contacts requested that I assure them that I would not write anything negative about the party, which I could not. The second contact gave me a mobile phone number. I dialled it constantly for three days running. No one ever answered.

Towards the end of my stay, I discovered that Ilias Kasidiaris, the Golden Dawn politician who struck a female MP during a television debate, would be talking at the party office in a square in Artemida, just outside Athens. Other Golden Dawn events advertised to take place in the neighbourhood that day included the opportunity to donate blood to a blood bank "only for Greeks".

On my way, I stopped to interview two left-wing female activists. I learned that Golden Dawn's leader, Nikolaos Michaloliakos, had issued a moratorium on speaking to foreign journalists which explained my difficulties in securing

an interview. The two women spent a large portion of the interview trying to persuade me not to go to Artemida, warning me that I looked like an anarchist.

I nevertheless caught the bus to Artemida where the square was being patrolled by uniformed Golden Dawn members with walkie-talkies. There was no one else about. The talk must have just finished as the party faithful were pouring out of the building. Amidst a large number of hard-looking skinheads were elderly couples, women and children. They were chatting as if it were the end of a church service. Many, including the uniformed skinheads, were eating ice cream.

Having learnt from my experience in Nikaia, I misrepresented myself to one of the doormen and asked him if I could interview someone. He checked inside and told me to follow him. On the way up the stairs he told me I was not allowed to record anything.

I was led through the crowd, down a corridor, to an office. The doorman stood by the window and an older party member sat behind a desk upon which rested a metallic model of a Spartan helmet. "You must not record anything," I was reminded. "May I take notes?" I asked, opening my notebook. "No," came the blunt response. A third member entered silently and stood by the door and I was asked for identification. I handed over a British Library card which was observed with curiosity.

When the interview came to an end, I asked the man behind the desk for his name. He declined. Instead, he gave me a Golden Dawn business card. It contained no personal information, only the office email address and telephone number. I was told that if I wrote to that address I would be able to put questions to a Golden Dawn politician. I wrote the next day but, to date, am still awaiting a response.

A few days previously I had asked the young lawyer in the bar what action was being taken against Golden Dawn. "Not enough," she had said, frustrated. "We should be acting now before it's too late."

"We're not as active as we should be," the musician had agreed. "There's something really weird about this nation. We don't succeed in doing lots of things but when something gets really tough we somehow get together and protest and something happens. We work well together only under pressure. If there's not enough pressure we don't do anything." I suggested, half-jokingly, that maybe it's a Greek trait to wait till the last second. "Yeah," she said. "Then we explode."

It must be hoped that any such explosion comes as soon as possible. From what I saw, the culture of self-imposed silence that has crept, or rather swept, in across Greece in the wake of Golden Dawn's ascent, is preventing widespread counter-organising taking place. Both sides, for different reasons, choose not to speak out. But in the midst of the prevailing silence, Golden Dawn continues to act.



THE GREAT DEBATE

WHEN IT COMES TO GENDER, DO WE STILL NEED POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION?

Positive Discrimination is an approach which takes factors including race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin into consideration in an attempt to mitigate the oppression of underrepresented social groups. The idea was memorably promoted through the US governmental policies of 'Affirmative Action' in the 1960s that were aimed at addressing imbalances in the US labour force based on race. Promoters of positive discrimination claim that it begins to compensate for past discrimination, or persecution by dominant social groups. The OT attempts to find the benefits and limitations of applying this form of discrimination when considering the topic of Gender.

No - Fanny Malinen

During my time with Occupy London, whenever I volunteer feedback from my working group to an assembly, or when I have been asked to speak on a panel, the following point has always been made: It would be good to have a female voice. Every time I have wanted to answer: I am my own voice. I feel that reducing me to a single aspect is far from empowering or equalising.

It is true that the same problems of gender inequality prevail within activist movements as they do throughout wider society. The work of women is often less visibly recognised. It is easier for men to get their voices heard or take on prominent roles. Indeed, any revolution must start by recognising and challenging privilege. I do not believe that adding women to a list of speakers is any more worthy than setting quotas for corporate executive boards or treating men and women differently when applying for a job. It merely obscures the problem and creates the illusion that we are equal, when in reality we are not. It also suggests there are simple solutions to inequality. Ticking one box is not enough, privilege is layered: yes, I am female, but I am also a white University student!

We should be going far beyond that to tackle the structures that enable men - as well as white, middle-class or well-educated people - to hold the power they do. To the contrary of believing in positive gender discrimination, I believe we should aim at breaking existing boundaries: treating each other as people, not as men and women. Many of these structures emerge from the way we are brought up; socialised into our gender becoming a defining characteristic. This restricts both men and women, not

to mention the ones who fall in-between this often artificial binary.

As long as there is discrimination, whether it's sexism, racism, ageism or homophobia, positive discrimination will be no more than a sticking plaster. Diversity can be encouraged through more effective ways of promoting equality, such as creating truly safe spaces and not tolerating abusive language or behaviour. These ways of addressing privilege can make us think far beyond the façade of quotas and panel-filling.

I do not believe in positive discrimination, but that does not mean I think we should pretend we are equal. I think we must avoid the easiest solutions and ask the fundamental, if unpleasant, questions: Why we are not equal and what can we do about it? To me, that is what being an activist is.



Yes - Terry Calwoman

It's undeniable that when it comes to gender, positive discrimination is often an easy, quick-fix solution that tends to conceal the real problematics around sexism, transphobia etc. It too often creates false dichotomies and hides complexities. However, in its absence, what is the alternative?

The liberal definition of equality (i.e to treat everyone equally) has an obvious bias in it. Therefore we need a framework which enables us to work against that by deliberately giving people chances to participate in the world in order to work towards a future with real equality.

Only 30 years ago, there were 40% more men than women in employment with women earning nearly half as much as their male counterparts. Women stayed at home more and were consequently

far more dependent on their partners and more exposed to sexist behaviours. Many factors are responsible for fostering the cultural change which has taken place over the last decades, but positive discrimination has undoubtedly played a key role in this shift.

Clearly our society is still deeply unequal: 64% of the lowest paid workers are women and there are almost four times as many women in part-time work as there are men. As an advocate of positive discrimination I do not operate under the delusion that quotas for women or other ways of encouraging women to be more active in public life make it any more equal. Quite to the contrary, these measures become necessary precisely because of the deeply sexist nature of our society. That's why, at a time when women's rights are increasingly under attack and rape apologism and transphobia are making a comeback, I find those who are completely dismissive of positive discrimination rather arrogant and self-referential.

Of course these reductive measures won't change the deeply patriarchal and unequal nature of our society on their own: for that we need a feminist insurrection! However, it's a tool that can and should be used alongside other forms of struggle.

Positive discrimination can also be a valuable resource within activism. Of course, especially in this case, the level of the debate should not be around how many women are speaking on a given panel, but how can the presence of more self-defining women within activism, bring new tactics and a new mode of practice. In other words, the presence of more women in activism should be a starting point from which to build a new radical narrative with gender at its centre.





Zoe Stavri

Media Feminists & Intersectionality

The past few weeks have seen a fair few spats surrounding columnists Suzanne Moore and Caitlin Moran. The pattern was always the same: A columnist says something awful which contributes to the oppression of less privileged minorities, people call them out, and the commentariat closes ranks around them for protection. The defence was the same: a decrying of intersectional thinking and pleas to focus on the "good" things that have been said instead of the bad.

This simply will not do. Flavia Dzodan's rallying cry holds true: "My feminism will be intersectional, or it will be bullshit!" There is no single type of oppression, and there is none that is most important to tackle first. We must look at how these oppressions interact with one another and attempt to mitigate these circumstances. We can never get anything done if we continue to think one-dimensionally.

Suzanne Moore has written well on class and feminism, yet made comments which were heavily steeped in transphobia, normalising these attitudes to the point where the Observer commissioned and published Julie Burchill's infamous slur-riddled diatribe. Even after the Observer retracted the article, Moore was still allowed to spread distortions about how trans people had orchestrated unfair bullying against her. Meanwhile, Caitlin Moran, while reasonably good on writing accessible "Feminism 101" works, has made flabbergastingly thoughtless remarks about, among others, trans women and women of colour. Just because these writers have written well on other issues does not mean they get a free pass for the things which merit criticism.



To the minds of the commentariat, though, intersectionality is the bad guy. Criticising oppressive comments apparently detracts from the importance of some sort of perceived "real struggle". People do not want to think about how sometimes they can be the oppressor.

The commentariat class is predominantly white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgendered and from a well-off economic background. Sure, there'll be some women, and some gay people, and some who grew up working-class (although, now, are raking in a comfortable columnists' salary). For the most part, though, there isn't much intersectional oppression going on and they have the luxury of ignoring this reality.

The first problem here is that people with privilege tend to slip up. I've done it a thousand times myself. Often it comes not from a place of hate, but from a place of ignorance: it's hard to know what's a racist thing to say if you have never experienced racism, for example. There is a way of mitigating these effects of privilege, which I strive to do: I listen to criticism, I proactively read, speak to people, and learn. I consider myself a work in progress and endeavour not to inadvertently become the oppressor. Alternatively, one can follow the commentariat's route, and pretend that none of this actually matters as there are more important things to do.

Another major problem with the commentariat is that of its platform. Put simply, what they say reaches a far greater audience than any rebuttal from those they may harm with their comments. There is not much space within traditional media channels (which are predominantly owned by those who benefit from the status quo) for many voices. This is a terrible situation, as it means that a rejection of intersectional thinking can now become the mainstream as the commentariat closes rank against a perceived attack. The voices of the oppressed, and those fighting oppression, are drowned out. The status quo is comfortably maintained.

These two factors intersect to exacerbate the problem further. Due to the paucity of women and queers and people of colour and so forth within the commentariat class, those who are from one of these groups are fighting an uphill struggle to maintain their platforms and might be less willing to rock the boat. But perhaps some members of the commentariat need to realise that in order to do intersectionality better, they may occasionally have to concede their platform so someone better placed to speak - someone who experiences different kinds of oppression - may do so.

This is not to excuse the backlash against intersectionality: in fact, it attests that entry into the mainstream commentariat is just about the worst way of achieving social justice. I wish fervently that we could ignore these privileged voices saying privileged things, but their distortions and myths reach far more ears than ours.

This is why we must call out oppression where we see it, and why we can be angry and infuriated by this sorry state of affairs. Perhaps it will change. Perhaps we will eventually abandon the commentariat model in favour of something better and brighter. I can only see the present and not the future - and it is a present which sorely needs a major edit.

WORLD OF WARCRAFT & TRANSPHOBIA

Katherine Cross



Two years ago, I revived my old World of Warcraft Holy Priest and got her up to the maximum level (at that time) of 80. I immediately set about raiding and questing (for the uninitiated, raiding is where large groups of players take on the same set of challenges collectively, usually in a dungeon setting). Indeed, I hit the ground running. I got into a group for Naxxramas, an entry level raid at the time, just after reaching level 80 and donning some epic gifts bequeathed by friends. All was going well!

When we reached our raid leader Heigan the Unclean, a man who'd been quite nice to me and effusive in welcoming me back to the server, was engaged in banter with his compatriots over a voice chat programme and the subject of Heigan's clothing was broached. For anyone who has played Massively Multiplayer Online games (MMOs) for a substantial amount of time you've probably guessed what's coming: the likening of mage robes to dresses and the mockery that follows. The raid leader said he took pity on Heigan; we'd only make his day worse, he said, because after all he has to wear a dress.

I mention this because it's a small, often overlooked in-joke among many gamers that actually betrays deep-seated assumptions about gender. At its heart is the misogynist distaste for anything associated with women being used, worn, or commented favourably upon by a man. Patriarchy constructs masculinity as something in violent, constantly threatened, opposition to the feminine; men are defined by what women are not, according to these stereotypes and gender roles. The defensive nature of this masculinity asserts itself in ways great and small: for our present discussion, we see it every time a male gamer asserts in strenuous terms, either jokingly or seriously, that their brightly coloured robe is not, in fact, a dress.

A fairly popular fan-made music video illustrates this trope quite nicely, its creator singing stirring lyrics to bolster the soul of any wearied masculine Mage:

*So why, I ask, it just doesn't make much sense
That a man of my stature should have to wear a dress
I mean what, may I inquire, were you thinking on that day
When you conjured up for a man like me a robe that looks so gay
Ahhhh sit right back and your troubles melt away
Ahhhh he uses fire but his robe looks so gay*

Even my favourite WoW-themed internet cartoon, Illegal Danish, which is otherwise relatively unbigoted, tries to get laughs from one of its male characters. Because he likes to wear dresses, he is mocked by one of the other characters as a "crossdressing holy man."

It is also worth mentioning that "man in a dress" is one of the transphobic stereotypes deployed invidiously against trans women. Just as the aforementioned male defensiveness clearly overlaps with homophobia ("a robe, that looks so gay"), so too does it connect to transphobia, which is, in large part, a fear of gender rule-breaking. A major source of transphobia is this defensive fear, sometimes expressed through humour, of gender variance. Pity the man who's wearing brightly coloured robes, because he doesn't get to be 'normal,' et cetera. It's a reasonably safe bet that the people, men and women alike, who make these jokes would also be made uncomfortable by the presence of a trans or genderqueer person in their guild or voice chat server. That day in Naxxramas I had the good fortune of having a voice that sounded normative for a woman; more than likely that was the reason I was 'let in' on the joke in the first place.

This "man in a dress" mockery also arises from a particular set of misogynist ideas that are prevalent among some gamers. It's assumed that 'real men' are strong warriors: more at home in a melee than wearing wimpy dresses and casting spells. In World of Warcraft this is reflected by the fact that the most prominent male heroes are nearly always people bashing their enemies' heads in with hammers, axes, and/or swords, even if their class (say, Paladin or Shaman) enables them to cast damaging spells or heal; it's not terribly often you see a male hero taking that role.

To be honest, it never made much sense to me. Mages/wizards/sorcerers are amazing, for one thing: the very nature of the class represents the power of the mind to overcome obstacles. It also challenges singular ideas about what constitutes 'strength'. No shortage of people, men or women, recognise this. Secondly, robes have a long tradition of being worn by men; cross-culturally and trans-historically this becomes even more visible. Religious figures today often wear robes or very similar garments, regardless of gender.

"It's only a joke," is the usual response to cultural critiques like mine, but as with most prejudiced language, it can have a far deeper impact - joke or not. The "man in a dress" or "it's not a dress!" trope is a small dollop of mortar that constructs and reinforces an interpretation of masculinity that works to the detriment of everyone. It reinforces misogyny by passively accepting that things associated with women are undesirable and have less value. People of all genders are at risk in various ways when we find that even the slightest hint of gender-bending is considered fair game for mockery and derision, which is then often followed by social isolation. This is a reminder - a subtle warning - to the gender variant that they are, at best, grudgingly tolerated. It's one of those things that makes me wince with discomfort every time I hear it in a group or read it on a gaming website, and as the YouTube song demonstrates it is often explicitly paired with homophobia in a syllogism that goes: being gay is bad, dresses are gay, therefore men in dresses are bad.

I leave aside the technical, fashionista nit-picking of how robes are decidedly not the same thing as dresses because I think it's more important to ask why it should be a problem if a man is wearing a dress in the first place. What does this say about how men view women? And where does this pernicious idea leave us as trans women who, in spite of being women, are often wrongly conflated with "men in dresses"?

GENDER: BIOLOGY, ROLES & ACTIVISM



WHO PAYS THE PIPE?

Jemima Hobby

It is common for the British to look at the American system of lobbying government and smile disdainfully. Money influencing policy is something others do, not the Mother of Parliaments. It is of course as inaccurate as believing paying MPs will lead to better applicants for the job or that Nick Clegg really wears a onesie.

There are a number of lobbying parliamentary groups in Westminster. All-party groups (APGs) made up of MPs and members of the House of Lords, can be found covering diverse areas from Rugby League to lighting. At times it seems more like a fresher's fair than a serious way for people to declare an interest in a particular issue.

I am a sex worker and a sex worker's rights activist, so when I discovered there was an All-party group on Prostitution I was of course interested. But when I read what they had to say, my heart sank. This is from their 'about' statement:

"The purpose of the group is to raise awareness of the impact of the sale of sexual services on those involved and to develop proposals for government action to tackle individuals who create demand for sexual services as well as those who control prostitutes; to protect prostituted women by helping them to exit prostitution and to prevent girls from entering prostitution.(sic)"

This group, rather than wishing to explore the issue of sex work, wants to lobby for an approach known as the 'End Demand Model' sometimes called the 'Nordic Model'. It is based on the idea that sex work is morally wrong and an act of violence against women. In the End Demand [ED] Model, and the APG's statement, there is no mention of male sex workers.

ED works under the baffling assumption that the most vulnerable sex workers - those with substance abuse issues, who are underage, and those who have dangerous clients - can be legally protected from people whose respect for the law is often already minimal. People who abuse sex workers are already breaking a whole host of laws, but apparently, this new one will work! Logic does not seem to exist in ED land. Research from Norway has shown that criminalisation of clients leads to increased violence towards sex workers. Of course, plenty of people said this before the law was passed, but 'dirty whores' are apparently not to be listened to when it comes to their own rights.

You may support ED, many do, choosing to prioritise a moral belief that sex work is wrong, over the lives of

sex worker - it's 'a price worth paying.' Unfortunately, there is another aspect to this group that deserves wider attention. APGs can receive funding. The APG for prostitution is funded by Care. Care is a right wing Christian group currently spearheading the campaign against equal marriage. They are also opposed to abortion rights. Pick an issue and you will find them firmly on the side of bigotry and oppression. Here for example is what they have to say on same sex parenting:

"One study found that many children living with homosexual couples avoid involvement in group activities or out-of-school activities and are considered by teachers to be "loners" or "introverts". The study reported that experiences in their personal and family life were thought to have motivated them to avoid working with and relying on others, and to mistrust other children - in the case of children of lesbians, males in particular."

Look at their website: If you are not heterosexual, married and Christian, you are doing it wrong. Care are also funding MPs, MPs who are happy to take their money.

When it comes to sex work, Care is not the only religious organisation trying to dictate policy according to their narrow version of Christianity. Currently, in Scotland, Rhoda Grant is trying to introduce the ED model, against the wishes of sex workers groups, National Ugly Mugs and the police. One of the major supporters of her campaign is Abolition Scotland. I could write for hours on the racist nature of their film, Nefarious, or the false conflation of sex work and human trafficking. Instead, I will direct you to the page of their supporters. Groups like Care for Scotland, the Evangelical Alliance, believe that equal marriage is wrong, that women should not have autonomy over their bodies, and that abortion is a sin and should be criminalised. It is no surprise that they morally oppose sex work, but is this who should be setting policy in the UK?

As an aside, it's interesting to note that the Biblical commandment of not bearing false witness does not seem to extend to their own declarations about sex work. They quote invalid statistics, lie about the Swedish experience, and try to deny my very existence as a sex worker.

This is not just about reshaping the problems with the End Demand Model, this is about the pernicious and growing influence of extreme Christian groups in British political life. Whatever your views on sex work surely this is something we all can agree is wrong?

Thirty to forty years ago, there was a "great debate" pitting biology versus society in relation to the role of gender. Just as there had been in relation to IQ and school success, and in earlier generations about class and race. Which was more important: nature or nurture?

The reason this debate flared up in the 1970s was the advent of the Women's Liberation Movement, which confronted gender inequalities and the oppression of women. Women's Liberation challenged stereotypes about women, inequalities of income and domestic labour, men's predominance in positions of power and, in due course, men's violence towards women in the form of rape, domestic abuse, and femicide. All these were seen as social patterns that could and should be revolutionised.

This soon brought the movement up against the cultural justifications of gender inequality. Some justifications were religious, some were folkloric, but some were expressed in more modern language. The most powerful, in the English-speaking world, were the arguments that came to be called "biological essentialism".

According to this ideology, the social arrangements that feminism challenged expressed differences in character (emotion, intellect, attitude, etc.) between women and men, which were rooted in biological sex differences. These in turn were explained by survival imperatives that had shaped the early stages of human, or hominid, evolution. Thus it followed that men, who did the hunting and fighting, had to be aggressive, dominant, promiscuous, rational, etc. While women, who had the babies and tended the home fires, had to be nurturant, passive, monogamous, emotional, etc.

Biological essentialism itself has evolved. It started by emphasising sex differences in size and muscular strength as the explanation for male dominance. In the era of "sociobiology" such matters as endocrine differences were emphasised, and men were supposed to have a hormonal "aggression advantage". As the field of "evolutionary psychology" developed, differences of reproductive strategy were emphasised; some of the more toxic literature of this type provided pseudo-biological justifications of rape. In the 1990s, seemingly all attention became fixed on the brain and we began hearing a lot about dichotomous "brain sex". This notion infested schools for a while, with bizarre ideas about boys' fixed brain-based "learning styles". (I have always thought this idea was an insult to boys, who actually have many ways of learning.)

Curiously, whatever biological mechanism was appealed to, the argument always ended up in the same place: Conventional sex roles, gender divisions of labour, and inequalities of power, were biologically determined and therefore could not be challenged. Feminist

activism was coming up against nature and so, ultimately, it was futile.

The idea that gender relations are biologically fixed, is shown up as nonsense in the light of the ethnographic and historical evidence of cultural diversity and change. But we can't substitute a simple "sex role" model instead, assuming that attitudes and emotions are determined by dichotomous roles. One of the most important empirical findings of gender research is that in contemporary affluent societies (at least), there are very few substantial differences in psychological characteristics (attitudes, emotions, intellect, etc.) between men and women. This conclusion flies in the face of popular stereotypes, but is supported by a large body of quantitative evidence.

Biological essentialism gets its influence from the enormous cultural prestige of biological science since Darwin; from its match with the familiar stereotypes of masculinity and femininity in European-derived popular culture, and from its value in shoring up existing structures of power and privilege. It does not get its influence from being good science. Most of it is not science at all. It is, rather, a conservative social rhetoric that cherry-picks those fragments of biological and social research that fit into a pre-determined set of conclusions. It is ideology that uses the rhetoric of science, much as ideology a few hundred years ago used the rhetoric of religion to justify the marginalisation of women. (I can think of a few archbishops, popes and muftis who still do.)

Building a genuine scientific understanding of gender and gender relations is an immense task, involving both biological and social science as well as a rethinking of human history and human evolution. The Women's Liberation Movement is rightly seen as the modern starting point of gender studies, opening up this whole terrain to serious analysis. Some of its formulations, we can now see, were too simple, but the movement was right in its perception that gender arrangements can and do change historically.

This doesn't mean that bodies are irrelevant, far from it! Feminism around the world is deeply concerned with perinatal mortality, infant survival, motherhood, HIV/AIDS, unequal nutrition, domestic violence, rape, occupational health, sexual desire, contraception, abortion, and the increasing impact of biotechnology. All of these are issues about embodiment, for which sophisticated biological knowledge is necessary. What we can see now, more clearly than a few decades ago, is that on all these fronts, human bodies are caught up in a historical process, and to understand that, sophisticated social science is also necessary. The knowledge base for activism thus continues to change and develop, but the social justice imperative for activism remains unchanged.

The Court of Protection

The Court of Protection (CoP) is a 'specialist' court in English law which hears cases concerning adults deemed to be lacking the capacity to make decisions for themselves. The court passes down judgements which cast aside an individual's right to legitimate political protest. Through the use of expert testimony from medical professionals, the CoP can treat behaviour based on political conviction as a matter of mental health, or as a medical condition.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 categorises vulnerable adults, over which the CoP has jurisdiction, as groups including: people with mental health problems, dementia, substance abuse problems, brain injuries and learning difficulties. The court's powers cover a variety of contentious issues such as compelling individuals to undergo abortion and/or sterilisation, the administering or removal of feeding tubes, and the management of property and financial assets belonging to vulnerable adults.

Individuals who are reluctant (or who outright refuse) to make a decision regarding specific aspects of their lives because of their political convictions are not recognised as a group under the Act. This relegates them to the status of 'lacking mental capacity' which allows swift and convenient decisions to be reached.

The CoP is reminiscent of Victorian concepts of justice. In the 19th century, prosecutors and judges had more discretion. Political 'crimes', like advocating trade unions, rioting or political protest, were treated like murder and robbery. People found guilty of these crimes - an easy claim to satisfy given that the accused often had to prove their innocence in speedy trials with little public scrutiny - were transported to the colonies to live out their days in indentured servitude. Victorian justice was primarily about being seen to be doing justice.

Considering that the Court deals with some of the most politically and ethically controversial issues of marginalised and silenced people in our society, the CoP is rarely reported on. This blackout is, in large part, due to the many barriers journalists face when trying to cover it. As a general rule, cases are heard in private, but the Court of Protection Rules 2007 do permit the media to attend hearings and to publish information relating to

proceedings. The application process, however, is complicated and expensive, often involving many hearings so that a judge can decide whether there is "good reason" to allow press attendance based on the competing interests of Article 8 and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. If authorisation is given for media to be present, further decisions then need to be made for subsequent reporting and the extent of such reporting; decisions often include restricting the publication of any information which leads to the identity of the parties being revealed, and in some cases, mentioning that the order exists. This is so even for politically sensitive cases which trigger public interest.

Families Against Court of Protection Theft (F.A.C.T) represents those who have had problems dealing with the Court and Office of Public Guardian. The group argues that for the CoP to justify itself as a democratic institution, cases should be held in a far more open manner. F.A.C.T has stated that there have been over 15,000 recorded complaints alleging abuse, fraud and corruption on the part of the Court itself, the police and the Houses of Parliament between 2001-2010. In 2007-2009 a total £3.2 billion of assets were seized from thousands of elderly and mentally impaired people.

In an interview in 2011, Sir Nicholas Wall, Head of the CoP, called for public debate on opening up the Court to public scrutiny: "It seems to me a matter of public interest. The public is, after all, entitled to know what's going on....we don't want people quietly locked up in private." Understandably, some decisions - such as a plea for a sister's right to die after suffering severe brain damage - are deeply personal and private to the family whose wishes should be respected in such instances. The problem, however, is differentiating between these cases and those with a strong public interest because they throw up wider questions of politics, policy and broader society.

Public scrutiny of the Court's moral and ethical remit would require a radical shift in mentality, policy and law. Without this, the politics of the CoP are nothing more than the centralisation of power, impinging on basic human rights and freedoms; where the vulnerable are further denied an audience and a voice.

Biomass: dirty & destructive

Almuth Ernsting
Biofuelwatch campaigner

The growth in 'green' energy has been a staple in recent UK energy policies, which have traditionally been dominated by a proliferation of gas power stations, large-scale fracking, government support for nuclear power and a bonanza in oil licenses.

The share of electricity classed as renewable reached 9.4% in 2011 and, according to a recent study by Virgin, green energy firms account for 25% of Britain's top 20 fastest growing private enterprises. Unfortunately, such reports hide the rise of another dangerous, high-carbon and polluting form of energy: large amounts of mainly imported biomass, used to generate electricity.

Biomass, of course, is hardly a new form of energy. Wood has provided heat and fuel for cooking throughout most of human history and some three billion people worldwide still rely on it. Many societies and communities have found ways to meet low energy needs sustainably using local biomass, but industrial demand for wood has contributed significantly to British and European deforestation. What is unprecedented is the widespread use of wood for electricity generation and the creation of a new global trade in wood pellets and woodchips.

The government and large energy companies are eager to see the UK become a global leader in this new biomass electricity sector. They claim that bio-energy could provide as much as 11% of all energy used in the UK - the lion's share of the 15% renewable energy target.

The British energy company RWE has created the world's largest biomass power station by converting the Tilbury B power station from coal to biomass. This record may soon be broken by projects at the Drax, Eggborough and Ironbridge power stations, all of which are to be converted to burning 50-100% wood. Coal-to-biomass conversions which have been authorised already would burn pellets made from 63 million tonnes of wood every year - six times the UK's total annual wood production. Add to this the tens of million of tonnes which would be burned if proposed biomass power stations were constructed. All of these projects rely on expected government subsidies of more than £3 billion a year with money coming from the "Green Investment Bank", a new government initiative.

The greatly increased demand for wood will necessitate additional imports and further deforestation. Currently, British wood imports are sourced from the southern US, Canada, Russia, the Baltic States and, to a lesser extent, from Scandinavia. Highly bio-diverse forests have already been destroyed and converted to monoculture pine plantations for pulp and paper in the American South. Destruction is now accelerating due to pellet exports to the UK, and similar developments unfold in Canada, Russia and Scandinavia.

Burning wood emits 50% more carbon dioxide than burning coal per unit of electricity. In theory, new trees will absorb that carbon dioxide again. It takes only minutes to burn a tree, but it takes many years for a new one to grow. Pushing up carbon dioxide levels for at least another generation has disastrous consequences.

In the long term, energy companies are hoping to import pellets from fast growing eucalyptus trees in countries like Brazil, where large numbers of indigenous people and small farmers have already lost their land and livelihoods, and where bio-diverse savannah is being replaced by monocultures. Eucalyptus is also known to contribute to drought and desertification.

In the UK, communities close to proposed biomass power stations fear pollution and ill health. Communities long-affected by high levels of pollution from Tilbury B and Ironbridge will face decades of additional environmental effects as the current coal-fired power station will be converted to burning wood rather than closing down.

It is essential for campaigners to call not simply for 'more renewable energy' but to be explicit about what types of genuine renewables are needed, coupled with reductions in overall energy use. Otherwise, we are simply supporting big energy companies in their decimation of other countries' forests.

More money for the 'Green Investment Bank' will mean more money for biomass power stations, for bio-fuels and waste incinerators. Support for the Renewable Energy Association, the lobby group for the renewables industry in the UK, unfortunately implies support for their "Back Biomass" campaign. A new definition of renewable energy is needed. Above all, climate justice requires a strong stance against the new land and forest grabs by energy companies in the name of 'bio-energy'.

For more information, see www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/

NOAM CHOMSKY

THE LATERAL STATE OF AMERICA

Since 2008, the latest crisis of capitalism has given birth to a new wave of horizontal and collective forms of organising in the United States: The occupation of the State Capitol of Wisconsin in early 2011 in opposition to Governor Scott Walker's plan to drastically reduce collective bargaining rights. The Occupy movement and its notorious occupation of Zuccotti Park in late 2011, followed by similar occupations of public space across hundreds of American cities. And most recently, the network of relief hubs, organised at a community level and aimed at cultivating an atmosphere of mutual aid in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Indeed, Occupy Sandy has been at the forefront of filling the gaps where the state seems absent. The last few months has witnessed the development of tools for debt resistance, exemplified by numerous debtors' assemblies held in city squares across America, and more recently by the Rolling Jubilee, which aimed to display the power of collective refusal of debt peonage.

One unifying thread that runs through these recent and varied forms of collective organisation is the lack of institutionalisation. In fact, institutionalised forms of collective bargaining have been declining for some time. Today, US union membership is lower than at any other time since 1933. Losses in private and public sector unions saw total union density fall from 11.8% to 11.3% last year. Meanwhile, anti-union laws are being pushed through state legislatures, most recently in Michigan.

One of the most prominent voices in the debates around collective bargaining and organising has been the MIT linguist and long-time political commentator Noam Chomsky. Recently, the OT sat down with Professor Chomsky in the hope that he might provide a few insights into recent developments on the American Left, and into conservatives' fight against unions. Below are excerpts from the conversation, lightly edited for length and clarity.

Occupied Times: After Hurricane Sandy, New York City seemed to turn into an authoritative vacuum. Nobody expected much help from the feds. Do you think that Occupy Sandy can capitalise on that feeling?

Noam Chomsky: The trouble is, it is a double-edged sword, because to the extent that Sandy or other citizens efforts are effective, they reduce the pressure on the federal government to stand up and do what it is supposed to do. That is a trap you want to be able to avoid. There also ought to be pressure on the feds to say: "You guys are supposed to be doing this."

OT: So, Occupy Sandy and these various movements that have come out in the last year, they are double-edged in the sense that they alleviating the pressure we should put on [governments], but they are also desired responses in many ways.

NC: What ways? The trouble with saying "the government backs off" is that it only feeds the libertarians. The wealthy and the corporate sector are delighted to have government back off, because then they get more power. Suppose you were to develop a voluntary system, a community type, a mutual support system that



takes care of social security - the wealthy sectors would be delighted.

OT: Absolutely, so it's an interesting dilemma. The idea of mutual aid is very prevalent within Occupy Sandy. Because of the failure of government responses, it has resulted in this thing that can potentially be used against us in lots of ways.

NC: It's difficult. In principle you are doing what a lot of communities ought to be doing. An organised community is just a government - in a democratic society at least, thus not in ours. Your problem is the effectiveness of the whole doctrinal system which has undermined any belief in democracy. You see it on the front page of every newspaper. Why is there a fuss now about raising taxes? In a democratic society, you would have the opposite pressure to raise taxes, because you appreciate taxes, taxes are what we pay for the things we decide to do. But if the government is a big alien force, we don't want them to steal our money, so we're against taxes.

OT: The idea of taxation seems so thoroughly demonised, even though it obviously results in things that everybody takes for granted.

NC: I think the demonisation is a consequence of the feeling that the government is not simply all of us formulating and carrying out our plans. If that's what the government was, people wouldn't object to taxes.

OT: There's a lot of spillover from that sentiment - taxation [and its implications for the average individual - to what we are seeing in terms of attacks on labour unions, like what just happened in Michigan.

NC: Its been going on for a 150 years, and it's a very business-driven society today. In every society business hates labour, but the United States is run by businesses to an unusual degree. It has a very violent labour history. Several times in the last century, labour has been practically destroyed, just through violence, government violence, business violence. Strikers were being murdered in the United States in the late 1930s, and in other countries for decades.

Many legal instruments have been used to discipline the labour force across the USA over the past few decades. One of the most damaging forms of legislation is known as Right to Work law. It exists on the statute books of nearly half of American states, primarily in the South. Its main function is to prohibit the requirement that workers pay union fees as a condition of employment. This doesn't prevent those who do not pay union membership fees from receiving the benefit of collective bargaining. The long term effects of the legislation, as with most laws designed to restrict labour rights, is a lowering of wages and worsening safety and health conditions for workers. Regions which utilise these laws are often dismissively referred to as "right to work for less" states by their opponents.

OT: What do you think of Michigan's legalisation of collective bargaining or in-shop organising? Did the integration of potentially radical tactics from the labour force take the ground away from under it? Or have they been normalised?

NC: It just depends how it works. Legalising collective bargaining made it possible to develop labour unions, but it really depends how they work. Take the United States and Canada. They are pretty similar societies but organised labour has worked in quite different ways. The reason that Canada has a health system, and the US doesn't, is because of the way the labour unions handled it. You had the same United Auto Workers on both sides of the border,



and it was about the same time in the 1950s. The Canadian unions pressed for healthcare for everybody, the American unions pressed for healthcare for only themselves. So the Americans got a good contract, a reasonably good contract for UAW workers, but nobody else did, and so we end up with this monstrosity.

Furthermore the UAW leadership weren't just thugs, they were serious and unbelievably naive. They thought they could make a compact with management and work together. But by 1979, the head of the UAW, Rick Frazier, gave an important speech - it's probably on the internet. He pulled out of some labour management group that the Carter administration was setting up, realising it was a farce. He said that he realised a little late that business was fighting a one-sided class war against working people, that they don't mean it when they sign these contracts, that they are just waiting for a chance to cut back and get out of them. And he said that he had finally figured out what workers knew 150 years ago: business is fighting a bitter class war, all the time. The business world is full of dedicated, vulgar Marxists who are always fighting a class war and the labour leadership didn't understand it, or wanted not to understand it. In any event, they entered into these compacts. Business wanted to undercut them, they did, which is what is happening. Unions were demonised by massive propaganda. We have movies, advertising, everything; it's moderately well studied. It's pretty dramatic when you look at it, and it has had an effect.

My daughter teaches in a state college where the students are mostly working class. They don't call themselves working class, she's not allowed to use the term - it's called middle class. Basically, they want to be nurses, police officers or skilled workers. She said she teaches labour history, and she says they just hate unions. Because they regard the union as something which forces you to go on strike, which steals your dues and doesn't do anything for you. As far as that's the case, they just hate unions.

Over the past few months, there has been a noticeable focus from activists on debt and its relationship to people's labour and livelihoods. While debt is not a new phenomenon, the level of analysis has become more detailed after the 2008 crash and the rise of the Occupy Movement. There's the Jubilee Debt Campaign, which has campaigned for some time against sovereign debt clawed from impoverished countries. Strike Debt is developing ideas around the debtor as a new political subject. The Rolling Jubilee collectively purchased distressed medical debt on secondary markets in order to instantly write it off as an act of solidarity. These initiatives, along with the European We Won't Pay campaign, are some of the more recent movements against illegitimate debt that have grown to prominence.

OT: Looking at the Rolling Jubilee, it also is a double edged sword. On one hand you are helping someone dramatically by abolishing their thousands of dollars worth of medical debt. So instead of debt collectors buying it on the market and saying "You owe this amount of money" and giving you a principle balance and some other fee, you don't have to pay it back. But on the other hand, you're giving five-hundred thousand dollars to speculators on the market.

NC: And you're also undercutting the government responsibility to do it in the first place. Political pressure that would lead them to do it. The same issue arises all the time. Let's say with charity, when you give aid to homeless people, you're taking away the community responsibility to do it, and in a democratic society, that usually means the government. And this is true, you can't escape the world you're in, you can't only try and change it. It's not an argument against giving to charities...

OT: Absolutely. I don't want to use the term morality, but there's definitely a sense that it's time to take action.

NC: We are responsible to other people. We should at the same time, and I think that's what Occupy ought to be doing, create an understanding that there is a community responsibility. It's not our responsibility, we're doing it, because the community isn't. It's like schools: there's community responsibility to make sure that kids go to school. People who want to privatise schools would be delighted if an individual charity sent particular kids to school, then it wouldn't have to be a community responsibility and it would cost them less in tax money. But I think much deeper than that is that they want to undermine the conception of communal responsibility. That also goes back 150 years, back to the beginning of the industrial revolution. It's remarkable to see how persistent it is - this idea that workers and working people were being driven from the farms into the factories. In England, the same thing happened basically a century earlier, and they bitterly resented it. The labour press from that time is very striking; people should read it and reprint it. I mean, it's very radical. They had never heard of Marx,

never heard of communists, but the press was just instinctively very radical. They were opposed to wage labour and regarded it as not very different from slavery. The main thing they opposed was what they called the "New Spirit of the Age" - 'you gain wealth, forgetting anybody else'. So that's what they've been driving into people's heads for 150 years. I talk to MIT students, kind of upwardly mobile students, not Harvard, a lot of them are kind of behind [Ayn] Rand, "Why should I do anything for anyone else? I should be after it for myself."

That sentiment has spread. Actually I think that's what happened in Michigan. The anti-union feeling that has been built up is, "Why should that guy over there have a pension when I don't?" In Wisconsin, that feeling was very strong. The labour movement was never able to get across the fact that these guys are hard working people who gave up their wages so they could have some benefits, they're not stealing from you. That never got across. So the very widespread feeling even among union members was, 'They got a pension, they got tenure. I don't have a pension, I don't got tenure, I'm just after myself, I don't care.' And that's one of the problems with volunteer and popular activism: It builds a sense of solidarity among participants, but it undermines another sense of solidarity in the community at large. That's really significant. I think that's what underlies the massive attack against social security, which is really a bipartisan attack. Obama says we have to cut it, too. There's no economic problem, but social security is based on the conception that you care about other people. That argument has become unpopular. But you got to drive that out of people's heads. You have to make sure not to contribute to that.

OT: We were trying to think that if we had to describe Occupy Wall Street and the protests of the last year in a very succinct kind of way, it would probably be based on the idea that for generations prior there was a sense of working class solidarity and the idea of having collective power.

NC: You're right, I thought the most important contribution of the Occupy movement was to recreate this mutual support system which was lacking in society. But it has this dual character: You have to figure out ways to do it which don't undermine the broader conception of solidarity. 'Actual solidarity' is the slogan of the labour movement - well, it used to be.

OT: With that in mind, if Strike Debt is taking this approach where it's focusing on debt, the commonality is that we're not all workers, but we're all debtors. Would you say that this is a rallying point?

NC: Sure. There are many points of commonality among people, say... schools. I don't have kids who go to school, I suppose you don't either, but nevertheless, many of us, we're committed to making sure kids go to school. We're part of that community and lots of other communities.

OT: But it's much easier to say, "you're a worker, you sell your labour for a wage." It's much easier to say that than it is to say: "You owe a debt and you have a solidarity to this person who also has debt." How do you articulate that bond of solidarity?

NC: That's the obvious point of contact. That's the way health organising ought to work: Everybody is going to face health problems.

OT: It's obvious that there is a need for that kind of thinking. But I'm not sure that it's so obvious that you could communicate it to people and get people out on the street and organising amongst themselves.

NC: Well, you know, it certainly happened in other places. Again, Canada is not that different but at least it had something of that concept of solidarity. That's how they got a national health system. Actually, one of the amazing things in Michigan is how the unions were never able to get across the point that even the concept 'right to work' is a lie. It's 'right to scrounge'. It has got nothing to do with work, but they could never get it across. When you mention that to people they say "yeah, I never thought of it".

They don't know what a scam it is to even call it "right to work." That should have been a major educational issue, just like with pensions for public workers. They should have said: 'Pension cuts mean that they cut back your wages'. Or take when Obama froze wages for federal workers and it was praised across the board. He was raising taxes - and this is right in the middle of saying 'You're not allowed to raise taxes'. A pay freeze for federal workers is identical with a tax on federal workers. Almost nobody pointed it out. We're just losing a lot of opportunities

The same thing is to be done about debt, as I'm sure you're doing it. A lot of the debt is just totally illegitimate. Take student debt. There's no economic basis for it, it is just a tactic of control. You can prove that there's no economic basis. Other countries don't have it. Poor countries don't have it, rich countries don't have it, it exists only in the US - so it can't be economically necessary. The United States was a much poorer country in the 1950's, much poorer, but it had basically free education.

OT: Sure, the NHS in the UK was founded after World War II when the debt was far greater in proportion to the nation's wealth.

NC: Even in the US, which came out of the war very rich, it was nowhere near as rich as it is today. But the GI bill gave us free education. Yes it was selective: only whites, very few women, but it was free education for a huge amount of people who would have never gone to school. In the 1940s, when I went to college, I went to an IVY league school, it was \$100 tuition. That's a poor country compared to today's standards.

Noam Chomsky's latest book, Occupy, is available from Zuccotti Park Press as part of the Occupied Media Pamphlet series.

HOW TO CRACK A SPACE



NEVER COMMIT CRIMINAL DAMAGE IN ORDER TO ENTER A BUILDING

Look For Insecure Doors / Windows Which Have Been Pried Open With A Crowbar, By Burglars Or Previously Entered.

Never Try To Smash, Break Or Cut-off An Alarm

If you set off an alarm - Don't Panic! - Animals can set them off and it's not always noticeable to anyone responsible for the building.

No-one is likely to bother if an alarm goes off in London, but in case the alarm company silently calls a private security firm or the police, act swiftly on entering the building.

Move quickly towards the doors and secure them.

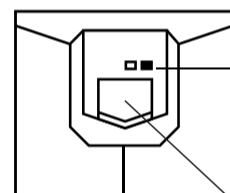
4 ALARMS



Find name of manufacturer and research alarm models they produce.

OUTSIDE ALARM

Does the manufacturer offer a call out service?



Small boxes found in corners of rooms - have a red light.

MOTION SENSORS ALARM

Use black tape to cover middle part of sensors you find. Now, when you walk past it again, it won't go off.

Move slowly through the building. Avoid crossing in front of alarm sensors.

7



Have at least one person outside building to explain legal possession of it

Contact your friends or eviction resistance.

A section 6 notice must be clearly visible.

Police likely to look for signs of criminal damage. Show them where you entered building legally.

The owner, security or police may arrive if they realise people are in the building.

If they do - it is not illegal that you are squatting a commercial building.

Occupation is only illegal if police can *prove* someone has committed a crime.

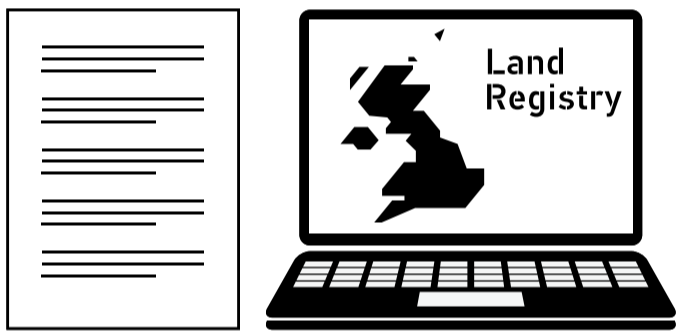
The police may claim "abstraction of electricity" to try to force you to leave. This only applies to a meter that has been rigged, though they may try it anyway. As soon as possible, phone an electricity company. Tell them you've recently moved into the building and need to set up an account - get a customer number. Show this to the police.

Remember as long as you have secured all of the doors then anyone trying to enter will be committing a crime, keep telling them this.

For further legal advice, see <http://theoccupiedtimes.co.uk/?p=7990>

1

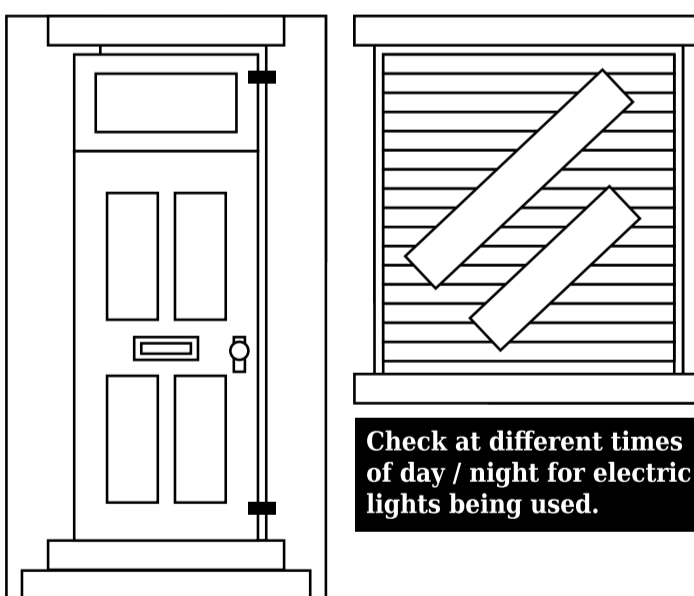
Make a list of at least 5 buildings. Research Online. Check Property against the land registry.



2

Stick pieces of electrical tape on exterior doors discretely. If they remain for a few days you can be confident no-one is using building.

If boarded up / stacked with mail - letterbox probably not in use.

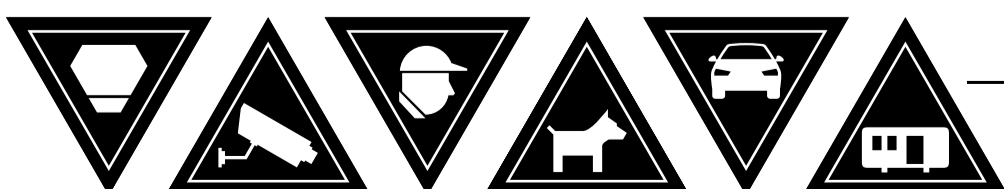


Check at different times of day / night for electric lights being used.

3

WHAT TYPES OF SECURITY PROTECT THE PREMISES?

Alarms / CCTV / Guards / Dog patrols / Parked cars / Huts-cabins



5

Secure doors with bolts. Hinges even more secure. Place one side into door frame, one side into door. Repeat 3 times.

6

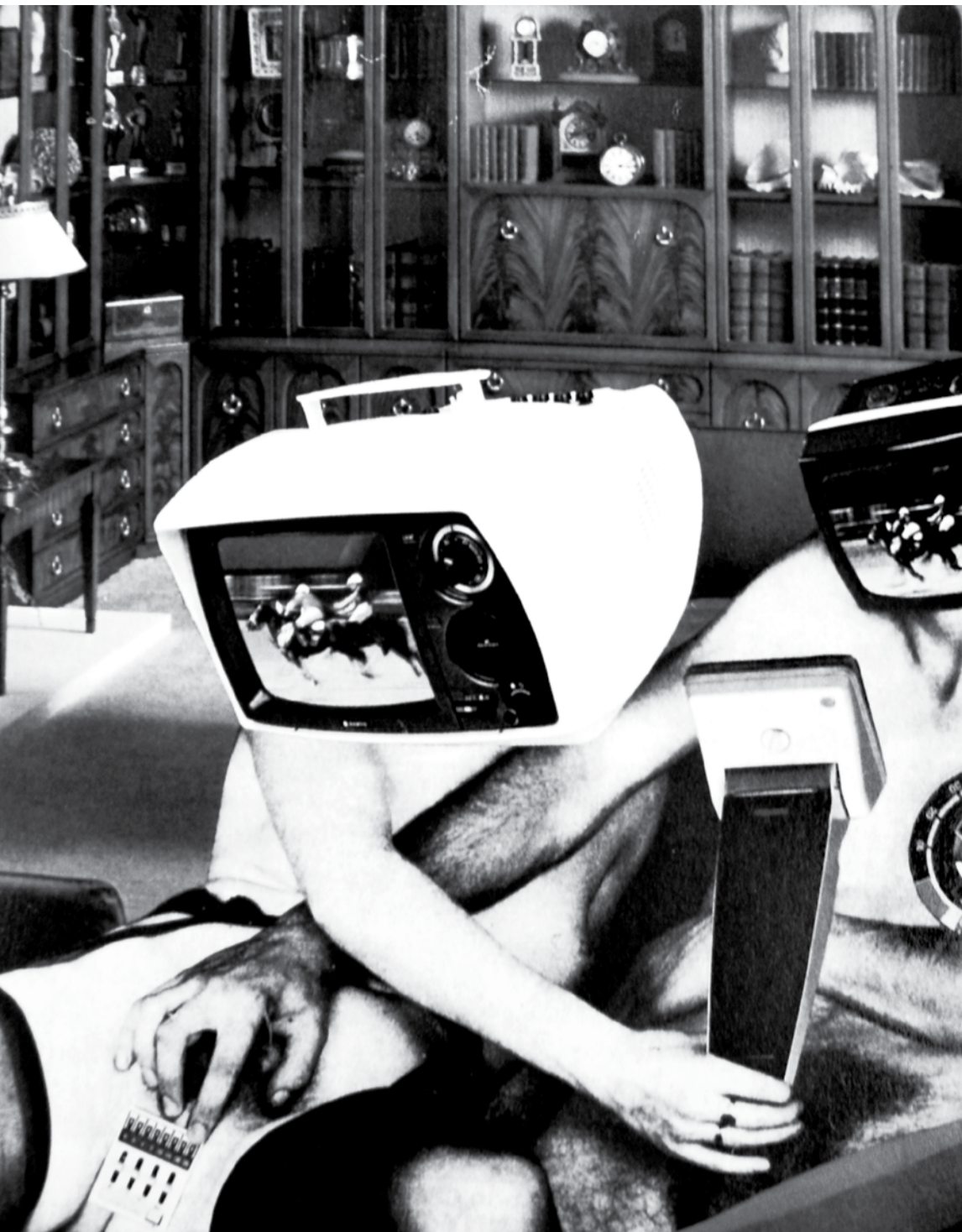
Construct a prop barricade. Nail blocks into floor and door. Use rope or electrical cable to lash them shut.

If there is a staircase near the doors. Use this to further anchor the doors.

LEGAL ADVICE

SCAN QR CODE





Gender Crossword

WHAT'S YOUR A-GENDER?

Across

2. Simone wrote *The Second Sex* and possessed a beautiful view (in French) (2,8)
7. Egyptian feminist, novelist and activist. Wrote the hard-hitting novel *Woman at Point Zero* about VAW and FGM. (5,2,7)
8. Judith would say that this manservant was merely performing a role. (6)
9. Anti-choice A-Holes who picket abortion clinics, intimidating women on their way in. (5,4,3,4)
12. If you have one, Nadine Dorries thinks she owns it. (6)
13. Discrimination against transsexual people. Julie Burchill being a successful proponent. (11)
15. She wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. (4,14)
17. In 2010, Norrie May-Welby became the first person in the world ever to be declared neither a man or a woman. Making this country the first to recognise a 'non-specified' gender. (9)
18. Why confront the patriarchy when you can shop your way to liberation? (3,3,3,4)

Down

1. A feminist theorist who's so cool she doesn't even capitalise her first and second name. (4,5)
3. Author of *The Feminine Mystique* (5,7)
4. The Queen of gender-normativity. She's like soooo plastic. (6)
5. Sometimes they scale buildings ressed as superheroes. Unfortunately, to date, none of them have fallen off. (7,3,7)
6. Discriminated against community on the Subcontinent who don't fall neatly into male or female gender roles. Often work in the sex trade. (5)
10. Now marching regularly across the globe against rape apology, this protest movement originated in Toronto in 2011. (8)
11. An organism with both male and female reproductive organs. Named after the son of the Greek messenger god and the goddess of love. (13)
14. Term defined by Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook as a label for "individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity." (3)
16. She was the First Lady of Song. She wasn't Spanish but was a Spanish she. (4)

