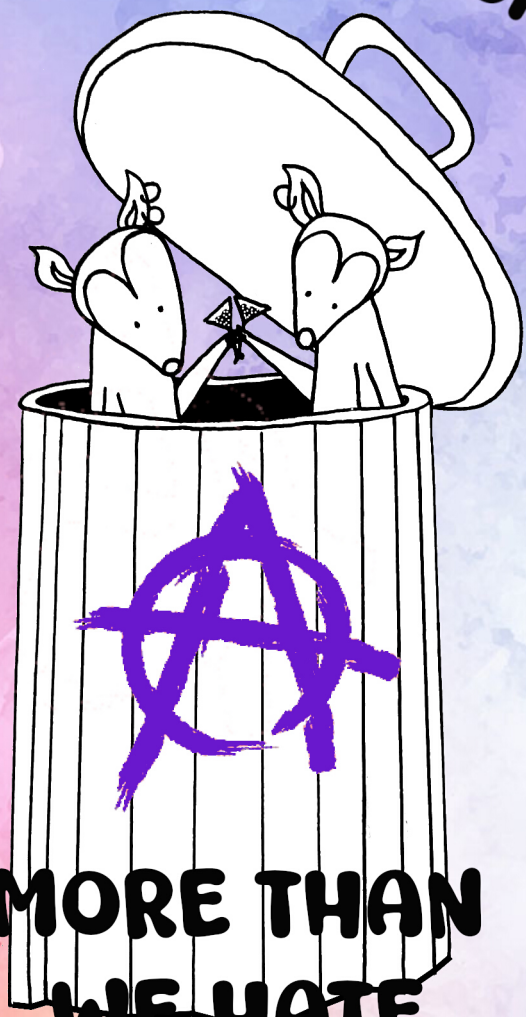


**WE MUST LOVE PEOPLE**



**MORE THAN  
WE HATE  
EMPIRE**

*subversiveness includes dealing with our own, and other peoples', shit*

WE  
MUST  
LOVE  
PEOPLE  
MORE  
THAN  
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and other peoples', shit*

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authors: neka and friends



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## **this zine...**

... was written by people with years of experience organising in different anarchist groups; we assume that readers have some organising experience, but hope anyone reading it would walk away a bit wiser.

... we lived through abuse as well as 'being cancelled'; we experienced non-traumainformed, non-anarchist and violent modes of communications from comrades as well as (perhaps well-meant but utterly destructive) "accountability processes" that were started because of disagreement and hurt stemming from dislikes, conflict, clashing behaviors and expectations.

... is an attempt to work through these experiences collectively, hoping that we and others might learn from them and grow. it mentions violence and abuse, but is not focusing on them; instead it focuses on the wide range of more subtle ways in which we hurt each other, the necessity of conflict and its many opportunities.

... we do not believe in intellectual (or any other kind of) property and have shamelessly used materials from other writers as we please. the works most drawn on are however listed at the end.

... we are aware that our experiences are always related to many systems of power/discrimination/domination/violence, including but not limited to patriarchy, racism, class, ableism, lgbtqia+ "fobias", etc. we want to acknowledge that the people involved in writing this zine are all able-bodied, white-skinned european, queer people and that this obviously influences our perspectives, lives, abilities, and makes us more able to notice and focus on some things and less able to do so in others.

... is an attempt to unite us against the enemies - and there are so many enemies - through normalising conflicts, comradely criticism, reflect on the systems of power that we might be replicating; encouraging us to establish honest communications, feedback cycles, trust - in short: this is an attempt in establishing loving comradery.

... is a work in progress! feedback: [onradicalcommunity.noblogs.org](https://onradicalcommunity.noblogs.org)

my curly-haired, pierced and very convinced anarchist friend once said to me, "we're going to need so much more hate to keep doing what we're doing"

not to sound like a hippie

but to me it's mainly about love??

i see anarchy more as a way to stop treading water and instead sincerely reach out to each other in the middle of this nightmare, in our shared dystopia

to offer to live more for each other and for ourselves at the same time, to create relationships, moments and skills that we sincerely appreciate

in this, certainly one of the key starting points has to be these communities that everyone is talking about

thinking beyond the nuclear family and its basis in domination, exploitation, suffering

also means we need to instead try to imagine the way in which we would like our society, communities, groups of affinity to work with each other, rely on each other, question and expand ourselves together

and, in all of this, be able to take responsibility for our actions and grow, actively combat all the toxins that growing up in this system has inescapably planted within us all

and to answer my curly-haired anarchist friend's claim,

i fully support attacks on institutions, but for now they are not my priority

first we need to plant our seeds to be able to build real alternatives to kill the cops in our heads, our tendencies to dominate, hurt, punish and instead learn to trust and rely on, to confront each other, fight, and grow

which is really the greatest fear of power and capital

that we realise that things are better when we do them for ourselves and by ourselves; that we can take care of ourselves and each other

that's how we become a real threat. and in the end, isn't that what all of us want to be?

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**AND REMEMBER: IF YOU WANT TO GET PISSED OFF WITH SOMEONE, GET PISSED OFF WITH THE ACTUAL ENEMY**

**SOURCES & MORE ON THE TOPIC**



## the basics

First, **none of us are perfect** (anyone who has ever tried to confront their privileges should be aware of this). We grew up knee-deep in systems based on domination, exploitation, and brutality. We are not free from racist, sexist, authoritarian behaviors - none of us, never. And recognising that, trying to continuously improve ourselves, while also helping others confront their behaviors, is the best we can do. In this context, we strive for a vision that acknowledges that we are all shaped by the forces we struggle against, we are implicated in the systems of power that oppress us. There are no perfect victims or perpetrators, we are all victims and perpetrators in different ways, we all make mistakes and hurt each other.

Secondly, **we are not all going to like each other**. Because we share some ideal, struggle, a part of a collective, that does not magically mean that we all trust each other and have great flawless communication. And that we are not all close does not mean that we cannot and should not work together (it is extremely necessary that we manage to work across different

splits between us). Rather, we need to find ways to coexist, acknowledge conflicts and differences of opinion, and still manage to fight together.

Thirdly, **power dynamics will arise in any group**. When power dynamics and other flaws in how we work as groups become obvious or start to pose problems, that is not an isolated problem of one person. It is natural that power dynamics do arise and our ad-hoc resolution to them should not be to cancel, exclude, leave, break up contexts.

Fourthly, **addressing behaviors, power dynamics, violence, manipulation, domination, are the prerequisites for the possibility of organising against state and capital**. Those patterns are what discourage us and hold us back in place; it is ultimately not only what weakens resistance but also they destroy people. Conflicts and disagreements are necessary for us to grow as people and as communities.

Fifthly, **repair is slow, partial, collective**. If we want to abolish carceral politics and (at least initially) attempt transformative justice instead, we need to accept that it's going to take work and commitment.

Finally, we all have days, weeks, sometimes months or years where we need more support or more alone time, where we feel down/hurt/betrayed/extra fragile/like the whole world is attacking us and we have nowhere to run. These days it is extra tricky to constantly keep a constructive, communicative, nice face even to people that you maybe don't even specifically like. **The bad days will come: we need to find ways to also excuse each other for our way-less-than-perfect moments.**

**PART I:  
THE SYSTEM  
HAS FUCKED  
US ALL  
UP**



## **morality and guilt versus radical passions, ethics and critique**

People who find it in themselves to cancel, exclude, hurt, generally treat a comrade like crap because of some conflict or disagreement seem to see themselves as standing on some higher moral ground, legitimising their right to pass judgement onto others. Especially in relation to anarchist purism, we feel that the moral highground and right to look down and judge others is far too often applied in anarchist circles. So, at this point, we see the need to adress morality, guilt, ethics and critique.

Morality is a form of authority: always, whatever its basis is, an abstract, unreal concept, a way to divide into binaries of good and bad. Morality judges: it doesn't see, evaluate, grow. When judging, we categorise people as guilty or not guilty, and guilt is one of the most powerful tools of repression. Criticism is essential to anarchy, but judgement needs to be eradicated: when we judge and condemn ourselves or anyone else, we are suppressing rebellion: that is the whole purpose of guilt.

Ethics, instead, is the dynamic space beyond static morality and vapid self-interest: it is the capacity to be responsive to the relationships that make us up. Whether consciously or not, our desires and choices are the product of everything that affects us. This kind of thinking runs against dominant strands of both western knowledge and morality, which strive for universalism and generalisability. They ask what humans are and always will be, what we should always do, or what we usually do (and how we can be controlled). In contrast, ethics is attuned to the singularity and openness of each situation: what are we capable of here and now, together, at this time, in this place, amid the relations in which we are embedded? From this perspective, it is

not about creating self-contained units, but about participating in complex, shifting, relational processes. We are always participating in the making of our worlds, and being made by them. From this perspective, freedom can mean nothing other than the ethical expansion of what we're capable of - what we're able to feel and do together.

Morality requires guilt; freedom requires the elimination of guilt. The necessity instead lies in translating radical critique and (sometimes harsh) feedback into responsibility to transform oneself and grow to hold ourselves accountable. If we want to be free, we need to treat each other and ourselves as people who wish to grow and be free side by side. We need to figure out together - as people interacting with other people - what works between us. We have the capabilities to decide for ourselves what is good for us; to set boundaries in relation to others; and respect others' boundaries. There is always a learning curve and no universal right or wrong in this aspect, so there also needs to be room for mistakes.

Radical critique grows from the real experiences, activities, passions and desires of individuals and aims at liberating rebelliousness while judgement springs from principles and ideals that stand above us and aims at enslaving us to those ideals.

Anarchy needs to leave space for many different worlds, peoples, opinions, modes of being and of organising. We might know that the modes of oppression of this world is what we do not want, but none of us has some ultimate answer to what our one true anarchist utopia looks like. That is because there is no one true anarchist utopia. We need to leave room for different things to form, for different modes of being, and we need to learn to take care of each other while following our passions.

## **the totalitarian impulse to exclude**

Many of us lived through situations of intense conflicts within our groups. Be it in the heat of the moment, in long-term processes, or through built-up frustrations: sometimes we explode. This includes some more explicit forms of (more or less) violent communication, crossing peoples' boundaries, acting in ways that fall short of what we expect of comrades in terms of care and support, short tempers, yelling, name-calling, cancellations, exclusions, etc. And we let it escalate. Punitive, carceral logics are present when we judge a person as inherently bad and exclude or otherwise punish them, sometimes even without them understanding what the issue with their behavior was. This is widely applied within our circles, while we still brand ourselves as anti-carceral. This often hinders us from practicing and improving as individuals and as collectives, and perhaps specifically as collectives trying to fight against the many systems of oppression that we are up against. That said, we are not saying that there are no situations where we might turn to vigilantism or exclusion: only that the situations to which these logics are applied should be way more restricted than they are now, if we wish to spread our ideas and build actual communities.

Empire sows mistrust and destroys our capacity for collective responsibility by making us dependent on its destructive, depleting, violent ways of life. Most everyone we know has been touched by some kind of oppression and abuse, and empire's oppressive divisions often lead people to betray even their most intimate relations. All forms of oppression seem to have this tendency: racism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, ageism, colonization, and other systems of oppression contort people's insights, experiences and differences into weaknesses or deny them outright. In this way, we lose our capacity for

interdependency and community-building.

And the totalitarian impulse of expelling people from groups has found its expression, and it has proven so destructive, in part because we have consistently failed to find the means for handling disagreements, for resolving disputes, for responding to violence, and for requesting accountability from others and ourselves. Without those tools, we rely far too often on ideological purity tests, friend-group tribalism, peer pressure and shaming, as well as general shit-talking. It is unsurprising that what happens when we expulse people is to kill spirits and groups, rather than motivate (new and old) people; and when we do that, our capacity for meaningful action diminishes. A cycle of suspicion and exclusion takes hold, we fail to expand and strengthen our circles and ultimately are often stuck in a counterproductive, toxic, demotivating mode of doing things. And this when we are already fighting basically against the whole machinery of state, capitalism, power around us, which is in itself so fucking daunting.

Through this we steadily grow less able, and even less interested, in having an effect on the larger society. Instead we become increasingly focused on the ideas and identities of those inside our own circle; we scrutinize one another mercilessly, and when we discover an offense - or take offense - we push out those who have lost favor. As our circle grows ever smaller, minor differences take on increasing significance, leading to further suspicion, condemnation, and exclusion - shrinking the circle further still. This tendency is very unsettling to us - and we think it should be to any anti-authoritarian - as it reminds us more of fascist attitudes than it does of attitudes of solidarity, mutual aid, and other things we claim to be fighting for. We behave, in other words, not like a movement (and much less a community) but like a cliquish, judgemental, and unfriendly

scene.

If we could instead actively, consciously, constructively work against some behaviors which are exacerbated through the system in which we exist, and reproduced in our anarchist circles/communities/groups/collectives, we could/would be able to face and combat problems of (smaller) harm, power dynamics, intrusive behaviors, communication problems, in other, at least less repressive, ways.

## **power dynamics in anarchist collectives and spaces**

Denying the existence of power relations in all human interactions would be naive. The racist, capitalist, sexist, etc, world order plants power relations in us from our cradles. On top of this, the mere conception of a group of people as a specific "group" can give rise to behaviors that entail power dynamics, favoring the own group or sections within the group; when some people take on high management value tasks such as external relations, internal dynamics, information preservation, this naturally also entails power. It is not enough to claim that we abolish hierarchies. The power positions in the groups don't develop spontaneously, they are resulting out of years of social construction and conditioning. The struggle against power accumulation is everyday work, of conscience, of care, of all. Of course, this goes hand in hand with other privileges, so checking your powers is also very related to checking your privileges. So there is a lot to unpack there if we are striving for horizontality, and there is no one-fits-all answer or solution, but there are some things that we could stay vigilant towards.

Some types of informal power (imbalances) to be vigilant towards are:

**INITIATIVE:** Ability to have and go forward with your ideas, act for yourself. Some people encourage the group, giving energy. They seem infallible. When they are not there, the collective seems lost and dead.

**INFORMATION:** Some have access to all important information. Without these people the rest can not speak, make decisions, dream, act.

**SKILLS AND TOOLS:** The people with knowledge or possession of certain skills and tools become indispensable specialists that need to be included everywhere, thus, also limiting on the possibility for the rest of the group to act autonomously without them.

**PHYSICAL PRESENCE:** Ability to be physically present in moments of collective adventure. Some are always present, they are the ones who have seen and lived the collective adventures such as assemblies, actions. They feel like they are part of the collective more than anyone else.

**EXPRESSION:** Ability to express oneself in speech and make oneself heard. The ability to properly express oneself in settings, maybe talking too much, listening too little, enjoying to hear oneself talk a bit too much, cutting other people off or diminishing their contributions in other ways. These people dominate assemblies and other settings and give little space and possibility for others to speak and make themselves heard.

**COORDINATION:** Ability to grasp a bigger vision of the collective objectives. Some people are the ones re-explaining the important things, formulating the objectives, refocusing the debates. Without them, the collective loses their path, focus, possibly also their motivation.

One part of the problem with power dynamics appearing in anarchist collectives is of course on the person who claims the power, willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, and how they act about it. More general mechanisms for confronting

people intervention-style when necessary should exist. But there is also a collective responsibility here. Often people doing high visibility tasks become go-to persons for certain questions and matters, bypassing - perhaps not even recognising this - the collective consensus-making process. The whole group need to stay clear of falling into such patterns, and listen and act accordingly. More on this later.

## **reflections on patriarchy in this context**

Patriarchy and sexism is everywhere, including in anarchist circles; we have suffered from it throughout our lives, and are sick and tired of cis-male violence, diminishing, and sexualisation of all kinds. Patriarchy is intrinsic in racist, colonial capitalism and oppresses on many levels, and we do not wish to invisibilise the racist, ableist, and other implications of it; in the next chapter we talk about white dominant culture building on BIPOC comrades' writings. And while we as white-skinned queer people have suffered under patriarchal oppression, we also want to acknowledge how it is sometimes used as a justification to treat cis-male people very bad for little or no reason. Continuing to confront cis-male destructive, dominant behavior, we also think we should try to widen our view of what patriarchy is and how we fight it.

The rage, madness, and sorrow go hand in hand when speaking about and trying to confront patriarchal behaviors. Often such confrontations have led to the exclusion of cis-male comrades, sometimes also others, without addressing the root causes or trying to properly heal as a community. The attempt here is not to silence or discourage speaking up about or confronting harm of any kind (quite the opposite). The feeling that whatever commentary will lead to a "perpetrator" stamp and an "accountability process" are also tendencies that encourage

comrades to not speak up about problematic behaviors. Instead, we want to make some suggestions/input on how to handle situations where the behaviors are experienced as negative in more subtle ways (intrusive/authoritarian/taking up too much space/etc). Understanding patriarchy is key to begin to work through things together and combat modes of domination and authority - including that which comes from witchhunts in the name of anarchist righteousness/purity - in constructive ways.



According to bell hooks, the foundation upon which patriarchy stands is blind obedience; the repression of all emotions except fear; the destruction of individual willpower; and the repression of thinking whenever it departs from the (cis male) authority figure's way of thinking. Domination and violence are key parts of this system, used to protect the patriarchy. This system shapes our culture and we were all indoctrinated into it, men, women, and queer people alike, although not to the same extent or in the same way; we all suffer from it, men, women, and queer people alike, again not in the same ways or to same extent. Dismantling and challenging this culture is thus work that

all of us need to do together, to highlight and dismantle the roles we all play in it, not only cis-male people - but again, obviously in different ways and to different extent.

For cis-men to “enjoy” the benefits of patriarchal masculinity, their capacities for vulnerability and care must be eviscerated, replaced by a violent and disconnected way of being built upon shame and woundedness. For white people to become white, they have to internalize entitlement and a hostility to difference, hiding from the ways their lives depend on institutionalized violence and exploitation. Settlers must build their lives on a living legacy of genocide, indebted to ongoing extraction and dispossession. Being privileged by empire means being sheltered from its most extreme forms of violence and degradation, and to be enrolled in a stultifying form of life that recreates this violence. Thus, we should collectively acknowledge the pain that this system does to all peoples, including cis-males.

Again, instances of sexualised violence, rape, abuse, should not be brushed over. We want to acknowledge that those are not the only forms of hurt: the pallett of hurt is so much larger. We need to work on our skills to acknowledge, confront, and improve behaviors to move beyond the toxic traits of our current society. (We do however also believe that an accusation of abuse should not be an automatic exclusion, and that we should invest time and energy to stay with the trouble also with those people - but that is a whole other topic that needs another zine)

## **white supremacy culture**

We want to leave the space to BIPOC people to share their experiences, critiques, while we stay open to them and vigilant towards systems of oppression even (or the very most) when we

benefit from them. With the risk of opening a pandoras box here that we cannot fully work through, we want to at least mention some characteristics of white supremacy culture and how it intoxicates our relations. This will only entail a brief explanation of the concepts and in the next part a summary of antidotes which we encountered useful for our purposes here. The input is taken from BIPOC writers that we encourage you to read (see literature suggestions).

Conflict inherently disrupts productivity, as it challenges the status quo. Any deviation from status quo in a culture deeply embedded in capitalism poses a direct threat, so western societies have developed a culture of avoidance and denial. Conflict is seen as a sign of poor self-control or regulation, while maintaining status quo is portrayed as mature and wise, which perpetuates a cycle where conflict resolution is sidelined in favor of preserving the existing order. A crucial note (especially for anarchists!) here: the ability to avoid or deny conflict is a privilege afforded to those who can live comfortably within the existing status quo - a privilege tied to the power dynamics within society.

We want to invite and encourage comrades to investigate how these characteristics and qualities lead to disconnection (from each other, ourselves, and all living things) and how the antidotes can support us to reconnect. If you read these characteristics as blaming or shaming, perhaps they are particularly alive for you. If you find yourself becoming defensive as you read them, lean into the gift of defensiveness and ask yourself what you are defending. These characteristics are meant to help us see our culture so that we can transgress and transform and build culture that truly supports us individually and collectively.

**FEAR** is used to divide and conquer, always in the service of profit and power for a few at the expense of the many. White supremacy culture's number one strategy is to make us afraid - we fear not being good enough, not being enough, not deserving love or happiness - and like this, we lose touch with our power and are more easily manipulated by any promise of safety.

A **SENSE OF EMERGENCY** is engendered, especially in those of us who are working to dismantle it, because it knows that living with a constant sense of urgency is the recipe for the abuse of power and burnout.

There is a **WORSHIPPING OF THE WRITTEN WORD**, leading to an erasure of the wide range of ways in which we communicate through honoring only what is written, and what is written according to a narrow standard.

Our cultural belief that there is **ONE RIGHT WAY** to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it.

Our **PERFECTIONISM** leads us to treating mistakes as something that reflects bad on a person, showing little appreciation to others' contributions in general, and confusing doing wrong with being wrong.

Our **PATERNALISM** shows when those holding power assume they are qualified (and entitled) to define standards as well as make decisions for and in the interests of those without power.

Our "**OBJECTIVITY**" shows up as the belief that there is such a thing as being objective or 'neutral', requiring people to think in a linear (logical) fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways, and a refusal to acknowledge the ways in which objectivity is used to protect power and the status quo.

The habit of turning to **DEFENSIVENESS**: denying and defending in the face of criticism, disagreement, etc, especially regarding the ways in which white supremacy and racism are produced and our individual and collective role in that production. New or challenging ideas are met with suspicion and

refusal, making it very difficult to raise ideas.

**INDIVIDUALISM** entails our cultural myth of how we make it on our own, without help - a toxic denial of our essential interdependence. A desire for individual recognition and credit, as well as a failure to acknowledge how what we know is informed by so many others.

The internalisation that I or we have a **RIGHT TO COMFORT**, which means we fear conflict, cannot tolerate it, particularly, open conflict. This assumption supports the tendency to blame the person or group causing discomfort or conflict rather than addressing the issues being named. Labeling emotion as "irrational", failing to recognize the importance of emotional intelligence. Pretending or insisting that a point of view is grounded in the "rational".

**BINARISM** reduces the complexity of life and the nuance of our relationships with each other and all living things into either/or, yes/no, right/wrong in ways that reinforce urgency, one right way-thinking, and abuse of power.

**QUANTITY OVER QUALITY** entails that the goal is always to be/do/get more and be/do/get bigger.

So - having conflicts and building community is basically a skill we've been forced to unlearn in order to be functioning within western society. Being at odds with the status quo means we have to be able to deal with conflict. When they are constructive and generative, they are a rebellious act.

## **the trap of overstating harm**

Conflicts arises when disagreements come to the surface and do not find resolution. Exacerbated by underlying power dynamics, these can escalate and lead to harm. Harm hinders our relationship to safety, dignity, and belonging. Repeated over time, harm develops into abuse.

Making these distinctions are key to handling situations of harm, conflict, abuse. For now, the most pressing issue related to this is that sexual assault accountability language and methods are used in situations for which they were not intended. One example of this misapplication involves the widespread use of the principle of rape crisis survivor support specifying that supporters should “always believe the survivor.” This makes perfect sense in a rape crisis organization setting, solely focused on providing emotional support and services to an individual who’s experienced a form of trauma that is widely disbelieved, when being believed is instrumental to the healing process. But this doesn’t make sense as a basis for conflict resolution. Transformative justice involves taking into account the needs and thus the experiences and perspectives of all parties involved, including the person accused.

Another example of the overuse and misapplication of sexual assault accountability discourse comes when people call others into accountability processes for a wide range of behaviors that aren’t sexual assault. It’s understandable that folks who feel angry or hurt for any number of reasons might want the kind of instant validation of their feelings that can come (in some circles) from framing one’s hurt and anger as a call-out requiring “accountability”—whether or not that process and language makes sense for the situation. This is dangerous not only because these terms and tactics were designed for certain types of conflicts and not others, but also because their overuse may trivialize them and lead others to treat dismissively the very serious situations of assault and abuse for which they were developed.

In some cases, folks frustrated by someone’s problematic behavior have even felt reluctant to call the person out on it for

fear of that person being labeled a “perpetrator,” presuming the hurtful but mild form of non-consensual behavior to have been sexual assault, and thus the person addressing it to be a “survivor.”

**PART II:  
BUT, WE CAN  
(AND, AS ANARCHISTS,  
REALLY REALLY SHOULD)  
TRY TO MOVE BEYOND  
THAT SHIT**

To write about the potential of trust and care, at this time in history, could seem like grasping optimistically at straws as the world burns. But durable bonds and new complicities are not a reprieve or an escape; they are the very means of undoing empire.

**The first step, for us, has been to affirm that we are already otherwise: we all have parts of ourselves that are drawn towards other ways of being.** Everyone has glimmers, at least, of the ways that fierceness can be intertwined with kindness, and curiosity with transformation. Every space is a complex ecology of different tendencies. If we hadn't felt this, we wouldn't have the energy, curiosity, and drive to continue organising or to write down all this.

The capacity to treat each other well is connected, we think, to movements that nurture autonomy, trust, responsibility, and the collective power that is palpable when people are able to participate more fully in life. Amidst and beyond barricades and molotovs there are new forms of care and belonging, quiet and humble forms of support. There are reconnections with subjugated traditions and practices. There is hatred of the forces that threaten all this, and a willingness to fight. Some have been nurturing these capacities for a long time; others are just beginning to explore them.

Anarchism can help us inhabit spaces by trusting our own capacities, and relating in ways that are emergent and responsive to change. There is a conversation going on, within and beyond anarchism, about the potential of strong relationships that are rooted in trust, love, care, and the capacity to support and defend each other. The most exciting currents of anarchism, for us, are those that encourage and enable people to live differently here and now, and to break down divides

between organizing and everyday life. There can be no set list of instructions. We hope to give food for thought and tools for moving away from regulation and policing, rather than playing into them.

## on (radical) community

*"Any kind of systematic change we want to make will require us to work together to do it. And we have to have relationships strong enough to hold us as we go up against something as powerful as the state, the medical industrial complex, the prison system, the gender binary system, the church, immigration system, the war machine, global capitalism.*

*Because we're going to mess up. Of that I am sure. We cannot, on the one hand have sharp analysis about how pervasive systems of oppression and violence are and then on the other hand, expect people to act like that's not the world we exist in. Of course there are times we are going to do and say oppressive things, of course we are going to hurt each other, of course we are going to be violent, collude in violence or accept violence as normal. We must roll up our sleeves and start doing the hard work of learning how to work through conflict, pain and hurt as if our lives depended on it—because they do."*

- Mia Mingus



It feels like we have heard it so so many times: how our "community" is doing or what the "community" feels and needs. But if we start applying specific meaning to community we quickly find that what we refer to as our communities often have little reason to be referred to as such. In our experiences, "communities" around us have been individuals organising together around a space or a political cause - with the possibility to leave whenever they feel uncomfortable and to cast out people who commit errors. And that is often what happens when discomfort arises. In this sense, we are not communities - being in community means embracing interdependence and constantly working with and on each other. Community is safe because it's vague; interdependence is scary because it's real.

Empire works to keep its subjects stuck in individualizing sadness, held in habits and relationships that are depleting, toxic, and privatized, in coupledness and the nuclear family. To be more present, in contrast, means tuning in to that which affects us, and participating actively in the forces that shape us. In light of this, radical community-building comes not from avoiding pain, but by struggling amidst and through it. To make space for collective feelings of rage, grief, or loneliness can be deeply transformative. Freedom and friendship used to mean the same thing: intimate, interdependent relationships and the commitment to face the world together. At its root, relational freedom isn't about being unrestricted: it might mean the capacity for interconnectedness and attachment. Or mutual support and care. Or shared gratitude and openness to an uncertain world. Or a new capacity to fight alongside others. In neoliberally-functioning groups, we don't have each other's backs, and our lives aren't tangled up together. In this sense, community becomes a terrain of struggle. Empire works to usher its subjects into flimsy relationships where nothing is at stake, and to infuse intimacy with violence and domination. Perhaps

relations and community can be revalued in an expansive but specific way: friends, affinities, chosen family, and other kin, intimately connected in a web of mutual support.

Friendship, kinship, and communalization have also been at the heart of working against empire, across the hierarchical divides of heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, colonization, ableism, ecocide, and other systems that have taught us to enact violence on each other and internalise oppressive ways of relating. To make kin across these divisions is a precarious and radical act. Everyone knows how difficult this can be, and how people fuck up, hurt each other, and blame each other. Those conscripted into oppressive roles can always fall back into old habits. But, in some cases, people are able to talk about all this in ways that are subtle, gentle, and more attuned to each other's tendencies, triggers, and gifts, and genuine relations of support emerge.

Interdependent relationships is a source of collective power, a dangerous closeness that empire works to eradicate through relentless violence, division, competition, management, and incitements to see ourselves as isolated individuals or nuclear family units. Creating intergenerational webs of intimacy and support is a radical act in a world that has privatized child-rearing, housing, subsistence and decision-making. Challenging the nuclear family is not about a puritanical rejection of anything that resembles it; it is about creating alternatives to its hegemony, to the dismembering of social relations, to the spatial division of people through suburbanization, incarceration, schooling, dispossession, and displacement. Initially, we can build such relations on a formation of common notions: people figuring out together what sustains transformation in their situations, and how to move with it and participate in its unfolding. Common notions can never be a fixed way of doing

things or a guarantee that things will go well. They can sound idealistic but in fact they are the opposite: they are pragmatic sensibilities, material conceptions that arise out of embodied, mutually enabling face-to-face relationships.

In reality, we as living beings are interdependent: between us humans as well as with the entire ecosystems we have around us. We need to create forms of life in which political activism is not separated from the task of our daily reproduction, so that relations of trust and commitment can develop that today remain on the horizon. We need to put our lives in common with the lives of other people to have movements that are solid and do not rise up and then dissipate. To build our radical, autonomous, oppositional communities where we practice living (more) independently from the systems we oppose, we need to face that community is more than a comforting word. Hurt, inconvenience, misunderstanding are parts of life, human relations, and thus, part of community - and the community will annoy us.

We can't all be friends, and some forms of life will never be compatible. This is the ethical basis of the logic of affinity, as well: it can never be a totally inclusive, come-one-come-all process, because this would mean welcoming the worst of empire, and all of its toxic ways of relating. Some differences might mean that people cannot work together. Differences might also signal potential for practices, orientations, and priorities that are resonant and complementary without becoming the same. Differences might then become starting points for new complicities and the growth of shared power.

But we obviously don't want this to sound like an imperative to always have "good relationships" with everyone and everything - this would be simplistic, reactionary, colonial and an erasure of

power relations and systemic violence. Just as intimacy and closeness can be enabling, they can also be sources of coercion, manipulation, and exploitation. To insist on, seek out, or use friendship—and to pathologize its refusal—tends to reinforce these divisions and hierarchies, rather than unravel them. Love and friendship can be contorted to erase power and exploitation, enforcing obedience to oppressive norms of politeness or devotion. What we are proposing here is that we, as anarchist comrades, view each other as beings in processes of constant learning and developing, where mistakes are opportunities to grow and learn. This means to - when manageable - stay with the trouble, with your anger, defensiveness, trauma, and give people a chance to listen, understand, improve their behavior.

Talking about communities and collective interdependence, it can also be worth examining the role that intoxication plays in your circles and the ways in which it might be normalised or related to boundaries being crossed and hurt happening. This is a huge topic related also to abuse that we do not have the intention to unpack here: but we want you to see it as an invitation to reflect on your collective behaviors around and normalisation of alcohol and drug use.

## **transformative justice & accountability processes**

The focus of transformative justice is to 1) protect the victim and providing them with a space to heal 2) protecting the overall community and provide it with a space to heal and reflect and 3) working with the harmful actor to understand what is necessary to prevent further harm. The basis of any transformational justice is that you can hate a person that harmed you, maybe even feel like they should be excluded, but still wish that that person grows and never repeats what they did. This basic

attitude we would like to encourage comrades to have.

One tool of transformative justice are so-called accountability or community accountability processes. These were developed for instances where sexual violence and abuse had taken place. They ideally assume the following form: a person makes an allegation; a handful of people form a support group for that individual; the support group convenes a process and organises a similar support group for the accused, who will be asked to broach the issue with this individual. The accused agrees to participate in a process; the 'support' and 'accountability' groups work together in the constellations necessary to break down the allegations in understandable and attainable ways; the accused acknowledges responsibility and an agreement is reached on steps they will take to repair the harm, such as informing future partners about what happened, or attending counselling; the accused abides by the agreement and is regularly checked in on by their support group, as is the accuser/survivor. We will make some notes here as well based on our experiences in how we would wish that those processes should be rethought, and this tool treated with care and intentionally used for the cases which it was built for, i.e. violence and abuse (sexual and otherwise).

Firstly, people can have very different experiences of situations, and when problematic behavior has gone unchallenged it can be unintentional, something the person is unaware of, or something that springs up because of dynamics between two or more people. It is then not just a problem of one isolated individual. Thus, confronting a person with an intervention-style accusation model when there is no concrete instance of abuse to understand and take accountability for is not going to resolve a situation like this.

Secondly, when accusations are made without having a group

working with the accused, we are not in any type of transformative justice process nor are we working on transforming behavior. As people who have lived through this type of scenario, we want to highlight two things. Firstly, the emotional torture of being accused of abstract things that are unattainable and not understandable without being given input to break them down into understandable pieces, the space to work on them, nor help to do so. Accusations of problematic behavior should be made with clarity and accompanied by support/information with how that behavior should change. Obviously this shouldn't (have to/only) be the work of the accuser, but they should be able to get support where necessary. Secondly, being in a dead-end process with little responses and little access to any information is daunting. The reality is that we have seen quite some bullying mechanisms at play here, and we ask you to also stay vigilant to this if you do decide to start a transformative justice process (that is not for violence/abuse). The role of being able to call for such a process and possibly exclude others is also a role of power. It can make sense to reflect on whether or not those dynamics might be at play in your case, and if this is the format for the harm that you have experienced.

Thirdly, we should try to remember that everyone is affected by the system we live in in good and bad ways. A flaw or some fucked up behavior does not make a person bad for life. If a person is committed to listening and changing harmful behaviors, there should be no accusations without staying with the person accused. Being accused and left alone is something that pushes people to repeated behavior, self-destructive behavior, reaching to the extreme. That is in the end what we all want to avoid. And then we also want to destroy the system that implanted all of this shit in us.

That said, certainly there are cases - specifically in cases of

repeated harm by people who remain unaffected by intents of the community to give them space to take accountability - where other forms of justice are called for. We do not see transformative justice processes as the only option to deal with harm, nor consider non-violence the only way. In our experience, however, the language of transformative justice have acted as a legitimisation of harsh accusations of comrades with little or no basis in actual abusive behavior but rather instances of - perhaps unintended - harm and personal conflicts. If possible, we would encourage other forms of feedback than accusations. Then, if accusations are needed, ganging up on someone and communicating harsh, abstract accusations without working with the person to resolve their issues is cruel. Calling it an "accountability process" does not make it better or justify it when it is not actually committed to accountability and transformation.

## **accountability, repair & boundaries**

As we have already established, in so many ways, we are all fucked up by this system. We receive violence from the world around us and learn how to pass it on. We can do harm and refuse to repair because that process of repair would require of us to acknowledge the wounds we've spent a lifetime concealing from our own selves. We refuse to engage in repair because of the punishment and carceral politics we have developed around harm, instead of radical accountability and repair.

There is no such thing as 'holding someone accountable'. We hold ourselves accountable when we are ready to do so. Some people will never be. We can also support others in expanding their efforts and capability in holding themselves accountable. Engaging in self-accountability allows us to hold more of the complex nature of what it is like to be a human being in relationship with others (humans & beyond). When we practice

accountability, we get to witness more of our own complexity and the one of others, making it more accessible to forgive. For us to be willing to engage in accountability and specifically an accountability process, we need to be able to imagine how taking responsibility for the harm we've caused will benefit us. Punishment never does that. But growth and transformation do.

To be able to tap into the miraculous nature of each other, we need to be humble enough to lead with curiosity instead of trauma, while acknowledging that our bodies, minds and souls are constantly existing within traumatizing structures. We need to be able to engage tension without indulging trauma. That is difficult and painful, but the only way to truly move forward.

One of the tools with which we can begin to change our relationship to the fears that we hold in our collective and individual bodies is through somatics (what's happening in our bodies) in navigating fear and trauma. Meditation, silence, music, dancing, poetry, drawing, singing, resting, brainstorming, compassion, etc etc... We have lots of options for how to meet and sit with our fear. If you and your community do not yet have a fear practice, begin to strategize what that might look like for you.

That said, that obviously doesn't mean that we do not practice boundary-setting and sometimes take distance from people who don't seem willing or ready to hold themselves accountable. However, boundaries are intentional and assertive, not passive or reactive. They serve as a means of asserting our needs and values while maintaining respect for ourselves and others. Boundaries are essential for establishing safety, without which love, respect, dignity cannot exist. An environment where boundaries are respected can diminish our inclination towards avoidance. And being avoidant is not establishing a boundary.

In that same way, practicing interdependent, transformative and loving relations necessarily includes undoing destructive relationships, dissolving or attacking depleting or harmful forces. Deeply transformative relationships are only possible through vulnerability and trust, and as such, they also entail the risk of being deeply hurt.



## **antidotes to white supremacy culture**

It seems that people with strong relations - their own webs of care and support - are the ones able to consistently support decolonization. These capacities are not based on abstract morality, nor are they about having the most bang-on anticolonial analysis. They are based on a web of connectivity that enables people to think and act differently. Indigenous resurgence is often driven and sustained by these deep connections and relationships that colonization seeks to destroy. Rebuilding and sustaining these connections is clearly at the root of decolonization—for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, differently. Instead of copying or appropriating Indigenous cultural practices we can tap into our own - and generally, into anarchism - and build this. Here are some ways in which we can actively work against white supremacy culture - for much more, visit the sources.

**We have to get good at belonging - belonging to ourselves and welcoming each other into belonging.** This requires emotional maturity and responsibility, mutual accountability and support, and knowing ourselves well. In this way we can work on meeting our fear(s) and avoid being manipulated by those in power.

**Develop a learning and understanding group,** where the stated expectation is that everyone will make mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning. Never treat the mistake as synonymous with the person. Practice ways of giving feedback: much more on this towards the end of this chapter. When a mistake is jointly or collectively acknowledged, ask for specific suggestions about what the person or group has learned and how we would do things differently moving forward. Realise that everybody has a world view which affects how we

understand things. Realise this is true for you too.

**Include process goals in your planning.** For example make sure that your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do. Distinguish here between growth or impact, which is necessary and organic, and the conditioned desire for "more" - more stuff, more people, more actions, more attention, etc, for its own sake. Consider adding measures that keep you grounded in what's important - how many times did we laugh together today? How many times did we express gratitude? How many times did we allow silence? How many times did we allow dissent?

**Work individually to identify your own habits of defensiveness and sit with the feeling when it arises,** to then reflect upon what you are defending and why. Do this with any type of discomfort: it is at the root of all growth and learning. Deepen your political analysis of racism and oppression, avoid taking everything personally, don't prioritise your comfort over other peoples'. Seek to understand all the ways we are informed by our dominant identities and how our membership in dominant identity groups informs us both overtly and covertly. Understand how membership in a dominant group extends psychic, spiritual, and emotional benefits as well as material benefits. Reflect upon our essential interdependence and work to get over your own ego and need for credit. Welcome honest and hard feedback as the gift it is, knowing that people could so easily choose to stay silent and talk about you behind your back rather than gift you with their truth about how your attitudes and/or behavior are causing a problem. Discuss collectively the ways in which defensiveness or resistance and critique to new ideas gets in the way of what you want to do. Work together to find ways to manage defensiveness when it comes up.

**Find clarity ahead of time about how (good) decisions will be made in an atmosphere of urgency** - including deciding what constitutes a 'good' decision, specifically, the possibility of involvement for all, accessibility to information, etc. Develop a personal and collective practice of noticing when urgency arises and pause to deliberate the nature of the urgency and the options available to you in this moment. Notice when you or others use 'either/or' language and make time to come up with more than two alternatives to avoid simplifying complex issues. We should also try to understand that rushing decisions take more time in the long run since people who didn't get a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings will not be content with decisions made and this will cause problems in the long run.

**Figure out what actually needs to be written down and come up with alternative ways to document** what is happening and make sure anything written down can be clearly understood. Encourage other ways of documenting or recording or reflecting what you are learning and what you feel you know (oral storytelling, embodied learning, visual and movement art, silence, meditation, singing, dancing, etc). Work to recognise the diverse contributions and skills that each person brings.

## **battling power dynamics**

We insist on the importance of a living, present anarchism, and on transforming our relationships here and now. The state's power lies not only with armies or police, but in its capacity to get us to govern ourselves and each other, and to recreate its hierarchical and divisive relationships through our conduct. The state is a social relationship; a certain way of people relating to one another. It can be destroyed by creating new social relationships; i.e., by people relating to one another differently.

If you find yourself identifying with the powers mentioned in the previous chapter, it is time for you to check your behaviors and give others more space, and use your influence to empower others to step forward, to distribute roles, to introduce more egalitarian elements and ways of running things. If you are a person who often feels like others with these powers are running over you, it is time for you to try to take more space, initiate knowledge and task exchanges, introduce more egalitarian ways of organising (word shift, passing around an object to whoever has the word, going through the full circle to hear everyone's opinion, etc). Build upon what you learned through the exercise mentioned earlier and tackle power dynamics from whichever directions seem necessary.

Collectively, we can all make efforts to take initiative in trying to learn new skills, maybe team up with someone who is skilled at a task to do it together and learn together, so that next time the person who didn't feel qualified can take on that task (maybe together with another person who wants to learn). Take initiative and responsibility for both sharing information in accessible ways - speech, writing and others - and to make these accessible to all. Take ownership of information and tasks in shifting constellations, and take the responsibility to acquire more information and responsibilities as well as sharing them when it is you who have access to things that others don't. Create a trusting context where attempts, faults, errors, weaknesses are accepted. Make the schedule of the collective adaptable and accessible to different groups of people, offer mutual aid versions in order to simplify the access to meetings and responsibilities for others. Identify collectively the pending tasks, clearly formulate who does each to avoid tasks accumulation, install circulating roles of moderation, note-taking, agenda-making, etc. Try out exercises to identify power dynamics and then tackle them from whichever directions seem

necessary.

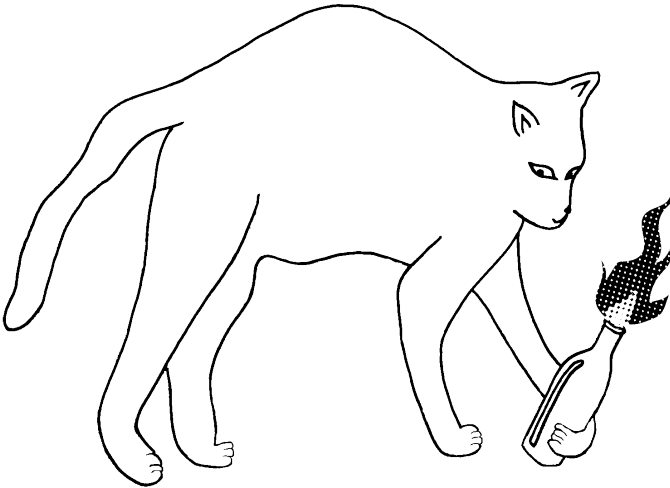
Basically, power dynamics are going to arise, and it is worth dedicating time within our collectives/groups to debate and reach a consensus on the functions, objectives, and if applicable, responsibilities of individuals and of specialised groups/working groups we create, as well as actively remain dedicated to a circulation of roles, responsibilities, and stay aware and responsible for both our own actions and dynamics in the group.

From personal experience with being people who take on important tasks we want to make some points around this: we do not take these on because we are greedy for power or want to take up as much space as possible, but rather, to get things done. We are often all at our very limit and its understandable that some people have things they are good at and prefer to do, and that some people have more other life responsibilities than others and thus have less time to invest in the group. While we can obviously not speak for everybody, we see our collective strength in realising that this is the case and that we still are all equal in the collective. But an awareness around the necessity to share and circulate certain responsibilities and roles also seems important in this sense, and when necessary, so does switching up who does the more high visibility tasks, to break patterns of this kind. That not only requires the dominant person stepping down but other people stepping up. While in dominant positions we have noticed tendencies of people from inside and outside the collectives to bypass the collective and ask only us, then called the collectives attention to this, but still not seen much change. Thus we urge the whole collective to stay vigilant of signs that people seem to grow into leader roles, confront the person of course, but also look at their own and everyone's role in it, and especially, react when people draw your attention to

this.

Adapted from [abcdd.org](http://abcdd.org), on the following page is a graphic specifically relating the softer power we have already discussed and ways to battle it. It can be downloaded in good resolution here: [onradicalcommunity.noblogs.org](http://onradicalcommunity.noblogs.org).

Note: this is obviously not an all-covering list but a collection of things that we have observed in our collectives. Another good thing to do if you sense power dynamics are present in your collective is to have a session identifying power dynamics collectively, make your own design of a table, fill it with content, use it.



# HIERARCHY PROBLEMS IN ANTAUTORITARIAN GROUPS

## and how to face them

### TYPE OF POWER

#### INITIATIVE

Ability to have and go forward with your ideas, act for yourself.

#### INFORMATION

#### SKILLS-TOOLS

#### PRESENCE

Ability to be physically present in moments of collective adventure.

#### THE SPEECH

Ability to express oneself in speech and make oneself heard.

#### COORDINATION

Ability to grasp a bigger vision of the collectives objectives.

### FIGHT AGAINST POWER

what the bosses can do

be less demanding, less critical, stop believing that without you things will be done wrong: they will just be different, leave the group a little, avoid taking responsibilities for a while.

transmit information to the others, collectivise information sharing processes, if you become a person others turn to for answers, bring the collectives attention to this.. be understandable and accessible.

share your skills and tools as much and quickly as possible, offer to work alongside others and show them how it's done, be understandable and accessible, don't despise others for not knowing.

remember that your ability to be present is related to your conditions/privileges/priorities and doesn't mean that you are more important than others, offer to support with kids, pets, other responsibilities of others so that other comrades can join instead of you sometimes.

learnng to shut up, to listen, leave silences before speaking, don't panic because of silence, try to practice your understanding for others who have a harder time expressing themselves.

ake care of sharing information, organise workshops, reframe the vision together with the others, empower others to take space and back own from dominant role.

### FIGHT AGAINST POWER

what the others can do

work on your self-confidence, take risks, do not be afraid to make mistakes, try to communicate how you feel and what you need: ask, investigate.

take active ownership of information and informationsharing, look for it instead of waiting for it, take responsibility, follow up.

request transition of knowledge, be direct, honest, and put in the work to initiate knowledge-sharing sessions (collective workshops, separate sessions, shadowing tasks...)

don't wait for dominant people, do things without them, try to include yourself as much as possible and empower yourself to be part even if your presence might be limited: don't see your role as limited by external factors that limit participation.

speak up when there is silence, practice saying what you think and what you need, defend yourself when you are cut off and others when they are being cut off.

ask, investigate, reflect upon your vision, share it with the group, put in the effort.

### COLLECTIVE SOLUTIONS

Create a trusting context where attempts, flaws, errors, weaknesses, are accepted, have clear processes of pending task distribution.

create accessible and dynamic collective tools of knowledge and information management: wikis, games, calendars, panels, agendas, drawings, songs...

formalise and generalise exchange of skills and tools: for example having an experienced person and a person learning in each task

accessibility: support system for kids, pets, other responsibilities to allow for busy comrades to join more, choose non-permanent organisation, changing roles and having accessible tools and information.

experiment with egalitarian systems of word distribution, build contexts where those with difficulties expressing themselves feel heard, respected, taken into account.

rotating roles for each assembly: mediator, agenda-setter, note-taker, avoid people taking part in too many working groups at once, talk about burn-out.



## **normalise (generative) conflicts**

To acknowledge conflict is to refuse to make our differences a problem, and instead see them as a pathway to getting closer to each other. Generative conflict means we make it a point to acknowledge someone's dignity and reflect that back to the person we are in conflict with. It can still mean that we continue to disagree, and also that we choose to separate, but it tries to foster expansion, regeneration, in all those processes, rather than hinder it.

One of the touchstones of white supremacy is the idea of sameness; while we all share our humanity, we are certainly not the same, and the idea of sameness problematises difference and is obsessed with control. Shared humanity instead portrays differences as an opportunity for growth and relies on connection: in other words, acknowledging, facing and even expecting conflict solidifies our interdependence in the midst of our differences. Here, where we can hold our inherent differences while still honoring our interdependence and shared humanity, lies the key to our collective liberation.

We also think that we should try to never throw anyone away - this does not mean we can't confront each other, support each other to be our better selves, set boundaries when people have not learned yet to take responsibility for themselves, apologize and take responsibility ourselves when we cause harm, and continue to grow and learn how to be with each other even when we are getting on each other's last nerve. Considering our belief in "each according to their capacities, each according to their needs", we believe this shouldn't sit too far from anarchist mindsets. Imagine the opposite of calling someone out as calling someone in: there is a problem, and thus we want to hold you closer and work on it with you. An instruction we might hold on to

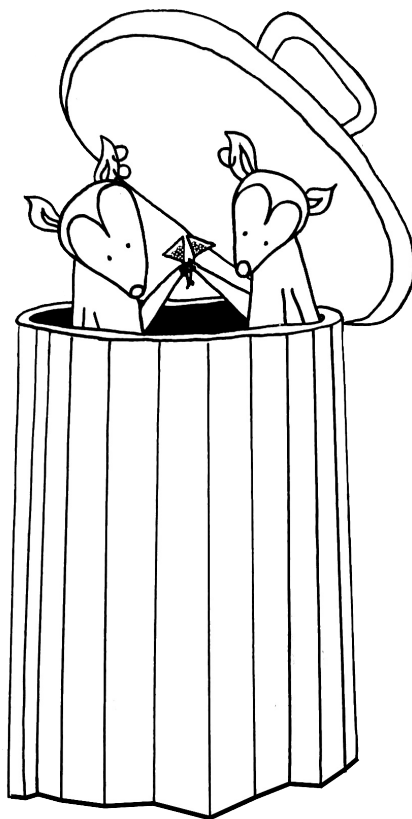
is to attack the problem, not the people, not each other. Of course, sometimes our behavior is a problem, our conditioning is a problem, and then we can, when we are able, help each other through. And if we cannot, we look to others who have the capacity to help or be in relationship as they look to us when they are out of capacity and we are able to show up.

As people who have received accusations and been met with unwillingness from the people doing them to follow up and help us understand and work through our issues, there are some insights we want to share here. There seems to be a lack of understanding of the impact that accusations have on a person. If accusations are made, the people who make them are responsible for its implications and for not leaving the person alone. When you are accused and excluded, this rips you out from your friends and into deep insecurity in yourself: you trust your comrades, and they tell you that there is something deeply wrong about you - but won't go into helping you to move beyond it. How do you build trust in yourself after this? How do you ever succeed in attempts to work through these things on yourself if you completely lack trust in yourself?

When we understand that there is no way out of conflict, and that in fact, conflict is part of the natural progress of a relationship towards more intimacy and vulnerability, we **stop problematising conflict and instead make it a point to become better at it**. Engaging in conflict with loved ones allows us to build and practice important skills such as communication, empathy, and compromise. It teaches us how to listen to ourselves, as well as others, understand different perspectives, and find mutually beneficial paths toward connection.

Reflecting upon this now, you probably have your head full of all the non-generative conflicts that have been dominating your

circles/communities lately. But before attacking all those structures and group behaviors, it is worth investigating conflicts that involve minor harm within our closest relationships - they are significant as they offer practice for our skills in addressing and resolving disagreements with a small number of individuals. As the number of participants increases, so does the effort required to foster generative repair. An exponential amount of resources, skills, energy and time becomes absolutely essential to face conflict within a bigger group. In essence, conflict with loved ones serves as a microcosm for addressing larger societal issues. **If we cannot navigate conflicts within our closest relationships, how can we expect to effectively address larger societal issues and abolish harmful institutions?**



Firstly, in order to engage in regenerative conflict, we should **focus on accountability rather than punishment**. Fostering this is a necessary foundation for confronting our faults. In addition, fostering environments that support our capacity to establish, maintain, and affirm boundaries paves the way for our conflicts to become generative: living in an environment where boundaries are respected can diminish our inclination towards avoidance.

Secondly, **conflict is practice**. It starts with becoming clear with the sneaky and punitive ways that we use which uphold systems of punishment, domination and control, such as:

**passive-aggressive behavior**: indirectly expressing hostility or aggression while maintaining a facade of civility

**stonewalling/avoiding**: refusing to engage or communicate with the other party as a means of exerting control or avoiding confrontation

**guilt-tripping**: using emotional manipulation to make someone feel guilty or responsible for the conflict

**triangulation**: involving a third party to manipulate or control the conflict dynamics, often by creating alliances or spreading misinformation

**silent treatment**: intentionally ignoring or withholding communication as a form of punishment or control

**sabotage**: undermining the other party's efforts or interests to repair ("it's too late")

**power plays**: leveraging authority, status, or resources to gain an unfair advantage or suppress the other party's interests

These behaviors might seem subtle and not so bad but they in the long run hold us back from our true needs. For many of us, our needs have been a source of acute anxiety and profound vulnerability as our needs are often consistently unmet - even,

or especially - when we did gather the courage to express them. We don't ask out of fear to be disappointed, rejected, abandoned. Our lack of ability to ask for what we truly need - let alone what we truly desire - also comes as no surprise when our mere survival has been conditional to our capacity to work and build capital for someone else. Racial capitalism doesn't justify its existence based on how well it responds to human need, it evaluates our own based on how much profit it extracts from us, for the benefit of a very few.

Thirdly, when reimagining a conflict in a generative way, all parties would **prioritize active listening and empathy**, creating a safe space for open dialogue despite differing opinions. Boundaries would be respected, allowing each individual to express their needs and concerns without fear of judgment or retaliation. Instead of resorting to defensive or passive-aggressive behavior, you could practice assertiveness and vulnerability, communicating your needs clearly and respectfully. By fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding, this conflict could lead to deeper connections and personal growth for all involved.

A good starting point when a conflict is emerging is perhaps to reflect upon your relation with the person with which you have a conflict and the future thereof. Is it a problem with a person that also spills over to other relations? Is it related to our way of treating each other? Often it is a good idea to try to bring it up directly with the accused person first, ask for support in preparing from others perhaps, try not to fall into traps of shittalking and building resentment but instead genuinely try to see where you are situated within the conflict, your own role, and approach the issue in a constructive, calm way.

## **spaces of conflict, reflection, criticism, feedback**

Our want and need is to find ways to replace the criminal justice system without replicating any feature of it, and foster new ways of relating free from patriarchy, white supremacy, and other forms of authority. Indeed it makes much sense to establish such systems of communicating way before we are forced to confront a situation of violence. As power dynamics are bound to appear within all relations, and these are what we want to combat as well as the background to many forms of harm committed, this could and should be seen as prefigurative work that may also help to avoid harm being done in the first place.

Establishing permanent structures that are put in place to help bring conflictual situations to the surface and deal with issues, clashes in personality, subtle power dynamics before they escalate, seem to be a good way to approach this. Buddy systems, where each member of the collective has a go-to person for speaking about issues, or an awareness team structure, where a group of people are the go-to people for bringing these things up for the entire group, have proven effective in supporting to bring things to the table before it's too late and to avoid people leaving being the ad-hoc solution to any type of conflict.

In order to actually create spaces and gain skills to reflect, confront power dynamics and create honest feedback cycles around unwanted or unacceptable behaviors, we need to weave together the ways in which we respond to any type of conflict/harm with a determination to confront and undermine the social order that gives rise to them. We are never dealing with exceptions and "a bad egg", but a structural feature of the society in which we live, and we often carry a collective responsibility for allowing behaviors to go too far. The social

order thus includes both the wider societal climate that encourages these behaviors and the collective level of your group(s) which most often enables and reproduces certain behaviors.

A key first step to this transformation is that we establish organisational cultures and create designated spaces to share disappointments, perceived shortcomings, or non-appreciated behaviors with the people directly, and of course also to practice our skills in receiving this criticism - see notes on teknil at the end of this chapter.

**Sharing criticisms in a comradely way** - for example when commitments and obligations aren't being fulfilled; it seems that power dynamics are arising; when you feel a person is communicating insensitively; not reacting sufficiently; taking up too much space; displaying problematic behaviors in any way, etc - is key to building comradely honesty and constructive criticism. This can then replace competitive passive-aggressiveness, talking behind people's backs, ganging up on people and pushing them away. You probably also know this well enough already from non-organisational relationships in your life: sometimes hard conversations are necessary. The key difference here, as we see it, is that we are also not always that keen on being close friends with each other, yet we end up spending time and we have the need to organise together. In this situation, taking the time and energy to communicate (constructively!) about things that bother you might seem like a hassle. And maybe it's not always necessary. But many times, in our experience, it definitely is.

When encouraging each others' accountability it's important to come from a place of love and respect that avoids being patronizing, competitive, egoistic or dishonest in any way. If you

feel you personally are unable to do so, perhaps because of a lack of trust or a history of miscommunications with that person, it can often help to bring along another person, maybe use a mediator closer to the person you want to feedback to. This type of mediation can be useful in the case of problems in communication and personal dislike between a few people. When many people share a similar opinion on an excess of power or destructive behaviors in one person, it might be useful to do a group intervention. But these shouldn't brand the person as the problem, and they should not be the first go-to way of handling any kind of dislike/conflict/disagreements. A reflection on the collective responsibility of allowing power dynamics to appear and continuous development of strategies to dismantle these need to follow.

**The flip side of giving comradely feedback is learning how to receive it,** using it to help you and your collective grow, become closer, build trust, and function better. This is often difficult since the vast majority of the times we are being told about our shortcomings, it is coming from top-down relations; so we are almost universally traumatised by the exploitative situations in which we have had to eat shit from above. But the egalitarian and libertarian practice of encouraging others' accountability and being encouraged to hold yourself accountable is fundamental to learn, practice and promote if we want to destroy and replace these top-down relations with relations free of domination. Radical selfreflection is key here (as it is throughout our lives): try to talk with your closest affinity people, write a diary to put down your thoughts, work through the emotions that come up being critical but gentle towards yourself. If you experience that the critique is coming from a place of love and respect, where a comrade is simply communicating some shortcomings to help you to improve them, it is really not as bad as it might sound.

When criticism isn't comradely, we should demand respect. But it is essential that comradely anarchist accountability and critical self-reflection as a practice is developed, encouraged and cultivated within our organizations. Without critical self-reflection and horizontal accountability, groups revert back to dominating and oppressive top-down relations.

### **Tekmil - a space for collective criticism and self-criticism**

Tekmil is an instrument of collective reflection and analysis. The idea is to create a space formally dedicated to collective criticism and self-criticism, and to use it to evaluate our socialisation in our societies; the influence of capitalist and patriarchal mentality on our personality; and to deal with our actions and our approaches toward each other in the format of comradeship and collective living and the ideas that we want to put into practice. There are obvious links to what has been discussed in this text - and though we have not practiced it personally we want to share some summarised and adapted input from lessons that anarchist comrades organising through this instrument in Rojava has written about (see sources for more in-depth readings!).

The setup entails that people sit in an equal circle or other form that does not suggest any hierarchy. Key is to be presenting and acting in a respectful way towards your fellow comrades of the circle, which includes no smoking, no drinking (except when necessary), talking amongst oneself, and that participants are sitting in an upright way. The space in which you have the teknil is usually clean and not messy so as to be open to thought and participation, as are the people participating, and those participating should have a way to take notes of what is happening and what they are thinking during the teknil. It is a space dedicated to criticism and self-reflection, and should be

prepared beforehand, so that you arrive to teknil prepared for those two things.

On giving criticism and receiving it:

Each participant may speak only once with items of self-criticism and then criticism directed toward others, and once with suggestions.

Criticism should be phrased in the 3rd person, so as to address the whole collective rather than one person, which also helps avoid defensive behavior. Criticism cannot be responded to, neither in words nor with body language.

### **Criticism is a gift - try to overcome your ego!**

Empathy, love and respect. Give and receive, think about the feelings of others.

When giving criticism, it is good to not only point out where we see shortcomings in our comrades' approach, but also to offer perspective and ways they can work to overcome these shortcomings. This helps us also to consider the person we are criticizing subjectively, from their view, and to focus on how we can all work to improve.

Beware of strong language or statements such as "it's obvious" "everyone knows/feels/thinks/does it", "crazy", "disgusting", etc. Think about how the way we express ourselves helps to build connection and understanding, or create separation between comrades. Criticism and self-criticism should help progress and develop, not verbally beat people down.

When criticism is given to you, focus on reflection/self-reflection

instead of counter-arguments. Even if you feel it is based on untrue assumptions, or on a distorted view of events, it is based on the view of reality of your comrades. Before you start clarifying the situation, you should at least think about what led to this criticism, and respect the fact that a comrade is trying to give you the gift of criticism with the best intentions. If what is said still needs clarification, wait until the next day or later and discuss it with the person who criticized you - not to "restore the truth" but first to better understand why the comrade perceived something in this way, and to better understand the essence of the criticism itself.

Don't apologise for your shortcomings - work on them! If an apology is needed, don't miss this point, but never abandon working on your shortcomings because an apology was made.

Other parts that inspired us:

If there is an autonomous non-male structure or group, it should have its own separate teknil. Autonomous teknil without men is not an additional, optional activity, but a just as important teknil. Because in mixed gender spaces we can observe a different dynamic that is often dominated by patriarchal behavior. An autonomous teknil without men can thus open doors that would not otherwise be available to non-male teknil participants, and allow them to create their own solidarity and spirit in the struggle to change the patriarchal mentality. This in turn can bring more progressive approaches, thinking and solutions to the entire collective. It can also create a space for analysis, discussion, or critique of something that, for whatever reason, is better discussed in a space without men, allow non-cismale comrades to collectively formulate criticism - or serve whatever other purpose that the group decides on.

Philosophy suggests that emotion cannot be the basis of criticism - nonetheless, emotion is very important and cannot be excluded from what we do. They are part of us, of collective dynamics and relationships. But the way we handle them, the way we express them, the impact we have on each other in the emotional field, the meaning we attach to them, and the impact they have on what we do is something to reflect upon. While emotions are always with us and in us, what we put into teknil should still be based only on ideas, values, principles, analysis and reflection.



**AND REMEMBER:  
IF YOU WANT TO  
GET PISSED OFF  
WITH SOMEONE,  
GET PISSED OFF  
WITH THE  
ACTUAL ENEMY**

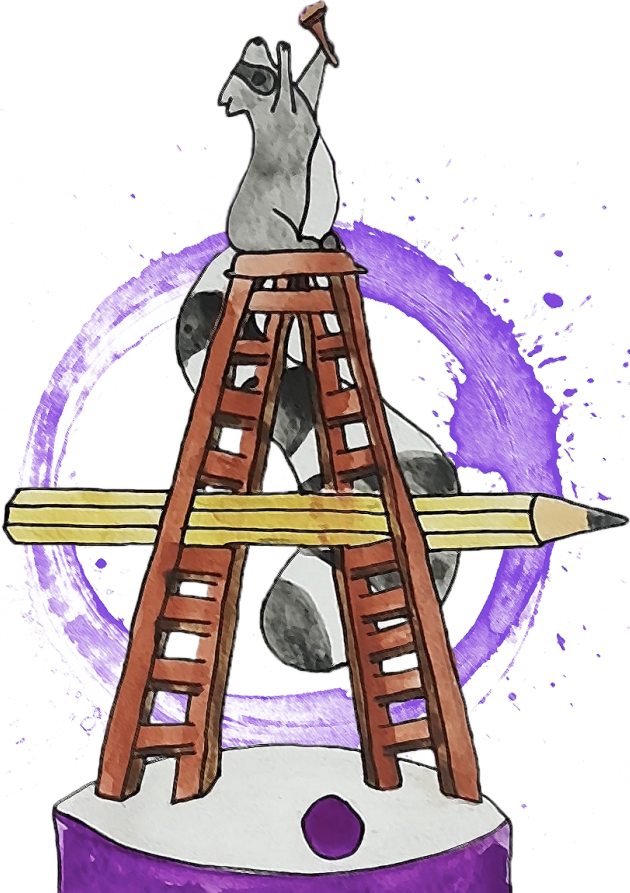
Capitalism, the state, imperialism, racism, patriarchy, and all forms of exploitation, domination and oppression aren't going to go away without a fight and - crucially - without something to replace it. This means that we need to work daily to find alternatives to reproducing the toxicity and the violence of the system of judging, condemning, excluding. Creating the organisational structure, practice and culture that encourages and takes seriously comradely criticism, radical self-criticism, friendship- and affinity building is fundamental to prefiguring the type of society we want to replace the current one - and dare we say it - to build actual communities. Here we can see a very solarpunk future, with interdependent self-sufficient communities of people, animals, plants, in symbiosis and striving to grow together for everyone's mutual benefit and survival. This applies not only to inter-human relations, which has been the focus of this zine, but our interdependency with the entire ecosystems in which we act.

We don't hold all the answers, we are constantly on a learning path, as is everyone else. Here we think of the Zapatistas' notion *preguntando caminamos*: "asking, we walk." We call for a fierce commitment to emergent forms of life in the cracks of empire, and the values, responsibilities, and questions that sustain them.

As anarchists, we must improve our trust in our comrades to grow, to see their humanity, to stay with the trouble and each other, to care when the toxic traits we inherited from the systems in which we were raised and which dominate the world tells us to exclude, condemn, hurt back. The trust in individual and collective strength is crucial for a self-determined life when we strive for everything for everyone here and now.

We wrote this to work through our own traumas, yes, but also because we believe in the impulse, desire, longing to move

beyond punitive systems. Together we can fight the cops in our heads and grow in ourselves and together, and provide space for others to grow.



## SOURCES & MORE ON THE TOPIC

for more on white supremacy culture and its antidotes, see Tema Okun's fantastic website and its many subpages: <https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/>

**most of these readings are available online (usually on the anarchist library):**

(A)legal, CrimethInc, Chrysalis Collective, Anonymous: "What about the rapists? Anarchist approaches to crime and justice"

Anonymous: "Confronting Manarchism Or, Please Forward This to Every Man You Know"

bell hooks "Understanding Patriarchy".

Ching-In Chen et al. "The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Partner Abuse in Activist Communities"

Cinética: Guide for the Prevention and Action Against Patriarchal Violence in the Environment of CSOA La Cinética

Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence (lots of exercises that could be useful)

CrimethInc: "Days of War, Nights of Love"

Elia Diane Fushi Bekene: selflovetribute.com's "Transformative Justice Workbook"

Erotics of Liberation: "We can't be abolitionist and conflict avoidant"

Errico Malatesta: "Let us go to the people"

Greg Elliott: 10 Ways in Which White Supremacy Harms White People

Kristian Williams: "The Politics of Denunciation"

Mariam Kaba: "We do this 'til we free us: Abolitionist organising and transforming justice"

Miami Autonomy & Solidarity: "Anarchist Accountability"

Tekoşîna Anarşîst: "Tekmil: A Tool For Collective Reflection"

Transformative Justice Practitioners Network's extensive resource list (a lot in German): <https://www.transformativejustice.eu/de/resource-collection/>

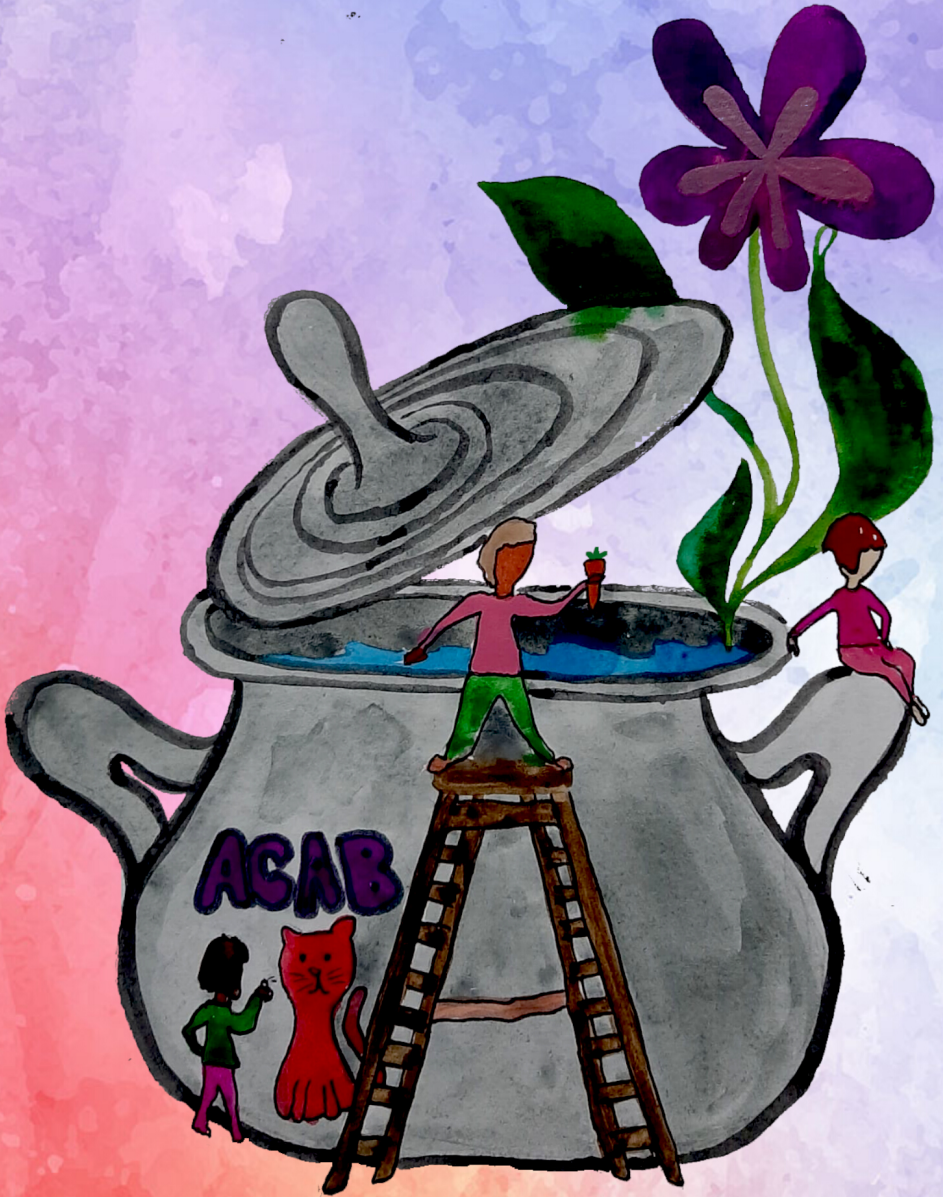
### **non-readings:**

"Andrewism"'s youtube channel, perhaps especially "Can Anarchy Protect Us From "Bad People"", "How To Build Radical Communities" & "What To Do When The System Fails Us?"

Christabel Mintah-Galloway's instagram and substack, speaking of white supremacy culture and overcoming it, shame, relating and connecting, etc

ContraPoints's youtube channel: her video "Men" is a great place to help reflecting on building non-toxic masculinity

eroticsofliberation on instagram does short videos explaining their practice, contextualising concepts, talking about experiences, etc



[onradicalcommunity.noblogs.org](http://onradicalcommunity.noblogs.org)