

# **TO MEMBERS OF THE FRINGE ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL SCENES IN MY BACKYARD AND ALL AROUND THE GLOBE, GENUINELY WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH US?**

I see a pastoral landscape. Striking, ordinary, and full of light and life. But behind the barn the crops are dying. In one corner lies the severed limb of an animal. A woman stands with her arms crossed on the front porch. How many of these seemingly innocuous, quiet and random things must exist to stain the landscape in irreversible ways?

Instances of harm. I hear of it happening far too often. I've had far too many experiences of my own. How many pieces of subversive, avant-garde work do you think it takes to make navigating the world like a coward, jerk, or fool not matter anymore? 5? Perhaps 7? I'd love to know but I'm too busy trying to figure out how to not cuss people the fuck out so that any real and genuine harm done to me or my friends becomes moot in the eyes of gormless buffoons. Many, many such cases. Because upholding civility and the status quo engorges people's dicks and clits like the pump attached to the helpless cow's teat in the fucking landscape.

The superstructures of oppression with its many intertwined tentacles has its masterful way of twisting into our little folk cafés, apartment parties, and underground theaters. In our day to day lives and personal interactions it can look like being more upset, critical, or uncomfortable with the person who calls something out rather than the person who does the harm itself. It looks like expecting people to not "make a fuss" or "cause drama" lest they desire to be quietly ostracized, ignored, or mischaracterized. It looks like being pedantic about what exactly they say or how they say it in order to avoid examining the original hurt and treat the calling out of the hurt as an equal offense. It looks like making

perfectly calculated excuses and undeniable reasons for bad behavior. It looks like weaponizing serious matters (mental health, identity, etc.) to try and make it difficult for people to object to bad behavior. It looks like co-signing other people's bullshit. It looks like avoidance, silence, lies and denial.



*Do You Get It?* by Anna Park. 2019.

The impulse to desperately delude and pretend that bad behavior or wrongdoing is just a misunderstanding and can be explained away, denied, or excused in some way needs to be cut off and buried like the head of a venomous snake. We will never negate feelings of hurt by trying to make ourselves and others believe that situations were actually innocent and harmless. This is not the antidote to magically dissolve hurt. The inability to face conflict and foster direct communication in the aftermath of harm or strife is harming all of us and eating away at our sanity and well-being each and every day. Those who weaponize their emotional and social incompetence to curtail responsibility and accountability get a one up on others by causing emotional damage yet remaining unbothered, untouched, and unaffected themselves.

Those who are not willing to sweep wrongdoing under the rug and ignore things need to be respected and looked to as figures of strength and inspiration rather than unreasonable

nuisances and selfish leeches of peace. Handling confrontation and conflict directly and maturely is a craft to master. It requires bravery, thoughtfulness, and an undeniable sense of self. When you decide it is easier to not say things and do not stick up for yourself or your friends, especially repeatedly over time, you erode your sense of self and become morally and ethically blind.

Imagine your body. It is living and breathing and responds to stimuli. If you starve yourself, your body eventually stops sending you signals of hunger and is instead forced to eat away at your internal organs. When you continually ignore your body sending you signals telling you “SPEAK UP” and “THIS ISN’T RIGHT” your sense of justice and morality will inevitably deteriorate over time. Think of children. So often they respond to injustice with a fervor, action, and curiosity your average adult could hardly recognize let alone understand. Do not let it lie dormant within you. You are slowly killing yourself and others.

This is not to say that our problems will be solved solely by investing in personal and individualized internal work. Absolutely not. Far too abstract and intangible. Welcome to the new age self-help metaphysical spiritual fascist pipeline am I right? However in organizing spaces and beyond there is plenty of discussion about larger structural issues and political matters yet an insufficient focus on long term plans and solutions, specific steps and actions to take, AND tangible ways to work towards revolution in our everyday and personal lives. Paying attention to how we contribute to improving personal relations within our own circles helps build a solid foundation and place of hope to form and develop real communities from. I’ll circle back around later to the term “community” (often so vague and hollow). Overall there is a significant impact that comes just from your behavior with the ones around you.

When something bad, hurtful, or uncomfortable has happened, there is a correct way of dealing with things. We simply cannot address every little thing that happens to us or those around us. And thank goodness for that because we’d all be exhausted if we did. But when somebody mistreats you in a way you know you won’t forget, in a way that fires off sensors in your brain immediately, do not ignore it and let it fester. Do not betray yourself. Trust what rubs you the wrong way. And give people the opportunity to course correct! Address them, more than once if you have to. Sometimes things cannot be resolved or understood in a single conversation. And no, do not address them on your fucking

Instagram stories. Or through the voices of other people. Or through text. Make it a face-to-face interaction (if not, at least a phone call) and be direct and concise yet thorough enough so nothing gets lost. Try your damned hardest not to yell or cuss. This will only be wrongfully used against you, even if someone deserves to get their fucking ass beat or cussed out. If you do all this and they still treat you like shit, then that's when you beat their ass! Uh haaaaa kidding. Toooootally kidding ;) .....



*Scab* by Maynard Dixon. 1934.

But if they really do refuse to take genuine accountability and reconcile to resolve things, it's okay to talk to people and seek support. Tell them what's going on and what happened to you. You don't know who has had similar experiences until you say something. You are not a gossip or a drama monger if you addressed people directly and they didn't care or make any effort to understand and make amends. Make no mistake, the internal and external pressure to be quiet and not ruffle feathers is **WRONG** and a way in which systems of oppression and social control play out in our daily lives. People face real risk to their social lives when they speak up. It becomes difficult to create opportunities and maintain and form connections. It is disgusting. And this may seem obvious but **all of this happens and affects you tenfold if you are not a MAN or WHITE!**

When do we make time to focus on solidarity, reconciliation, and connection in our spaces? No time and space is made to simply exist. Is this not the exact space which allows us to give birth to progress, connecting through organic conversation and intimacy?

Gathering together with no intention but existing in conjunction should not be mistaken as anything but revolutionary. Must we always have something to offer, whether it's being another body for more numbers at an event, or a skill, talent, or creation to exemplify and utilize? What does this all reinforce? How are we contributing to the commodification of art, friendship, etc. as exclusivities for the privileged? Why is everything so transactional? Is all we are means to an end? Do we care enough about slowing down to actually practice it? Where and how else do we expect to address these things?

What is the value we are placing on each other? How is this judged? Who are our social architects? What social markets do we control, trade, and invest in? Social architects are rarely confronted therefore held accountable, for fear of others losing them as a connection, as a currency. Social currency fits into capitalist power structures the same as any other form of currency, and just like with others, hoarding it distorts and pollutes the behavior of the socially wealthy. If you do not establish any type of social, artistic and intellectual presence in an earnest and healthy manner, you are like a shell company waiting to collapse. Are you poisoning the well from which we all drink? Are you dodging the townspeople with their cyst-bloated ovaries, sunken in exploited eyes, and voices soaked in chromium despair?



*Iridescent Wings and the Crackle of Bottle Money* by Joel Slotte. 2024.

When it is easier for powerful individuals to abandon and avoid, who is then being left behind and forgotten? Are reconciliation and growth not essential factors of solidarity? What happens in the act of closing doors? What does it mean to be a true comrade, a real friend, a good person? The role of the artist and intellectual is something which inherently necessitates a reliance and interdependence with others, yet we maintain such individually driven behavior and perspective. We absolutely cannot do things alone. Yet we refuse to reconcile with this fact and everyone acts like a self starter running a personal business. It's like the new starving artist but worse.

How do we mend and strengthen our safety nets to fall back on? What purposeful efforts need to be actively nurtured around community, camaraderie, and intimacy? Let's talk more about that word now, community. So often used as such a nebulous and nonsensical term. Let's say you go on social media and see a video of someone making a clay vase on a stone wheel and they mention the "pottery community". Well what the fuck does that even mean? This use of "community" means NOTHING!

In organizing we talk about base-building. Base-building refers to strategies and actions utilized with the intention of building relationships, strengthening bonds, identifying commonalities, and improving dynamics amongst connected groups of people (local labor unions, tenants associations, student organizations, etc). It requires active engagement, collective responsibility, and face to face interaction. It is all about how we form and develop real, perceptible COMMUNITIES. Until we make the personal political and seriously and deeply consider these matters, we will continue to have stratified groups of disjointed individuals coming together to form "communities" which do not feel real, supportive, or safe enough.

This next thing *must* be said. Liberalism is an insipid disease that culturally, morally, and spiritually sucks the spine right out of people. And try talking to somebody while their gummy fleshy body writhes around on the floor. Tough fucking luck getting anywhere with that one buddy. There is no such thing as being liberal and anti-capitalist. And no you are not magically a socialist or communist without putting in actual CONTINUOUS work. No amount of Twitter research, zine making, and GoFundMe donations make up for this. And what the fuck do we even say about conservatives at this point? I'll give a surface level and reductive analysis at best. They are a group of comically and celestially stupid and more outwardly terrifying and dangerous people. As Malcolm X said, conservatives

are the wolf and liberals are the fox. With both there is a deep contradiction at the heart of everything, **a willingness to poison the future in an attempt to make the past and present last forever.**



*Heat* by Emma Beatrez. 2024

Nothing else in this essay matters without the following crucial factor. Operating from a hard bottom line of dialectical and historical materialism and Marxism is a **personal NECESSITY and a global REMEDY!** Coupled alongside that we need these essential five things in order to get somewhere worth going to:

### **DIGNITY, GRACE, CHARACTER, MORALS, AND STRENGTH.**

Maintain these as more than just qualities, virtues, or values but ways of life to die by with unwavering commitment and devotion. I'll never forget being onboarded as a member into Anakbayan, a Philippines based international militant youth organization espousing Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. A slide in the presentation called for us to repeat lines that we would be willing to die for our cause. I remember our presenter somewhat

sheepishly explaining in a way that seemed almost embarrassed by the strength of the statement that we didn't have to actually die by anything. I remember wanting to pull them by the collar and go forehead to forehead and say, "DON'T YOU DARE APOLOGIZE OR WAIVER COMRADE!"

It is nearly impossible to form any real code of ethics or moral compass worth clinging onto without the eternally giving and miraculous science of Marxism and communism. I genuinely and wholly believe this. Liberals, conservatives, and "LEFTISTS" alike wouldn't know right from wrong if it bent them over and fucked them in the ass. And again, developing this requires lifelong effort, maintenance, and dedication (which becomes exponentially easier when done with others). No one particular identity exempts you from this work. No amount of art or music you make exempts you from this work. I cannot even begin to convey how worthy and necessary it truly is so I won't really try. All I'll say is it is revolutionary work which builds a renewed world we so desperately need to imagine and experience.

Injustice and harm is enacted on both massive and minuscule scales. THE FRINGE ARE NOT EXEMPT! We mimic and reflect the systems which we claim to question, abhor, and fight against. Think about this. When the maintenance of the political belief system of Marxism and communism with the essential FIVE I have mentioned falls to the wayside, you end up with figures like bell hooks. Once prolific Marxist and feminist writer who shifted the perspective of thousands to then become a transphobic landlord. Many, many such cases.

This is to say that "ideologically or artistically sound" people are still vulnerable to being stupid, awful, and fundamentally antisocial in their behavior. Regardless of where you're coming from, as an artist, organizer, neighbor, friend, fool or just plain nothing-person, it doesn't matter. Understanding and interrogating the scope of these behaviors and their interconnected issues is non-negotiable. Do not render all the honest political, artistic, or intellectual work you may have already done or will do in the future as atrophied mush. Work to keep our wells full and contaminant-free. Remember the landscape and never let it leave your view. Attend to the rubbish and carrion before it scatters into the fields and leaves its stinking mark.

We must become so appalled by the mistreatment of ourselves and others in every facet of



our lives that there is no second thought in reacting quickly, assuredly, and thoughtfully with that Marxist bottom line to guide us and our **DIGNITY, GRACE, CHARACTER, MORALS, AND STRENGTH**. We provide so much incredible value and potential to the world. Just imagine if we made some changes how fucking unstoppable we would be. We can do it. We have to do it. We have no choice.

**REVIVE THE CROPS, STITCH THE LIMBS OF THE LAMB BACK TOGETHER, AND PULL UP A CHAIR FOR EVERY WEARY WOMAN.**



*Enlightenment* by Veri Apriyatno. 2018