

Violence and Nonviolence

Friendly Anarchism Podcast

May 14, 2017

Contents

Synopsis	3
Transcript	5

Synopsis

We jumped into the debate surrounding violent vs. nonviolent protest tactics, and it led to discussions about the importance of intersectional feminism, sustaining good anti-authoritarian process, the Portland May Day "riots", and more!

Here is a bibliography and reference guide for this episode:

Mothers Day as an anti-war holiday

<http://annapolisvalley.quaker.ca/posts/the-radical-peace-roots-of-mothers-day/>

Gene Sharp - From Dictatorship to Democracy... Gene Sharp has also written voluminously on non-violence including a strategies book with 198 nonviolent tactics which can be taken.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/From_Dictatorship_to_Democracy

Mark & Paul Engler - This is an Uprising

<http://thisisanuprising.org/>

Peter Gelderloos - How Nonviolence Protects The State

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/381842.How_Nonviolence_Protects_the_State

Shon Meckfessel - Nonviolence Ain't What it Used to be

<https://www.akpress.org/nonviolence-ain-t-what-it-used-to-be.html>

Jonathan Matthew Smucker - Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals

<https://www.akpress.org/hegemonyhowto.html>

Michelle Alexander - The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the age of Colorblindness

<http://newjimcrow.com/about>

Audre Lorde - The Uses of Rage

<http://www.blackpast.org/1981-audre-lorde-uses-anger-women-responding-racism>

'Texas Slim' - Hot Lead is Medicine: Thoughts on Whiteness, Privilege, & Violence:

https://akuk.com/index.php?_a=product&product_id=5878

Milo Yiannopoulos - bridge to the far right: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/ryan-lizza/how-alt-right-fellow-traveller-milo-yiannopoulos-cracked-up-the-right>

Seattle Antifascist shot by supporter of Milo Yiannopoulos: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/25/shooting-milo-yiannopoulos-speech-seattle-charges>

Portland Protest May Day - in the news: <http://www.kgw.com/news/politics/may-day-protests-expected-monday-in-portland-across-us/435436532>

It's Going Down communique on Portland May Day Protests: <https://itsgoingdown.org/portland-make-may-day-anarchist/>

Daniel McGowan - served prison time for actions with the Earth Liberation Front (ELF): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_G._McGowan

Documentary: If a Tree Falls - A Story of the Earth Liberation Front: <http://www.ifatreefallsfilm.com/>

Riots in Greece - Alexandros Grigoropoulos was killed by police and riots ensued: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Greek_riots

Valarie Kaur - Not the Darkness of the Tomb, but the Darkness of the Womb:

<http://www.today.com/video/what-if-this-is-not-the-darkness-of-the-tomb-but-the-darkness-of-the-womb-watch-valarie-kaur-s-speech-917892675740>

Vocabulary:

Intersectionality
Socialist Vanguardism
Diversity of Tactics
Tankies: <http://sjwiki.org/wiki/Tankie#.WRnxzMlBnZ>
Insurrectionary Anarchism
Greeks have many words for love: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_words_for_love

Transcript

CATHERINE: Hello and welcome to friendly anarchism. You're listening to KEPW LPFM 97.3.

SIMRAN: Welcome back.

CATHERINE: All right so.

GUTHRIE: Welcome back.

CATHERINE: I am your co-host, Catherine.

SIMRAN: And I'm the Co host Simran.

CATHERINE: And we are so happy to have you here with us today and a happy Mother's Day.

SIMRAN: Happy Mother's Day.

CATHERINE: So before we start we have a little Jingle for you. Get us in the moon, real fun song by our good friend Woody Guthrie.

SIMRAN: All right?

GUTHRIE: Let's show these fascists what a couple of hillbillies can do. Well, I'm going to tell you fisis you may be, Umm. In this world are getting organized and found the lose you fascist bound the lose. You buy this as people of every nation park inside the side marching talking field where a million faces side you sound to lose bound to lose.

CATHERINE: OK, so that was super fun one of. My favorite things. OK, so again Happy Mother's Day to. However, it is whatever that is that means to. You and we're. Glad you're here. With us and we are going to be talking about violence and non-violence. We're doing the thing.

SIMRAN: We're doing the thing and this isn't appropriate weekend. Doing it because Mother's Day began originally as a critique of war and militarism, wanting both to be a day of service to for mothers and more privileged business. Helping people who are in less privileged positions, helping people out and also acknowledging the tremendous and terrible wars that have been happening. In Europe, both in following the United States Civil War and. The Franco Prussian War and so it's important that we think about and talk about violence in our lives on a day. On a day. That was originally intended to think about. Think about violence so.

CATHERINE: So I mean the question always is. So your Quakers and anarchists? So how exactly is that a thing? If Quakers are nonviolent and anarchists believe in sort of this, this diversity of tactics that includes violence, right? So we've been doing a lot of thinking about it and a lot of research about it and a lot of thought. But and sort of the first thing. I want to say about it is the more that I research and the more that I read, the more for me it's so so perfect that this is on Mother's Day because the more that I delve into this topic, the more it keeps coming back down to intersectional feminism for me just over and over again. Intersectional feminism. I'm yeah, so I'm reading. And just sort of starting with all the quote UN quote heavy hitters when it comes to talking about violence or non violence and.

SIMRAN: Who were some of those people?

CATHERINE: So I've read Gene Sharp, which is he's known. He's like the father of non violence from dictatorship to democracy. A couple of his other things, Mark and Paul Engler. Wrote a really important new book called. This is an uprising. Where they talk about the history of nonviolent resistance, I read Peter Gelderloos how nonviolence protects the state Sean Mccaskell. Nonviolence ain't what it used to be. Unarmed insurrection and the rhetoric of resistance. Jonathan Matthew Smucker, Road map to hegemony. And what is it that all of these things have in common? Well, I'll tell you, they're pretty much all. White CIS hat men intellectuals who are basically middle class. And some of those things may not be totally true, but overall, all of those things apply and we sort of the thing about this debate is that everybody gets sick of debating it like it's been rehashed and rehashed and

rehashed. And everybody gets frustrated and wants to talk about. And if you look at who's dominating the conversation, maybe that's why, like you know, like you know, like honestly, it's been emotionally tiring for me to be doing this research, because no matter how important the books are and how wonderful the information is and like, I'm really, really glad that these things are being said. And I really enjoyed this research in some ways. There is just. Always like, can't get away from this. Sort of like how dare you question my authority like kind of privileged attitude that seems like. CIS head white middle class men just can't always shake and you're wonderful sins and I'm. Not, you know. And this is exactly. When people jump in the room and say not all says that white. Middle class men Like honestly, if this research has been kind of tiring for me because that attitude is just pervasive in pretty much. All of these. Works and like I need to start doing a better job of making a point of like between reading. White men like making sure I'm going back and like reading a black woman like reading somebody something written by a trans woman or something just to like. Keep myself emotionally steady and sane because those voices have a different take and like have a different attitude that I find incredibly refreshing. So like when we're talking about violence, nonviolence, what needs to happen is having more intersection. And more intersectional feminism all the time. And that's one of the things that I love about anarchism is. That anarchism is. Deeply rooted in intersectional feminism, it's always there. It's always coming up like anarchy. Is like closely connected to black feminism. It's closely closely connected to trans rights. You know, it's been part of feminism forever, basically. No, I didn't write a button like from the very beginning. Mary Wollstonecraft's husband William Godwin was like one of the fathers of anarchism and Mary Wilson Kraft is one of the father. One of the mothers of feminism. So like this goes all the way back and I. I just wish I had more from these other perspectives to bring to this debate, and I need to. I'm going to start doing that and it's like these voices are more buried. You know, like if I if I just said like I want to get all of the. Get all the like top information and it turned out without me really even thinking about it to be all of these white. And now I'm like thinking it's like oh 96 it's like it sucks so you have to like dig a little deeper to get these other voices and it's really important that I go on a personal level. Go do that and so.

SIMRAN: And it's like who is regarded as like an authority in our societies often to do often has to do with privilege. Who are. Who has access to whiteness? Who has access to white spaces and to have the you know the time and energy to write books to engage in these things? And I'm not saying people shouldn't, it's it. Is important to engage in intellectual pursuits, but. That whiteness can't be the center of all discussions, especially when the way our our society revolves around violence and how how you sort of alluding to this how, how gendered it is, how racist it is, how much violence is applied in different ways to different people. And we see that in all sorts of different metrics, both in terms of like how police as like actors with violence engaged with arrests and prisons and. Like Michelle Alexander's, the new Jim Crow points out that 70% of the US prison population is people of color, and so it it's. I like to bring this up because I think it's dangerous to like go into and talk about and have a discussion about violence without thinking about the ways that it. Affects different communities.

CATHERINE: Yeah, that's one of the reasons I really enjoyed coming up this debate from an anarchist perspective, because anarchist literature is much more likely to engage in discussions of racism and these binaries. And sort of all of these different voices that should be heard. So like even if the people at the top of this debate that I mentioned like they are in fact more likely to have even talked to like different people of color and different and then also. the issues. Being brought up like at least that part at least in anarchist. That's part of the conversation. So like I really, I really, really enjoy that, and I wish that this literature was more well known to people that are not anarchists, because I think this book non. Ain't what used to be by Sean. Lifestyle is incredibly an important document. Like the thing I learned a lot from this, I learned a lot from this. It did take me a minute though, to be able to like get past the tone of it. The tone of the. Book like the way that the attitude that it was written from that, I think was definitely.

SIMRAN: What would you say is like the dominant thesis?

CATHERINE: The uh, the well I mean.

SIMRAN: I haven't read the book.

CATHERINE: It gets past like thing, uh, the dominant thesis is that violence is more complicated. It talks a lot more about. Structural violence and like self-liberation and using violence like, you know, quote UN quote violence as smashing windows and stuff is like an act of self empowerment and those kinds of things. I think it's a great book. There's a lot more to it than that. I mean that that does bring us up to the next problem though. Is semantics like the other thing that's happening is like you're trying. So the first thing is who's doing who's in the debate, and then the second part is like every time it seems like we try and talk about this, you just get caught up on semantics every time like the first thing you have to do is if you're talking about non violence versus violence, you have to define violence and then. That's you don't get past that. Like have you have you? Have you dealt with that?

SIMRAN: Yeah, I mean I've. I've done a lot of research to think about, like what is, what is violence and what does that mean in the United States. And it's absolutely true. there's this like there's a couple of things going on, one of which is the like cult of militarism around like, well, you know, there's what the military does as violence. And then there's what? Civilians do and. And so we we separate things in all kinds of different ways. You know and like what is it appropriate? You know what is appropriate. Violence in different contexts, you know and really recently with Black Lives Matter. The discussion about like what is what is appropriate protest, you know our our riots, violent are riots are riots appropriate? Is this? Is this a tactic? Is this a legitimate? Yeah **** and I think that. There's so much you know built into the semantics of like defending or defining that it often loses that part of the discussion. Just like using that as a way of getting away from actually talking about what is the issue here, you know like why are people protesting?

CATHERINE: Right?

SIMRAN: Why are people using or not using? Violence and instead moving away from that to discuss, you know, to discuss the tactics, and that's I think that's always been true. If you look at in the civil rights movement. There was a great song that it's. It's not always easy where the singer talks about going into a store and into a segregated shopping store that won't serve people of color and like filling the grocery cart and leaving it and being like no like this is your problem. Like we're engaging a match of protests and people would always say Oh well. You're you're you're pushing too far. You're pushing too far or. If a civil rights activist was killed, as happened repeatedly, people would say, you know, this sort of like. A lot of white Christian people would say, Oh well, that's too bad that they died. But why are you making such a big deal? Why are you protesting? Why are you doing any? You know, it's like there's no amount of injustice that makes protest OK for some people. And it's like always comes back to the semantic of like what's acceptable. What's appropriate, you know.

CATHERINE: Right and then this this conversation over tactics and. Over just the semantics of non violence, if you spend the if you that's a great way to derail the. Real conversations, you know. I mean like if you're spending all of your time trying to just define what violence is, then you don't actually talk about what's actually going on.

SIMRAN: The substance of it.

CATHERINE: The substance of the problem, so you know that that is a real real issue, and then the other thing about semantics. The conversation goes on for so long and it's so frustrating because violence is just not adequate. The having one word for the nuance of what violence means in our culture at this point. Like you're not, you're literally not actually speaking the same language, cause violence means something different to every single person that you talk to because it goes from it ranges from like seriously, just like the violence of smashing a bug or like eating meat. Or you know, or whatever to like structural violence to, like you know, punching some like.

SIMRAN: Yeah, yeah.

CATHERINE: Breaking a window or like punching somebody or like. You know, or like, emotional violence.

SIMRAN: Sort of, yeah.

CATHERINE: Emotional violence like hate speech like there is so many different things that can be included in our culture. Even just like anger. Like anything, anything that feels. Angry or intense can feel violent, you know, like.

SIMRAN: And there's and there's a lot of that being. Tied up that's. I think that's really harmful to the movement in some ways in that. You know, I think there's a lot of discussion around. For instance, I hear this a lot in like the non violence discussion community about how. Oh well, you know we we really have to live our values, which is like that's important. You do want to live your values, but then using that to say Oh well, I don't, you know I don't want to feel any anger. I don't want to ever hear any anger. Why are people of color being so angry in the streets? they really need to work on themselves. They really need to calm down and it's like no like that's a.

CATHERINE: It's not appropriate, right?

SIMRAN: That's a real problem. And under Lord as a whole. Hazel essay on the uses of rage that, like there are, you know, we don't want to live our lives in rage. But I think that it is. There are important moments when systemic oppression is happening that we do have to recognize that there are places where this is appropriate.

CATHERINE: I mean our cultural understanding, like our cultural relationship to violence is really messed up and that's something that anarchists really try and are trying to point out to people. Is that how our society understands violence is very, very damaging and screwed up and so like, that's a conversation that needs to be had. That's not really being had. And I really appreciate that, and we need to be just at least having that as part of the discussion. So for instance, like I've done Krav Maga and the idea.

SIMRAN: What's that?

CATHERINE: What's that what's krav? Maga Krav Maga is a type of martial arts that is self-defense. So the idea is. But it's like. it's brutal self. Defense because the idea being is like you end. Like you, you make sure that you end it as soon as you can so that it doesn't get prolonged and things don't get worse. You know so, but it's like as within months. Lots of martial arts. The idea is like if you can run away, run away. You know, if you can get out of the situation first, get out of the situation, then if you can't, if you can deescalate, deescalate and if you can't do that then like do. Like long shots, you know like long kicks and that kind of thing to like. Get people out of your space and if you can't do that, if it comes down to a point where you're about to be murdered like you put your hand behind somebody's head and you gouge out. Guys like yeah so. But so here's the here's the hypothetical situation in which I'm. About to get murdered. By somebody.

SIMRAN: This might be an intense conversation also.

CATHERINE: Oh yeah, all right, well actually the transmitter is sound so, but that's here's the thing we're talking about. Non violence, violence. It's going to be intense. People should know that you know and like understand that so, but in so in this hypothetical situation, the thing that got shocking, the thing that made you want to like give a warning on the radio. Is not my murder, it's the maiming. Of a murderer. You know what I mean? It's like we've become so desensitized to death that like it's more shocking to us. And if you think about the implications of that, it's like that means a Nazi eyeball gets more deference than a vulnerable person's life.

SIMRAN: I hear that, but also like explicit description, is like. They can bring up a lot of things.

CATHERINE: That's I mean, I guess explicit description. Yeah, like I, I get that. I maybe I went a little too far with that but the idea being though is that we are so afraid of talking about the realities of what violence is. I mean like what I said, that's a reality. That is, you know, like that is the real world.

SIMRAN: Yeah, totally.

CATHERINE: You know what I? Mean so I. And it and it is more shot like and the point being that it is like it is. You know, like we, I think in this culture it is more acceptable to kill somebody than to name. Them Mm-hmm like it's sort of this real ableist undertone. You know what I mean? And So what? A lot of anarchists. And I guess we're talking about in like in this non violence and stuff. The

idea of like what is violence like? We say violence. Is force and pain and damage against a person or a live thing like a you know? I mean like a person? So if you're smashing windows and burning things, it's not violence because it's not against a soul you know, or you know or like it doesn't. It's not the same. So then what you're doing what they're doing, you know, is kind of like. Trying to show the dichotomy there of being like look you're getting so upset that this is how upset our society gets over a smashed window versus the total lack of empathy for people being shot in the street. You know, and so that's, but here's the here's. The problem with that. Is like the sort of philosophical. Underpinnings of the message of. Like property over people or people over property over people. 's issues often is gets lost like it's sometimes it's a message that's hard to contain in a brick. You know like so. So then if the message isn't getting there. And it's actually sort of not furthering the conversation then it's not where if that's just not working you know what I mean? Like it's that's a problem. So how do you bring up these conversations? You know, how do you? How do you get these messages across in a way that will get people to listen to the message? Because if people don't listen to the message, then what's the message for? I mean the other part of this though, is saying that the idea is not just the message, but also the idea of self-liberation, that people who have been so disempowered by a system. Like taking that physical action against an against just a window. That's an oppressive system. That's like breaking a rule. That's something is like a very empowering experience for people. But you know, I don't know if there's other ways to empower people that doesn't risk you being jailed, you know.

SIMRAN: You know, I mean, and I think you know every context is a little bit different. There's a. There's a scene that came out a couple years ago called Hot lettuce medicine and it's thesis is basically that like yeah, you can be feel this liberation by firing your gun and you know I think that I mean. Having fired several guns like, I mean, I can see how someone might think that, but you know, for me, like I feel on some level. Sort of like. Intrinsic sort of like drawback from violence, like when I hear violence is happening I like, I cringe. You know it's like something that like I, I want to pull away from like that's not a society that I desire in which like lots of violence is happening but also. You know there's this sort of like violence that happens in or around protests. That's one thing, and if all of the attention is on that rather than like talking about what's happening like that, can't be a focus without talking about what that came from, you know.

CATHERINE: Right, and then I mean, and that's the other thing is then when there are, when there is violence and protest that can also derail the conversation. You know, I mean, because end up even if it's not fair, often a a violent act within a protest situation. Will draw all of the media. Will negate anything that the message of the main protest was trying to get across. You know and will even like, quell the Quell participation like for future, for future discussions that are, you know, these large scale protests that are like supposed to sort of be discussions about these. Issues, you know. What I mean?

SIMRAN: I mean, and I think also, you know there's I hear me now again this thing saying, well, you know the media is going to misrepresent what we say anyways all the time. Why should we care what they say and. You know? it's interesting because in. In Seattle, when there was a Miley Innopolis came to speak and he's this, you know, far right. Sort of tool who his I mean his like. His purpose is to is to make a bridge between what is, what is the like far right fascism and sort of like more mainstream conservatism. Through talking about like popular media, he really like tried to get people through, like Gamergate and like move them towards the alt right? He's this like bridge figure who recently lost favor and popular society because it came out that he was that he like repeatedly, and like, vociferously, endorsed pedophilia. And you know, but like, it wasn't that like he was OK with Nazis. It wasn't that he was OK with white supremacy or this like so-called alt, right? Like that wasn't a problem. It wasn't until he like came out as a pedophile. You know, and like vociferously like on multiple in multiple venues, on TV and on radio, and those clips were like put together that it that he was like. Finally, kind of shut down, but like it anyway. He was.

CATHERINE: Ethnic cleansing wasn't enough.

SIMRAN: Yeah like that's not a problem, you know and at the same time like there. So he was speaking at this event. In Seattle and a. anti-fascist protests was happening and one of Milo Yiannopoulos's supporters pulled out a like brought a gun to the rally and shot one of the protesters and the first like thing. The first like news articles I saw and like comments were like Oh well, did the protester deserve it? What was the protester? Doing what like this person just got shot like what are you talking about? You know? Well exactly, but it's like that's where the media focus is. You know, so like there, there is a real thing that, like even if you're doing, even if you are, you know, ostensibly nonviolent, and like, not not harming or not engaging in physical violence. And you are harmed like the state can still be like you know or popular media and popular narratives can still be like. You know you're still. At fault, you know, so I mean, it's. It's not easy.

CATHERINE: However, however, it is really what the community at large what the narrative is, what the dominant narrative is, is really important and like reclaiming that narrative is a large part of the work, because the idea of societal change is that society's societal values have changed and that will be reflected in the narratives that we tell ourselves, and that we tell each other about. These issues, So what people think of us matters. It really does matter, you know, like we have to regain control of those narratives. And like right now it the violence and the sort of like outright hostility is really damaging our ability to sort of take back those narratives. About us what anarchism really is which is about love and cooperation and protection and self-defense. You know of community. When I was talking about this with somebody at our meeting this morning, I was describing how anarchists, what this what this place comes from is just like really like fierce love and wanting to protect self like defend. And protect vulnerable people. And I told him this, this is Jim and. He's amazing and he said you sound like a lion. He sounds like a lioness you know and you sound like a Mama bear. You know, like the idea is like but. Like a lioness will do what it takes to protect that cub so la Mama bear and that like intensity is really important. And this brings me back to the intersectional feminism and how feminism is so important for this discussion, because this is the stuff that feminists talk about is the discussions that we need to be having. Like when you're talking about. Violence versus non violence. That's a strong binary. And as we know if we talk to our trans women. And you know, talk to our trans community. They are on the forefront of breaking binaries. And like we have to be able to break this binary to have like a constructive conversation about different tactics as opposed to just putting everything. Trying to just shove everything into this binary. Of non violence versus violence. And then if you talk about like. Issues of consent and coercion. This is one of my problems. Sort of. This is one of my fears and dangers about about. Sort of this like smashing Windows, writing types of things is issues of consent with the rest of community like we're talking about Portland, the Mayday riot and riots in Portland. There I feel like there is an. Issue of consent there. When or when anybody sort of brings up and starts smashing windows and stuff at these or larger scale protests. Is it can up the ante and escalate a situation? Create a higher level of danger without consent of everybody else. At that protest. Who are not like maybe the people involved are totally willing to take those risks, but that has not. Been okayed by everybody else involved in that space, you know I mean and another sort of a the problem. Another one of these problems here is. UM? Like centering sort of the problem of like centering the kind of talk a little bit about like sometimes these these things will center the conversation and that is difficult. And then we we're fighting these narratives. I see, sort of. Well, let's let's go back a second like I feel like a lot of these problems that. Having are not even actually about like morality or tactics like. If you talk. About these violence and these things you know, smashing windows and stuff. I think a lot of people anarchists would be surprised at that. How much people honestly don't even necessarily care if it's if you read behind. If you read if you read behind. Between the lines of an article that I read about the Mayday riots riots.

SIMRAN: Quote UN quote there.

CATHERINE: Oh yeah, I'm hand coding. Nobody actually cared about the corporate windows, no, but like nobody actually cared. The only one that they cared about was when the small business got their window smashed, because that's actually an economic punishment on that business owner. Cause

those are expensive and like that guy did not deserve to be punished in that way. So but the idea being that like nobody actually cared about. The corporate stuff and like people are ***** at capitalism right now and like there's I don't think that the problem here, but so one of the main problems happening is not about the violence or the whatever. It's about bad process and like I think oftentimes things just come down to process and process work and good process versus bad process like good. Collaborative, cooperative process gets good results. Bad process gets bad results, you know. And so If we're having good cooperative process within communities as a whole, and everybody at the table, and you get good stuff going on, I was really, really impressed. With the black block in Minneapolis. Oh, that was so cool. So like they came together with community and sort of like ran fascists out of the capital.

SIMRAN: And then they did it this interesting way, right?

CATHERINE: Like they yeah, they, I mean so like it was with a lots of different types of people and like a full range of people from their community. And it was. But they also were, you know, they were in full black block at the at the. But they were there as part of community and not as a separate entity with of community. And like one of the issues I've been having. With the with what happened in Portland on May Day is that there's been no accountability from Black Block about the part that they took and what happened. And it's like I would love to see. Their account, their actual account. And it's sort of like. I'm I have access as an anarchist. Things that I follow I know more about what happened than most people and I am I mostly agree with everything that they did and the fact that it was the cost who definitely escalated that situation and made it very, very dangerous. It was not. Black block like. But however we should know better than to pick fights with cops and around around people that are vulnerable around the elderly around children. You know, I mean like the way that the cops reacted was way overblown, and there's no way for us to have known that it was going to be that bad that they were going to react like that, like that. That was like insanely terrible and like. So, but the point being is that after that point there was an opportunity to, in a cooperative like open dialogue, way for black block to have sort of maybe come out with a statement that. Says look this is what? Really happened, we worked. We worked cooperatively. We were working cooperatively with the whole protest. They asked us to be at the back. We were at the back then the cops started compressing us into space. This is how I understand it from the things that I've seen. So if this is it incorrectly, please e-mail us and let us know. Right now we're at staff@kpw.org. But they were getting they were getting right and that. The cops were. Really kind of like helping escalate this situation. Then there was some playful rock throwing. There's hilarious photo of like a black block hand hand trying to. Hand a Pepsi. You know, and like, that's you know what I mean, like? OK, like what? But then they come, you're you're like, these are lines of cops in full riot gear like you can't take a few stones and like you don't want to be offered Pepsi. OK, like they're reaction was insane to that right? And so then so you know, this could said of that and then said. Once the cops. Did what they did and became a super dangerous and created the Super dangerous situation. Black Block was setting up barricades. Black Block was protecting people. Blacklock was making sure that people who were vulnerable could get out of this situation that the cops had created and like that is. That's great, nobody knows that the only the only thing I've seen about that was an article written for it's going down. But the tone of the article was so defensive and hostile, and Rick wouldn't take any. Any like accountability for the fact that you know you like you did pick a fight with authoritarian cops? You know what I mean at a rally that was about not that you know what I mean in a different space. And then even even if that's not true, even if that's not fair, the idea of like working cooperatively if you're getting if we're getting. If we're getting criticism from the outside community like, why not just like smooth that over and say like here's what happened. If anything we did compounded the situation. That's not was not our intent, and like on a personal level. Like I'm saying all these things and I'm being so critical because this has directly affected my life like. And I feel like I have a real I. I have a right to bring up this to bring up this criticism because my life has gotten as an anarchist organizer like as trying to do community organizing like it made my life harder. I'm having to expend more energy and time as emotional energy. I'm just trying to convince people. And safe, you know that you know just trying to like breakthrough the barrier of this bad PR.

So you know and it so it. It literally makes my life harder and more dangerous and more frustrating. And you know, like so I really want and I want to be opening these dialogues and I'm trying really hard right now to like, come from like a loving. Like my my own process like we should always be checking in with our own process, right? So like I want to. Be coming from like a. Loving cooperative place. Because I totally do understand like I feel like if you don't want to light stuff on fire right now, maybe you're not. Paying attention to like what's going. On but on the other hand, it's really hard to come into that space.

SIMRAN: Yeah, yeah.

CATHERINE: Like in a loving manner with good process when the feedback I get is so hostile, you know.

SIMRAN: Yeah, and you know for me and I gave up for a long time using using the identity benefits. For that reason it was just like I can't. I can't say this like it's because as soon as I say like I'm an anarchist, everyone just shuts. Town, you know, I can't talk about hey, you know, let's go hang out because then other people say, well, I don't want to hang out with. I don't want to hang out with these anarchists. You know? You know, folks are sort of middle of the road and it's like it. It becomes a real hindrance to doing any kind of community organizing, and that's a problem that's a problem.

CATHERINE: That's the thing that's because I understand we have something super important to bring to the table. Really playing and right now people are more open to it than ever before. They're like, oh, like, we're. Falling into fascism like what are these anti fascists doing like?

SIMRAN: Yeah, yeah, what does this mean?

CATHERINE: You should find out what does this mean, you know? So, like there's this opportunity here to really like, reach out and like engage with the community and become sort of normalized, which would be super helpful and sort of this like large scale neighborhood organizing, organizing that we're trying to do and also. As far as process goes. It's really important for us to be checking each other when we start seeing bad process, because if we're not checking in with each other when we see bad process, we are actually complicit in the problem. So like I'm, you know, reading about working in cooperative groups and all these things like we were all raised. In an authoritarian, violent culture. You know what I mean? Like that's what? We know and like what anarchists are trying to do is get rid of authoritarianism in all forms and that includes within ourselves. So like anarchists, cooperative process is beautiful because it says like we are trying to make sure that all authoritarianism is not in this process. We get all of it out. But because we are all raised in this society. It sneaks in and it sneaks into all of us in. Lots of different ways. So this isn't just on black block or anarchists or whatever like this bad process. And this, like sneaking authoritarianism is everywhere right now and like you know it's like another way that it shows up in lots of different ways. It can be not speaking up, you know that can be a way of like bending to operate.

SIMRAN: The silence of our friends.

CATHERINE: Right so and then also it can be trying to like sort of sometimes a lot of times working with liberals, they'll come in and try and instill a hierarchy and put themselves at the top. Like that's an authoritarian way of trying to become do community process. You know what I mean? So it's like.

SIMRAN: We were you. Know we we talked about this the other day when we were sort of preparing for the show that. You know, in some ways, on the one hand, like yes, like Black Block has played an important tactical role in different contexts and responses to different situations. But you know, this isn't like all black boxes, but that's like not what we're saying.

CATHERINE: No, absolutely not, absolutely not.

SIMRAN: But on the other hand, like. If you know if people think look we're going to start something and we're going to show everyone else how to do it, but we're not accountable to them. I mean, that sounds like anarchists trying to be like old school socialist vanguards, you know, like are you a vanguardist? Are you trying to tell the community what they're going to do? Are you going to say you're going to do this whether you like it or not? Like, no like that's not acceptable.

CATHERINE: I mean, I don't think it's necessarily that, but there is this sort of false idea that they can be. Like in the situation that we're in now, I don't think it's possible to separate. You know, like well, we do our thing. You do your thing, but it doesn't really work like that. Everything that all of us are doing are affecting each other right now. You know what I mean? Like it's so that's so. I think this could be our strength though because. Authoritarians on the right. Their process is to try and step on each other to gain more power and to get at the top. Of the system and they actually have infighting, and so one of the things that the left keeps saying is like we don't want to be infighting, we don't want to be infighting, and I. Heard that that was that. The Democrats ran on, but I also also I hear that from anarchists.

SIMRAN: Right?

CATHERINE: I hear like don't say anything bad about black bloc ever because it's it causes division, you know. I mean, it's like that sounds the same to me, you know. And but, but because we're not authoritarians, we're anti authoritarians. I see us not as infighting. I see us as struggling with cooperative process, but like that difference in mindset, makes all of the difference. But that means that we all do need to be continuously trying to keep keep the focus of. We're struggling with cooperative process. That means that we have to keep. Reminding ourselves and each other what cooperative process requires. And right now we're going from workshopping, small cooperate. To a global movement, like anybody who's worked in a cooperative environment can hear, that's like that's a big ask like somebody. So like anything, so we're going to. We're going to get through this. And we're going to survive this. Through process work like, that's how I feel about it. And at the end we're fighting for our lives. You know we're fighting for lives right now, and what Black bloc and anarchists in general are saying is like if you're fighting for your life, you look at every tool in your toolbox.

SIMRAN: Sure, sure.

CATHERINE: You're going to mean like you look at every single tool in your toolbox, and I'm saying I say agreed you have to start there, like if we're starting the conversation like already. That's that process to start the conversation already having next. Ideas you know what I mean? And even if you come to an idea, that is what you thought it was in the 1st place, like even if we came to the idea, like yes, complete complete nonviolence all the time, it's like it's if the process is bad. The outcome is going to be bad if people aren't on the table with you. You know what I mean? And that's also like we have to. I was I. Was thinking today like I got this ministry that was. We talk a lot about unification and unifying the left and keeping us from fracturing, but we already are in Umm. You know, if we can hear what everybody is saying, we're already in unity because we all have the. Same goals like we all don't want authoritarianism. We all want to survive on this planet like we all want the human race to continue. We don't want a future, you know so, but what needs to happen is listening to what everybody else is saying. So one of the problems here is that. Anarchists and even like violent anarchists have something really important to say that is not being heard. And like we have to hear what they're saying, we have to hear that yes, it's worse than you than you're willing to admit. Right now, authoritarianism is scary, our world is violent, like we have, you know. I mean, there is going to be physical confrontation, you know. I mean there is going to be a certain type of you know. And this and. That this already exists. You know people don't want. To hear that. But in your hand, people don't want to hear that because it's being. Not being expressed well, you know what I mean? Like if you're coming to a conversation in a place of like total defensiveness and hostility, it doesn't matter if you're right. Nobody wants to hear it.

SIMRAN: I mean, and you know there are some real differences in the communities, right? Like there are tankies. There are people who you know like justify any kind of like Stalinist crush, the other people snatchy smash, you know all the face but also you know there are I'm going to bring up to two sort of critiques.

CATHERINE: Oh yeah, yeah.

SIMRAN: One of which is that, and this is out of this is out of Minnesota. There was this group people got together and one person saying you know like look if you're if you're sort of like an insurrectos

anarchist. Like if you're like I'm going to smash things and that's going to show people you know the great way. That's where I'm going to find liberation in the streets you know, and taking space. Is the only way to do it like yes like holding space and having like and having like roots in a neighborhood and knowing that like this is in fact your space and your like fundamentally tied to it. You have a relationship to place like that's important, but. Then like just going and like picking fights and breaking things and like getting arrested and then being like alright now everyone jump on my go fund me you know and everyone is expected to just like show up and support you and like donate tons of money to your campaign and your legal costs. Well, good for you. But now like what about every other community organization that was doing things before you went? Out and got like Smashy smashy and you know now like there's less money available in this community to do a like a ton of other projects. You know, cuz like all of the emotional energy, all the physical energy all the time, the money and resources then is suddenly being spent all around you. And that's. Like, frankly, like that's not constructive, you know.

CATHERINE: Well, I mean actually like I saw Daniel McGowan speak and he was an amazing speaker and I don't. If you don't know who Dan McGowan is he's he's like a for sure. Like certified anarchist. Who's jailed for?

SIMRAN: He was part of the Earth Liberation Front and was involved in the a series of bombing campaigns.

CATHERINE: Yeah, yeah.

SIMRAN: There's a great documentary on it. If a tree falls.

CATHERINE: Well, I so I saw him speak recently and he said that he was really he wanted to go to Washington DC but he didn't want to burden the community with any legal costs that might happen if he specifically was jailed. And I thought that was really a nice thing to say. And I also think that without with through all this you know, say it we are struggling with process. And anybody who's not an. Artist or even many owners who are listening, know that this is a conversation. This is an ongoing conversation with within the anarchist community, and that this is not something that like I just thought of, and we're bringing up. It's something that everybody is really discussing, and because they're very smart and I guess they're very savvy and like I've been really impressed, like even people I've met. Who are much more ***** than me? Who like are like, are very, very generally open to dialogue. If I, if it's if it's sort of a thing. So like it's. It's hard when I am dealing with sort of like hostility because I know that that a lot of anarchists really are trying to are seeing these problems also and are trying to work on a way to within our community ourselves. Kind of collaborative come to this, but I don't want to see that. Conversation end up that the decision is to quell dissent and that the decision is if you don't like it, that's where you're not involved. You can't be involved, or you're not a real anarchist, right?

SIMRAN: Or you're not a real anarchist.

CATHERINE: You know what I mean? So like that's kind of because that's bad process. You know, so like it feels it kind of feel. I feel like a little bit of this like real like unhappiness feeling when I'm told that like. Like how dare you not? Appreciate us putting our ourselves on the line for you. And that feels really. Unhealthy to me, that's a really unhealthy dynamic, especially if it wasn't something I consented to. You know what I mean? So that's it's just a difficult dynamic, but if we continue again like I just really think that the key here is good process and that everybody does have something to bring to the table. And the other thing about like if nobody wants to hear you because you're being loud and like making it difficult for other people to. Do what they're doing. On the other hand. And everybody else like sort of like on the nonviolent side too. Sometimes that person in the room that's being really loud and really obnoxious, and you don't want to deal with. They're not being heard, So what other recourse do they have other than becoming louder? You know, I mean, so it's like, even if they're hard to hear. And so it goes on. It's both sides. It's both sides, needs to fix process like we have to be hearing what? It is that they're trying to say.

SIMRAN: Yeah, and I wanted to bring up like a second critique, and this one is from New York. This is a couple years ago. There's a there's a major protest in Riot and I think this was maybe tied to

occupy and I don't remember exactly, but the idea was that here are all these people that are like working in these, you know otherwise awful. You know multinational corporations. You know your McDonald's. Walmarts your your targets and everything else and. Here come these protesters and smashing windows, and these are people who are broke. You know these are poor people in living in poor communities who like can barely make it. And you know you're showing up and like trashing their workplaces. You know, and like, it's not the fact that like that, the place is being destroyed. But it's like you're also like attacking the work of these, like people who are here. And the specific argument critique was saying like look. A lot of people live in like places where the like. The extraordinary violence that's happening with regard to in particular, like shootings and things. One person is telling the story that protesters came up and went to go smash a window and the like, the crashing and the hitting of it. Just like sent multiple of their coworkers working in a working in a Starbucks, like scattering to the floor and terrified for their lives, not because they were afraid of protesters, not because they couldn't have class solidarity or something. But no, because like this is really scary. Because here's an attacker you're like you're as a protester. Like attacking this institution, this corporation, and like that's legit, but like then you turn around and like there are people in there, you know that are having that are dealing with the consequences of what you're saying. And I don't care about like all this, management is stressed because of whatever. And window like that doesn't bother me, but like there are like there are people you know who are part of your communities. You know who are harmed by these actions and like. You know? We we got to think about that too. You know, like there's, there's real harm to you know to our people, to our side. You know that comes out of this as well. In addition to like the big like meta conversation about like can we can we talk about anarchism? Is this like? Is this a defensible conversation are we? Are we really spreading like the message of anarchism? About a, you know another world that's possible and sort of prefigurative notions you know is that really what's coming out of this? Not that like people can't protest like there are lots of places in context. You know where someone has just been killed or just you know been murdered by police and like you, you just got to respond, you know. And that's. Artists, and that's important. But we can't have the response to everything that happens in our society. Be just like riots and like, yes, like Mayday has a particular history and you know the origins of Mayday in the United States and Chicago, and like rounding up and murdering anarchists like there's extraordinary violence on the part of the state in there. But it's also it's also a day of immigrants rights. It's also a day of Labor rights. It's also a day of, you know, like changing of seasons. There's a there's so much tied up in the like I really love the idea of Mayday. There's like so much like fantastic history and intersectional things going on there. But also like it doesn't belong, only to anarchists.

CATHERINE: And then the. A lot of times people you know there's conversations about like. Well, here's where it worked. Here's what we're here to talk about. Like the riots in Greece when that very young anarchist was shot and. Or, you know, talk about. Haiti was talk about these things. It's like if you look. I feel like if you really dug in the difference there would not be tactics necessarily. It'd be processes that everybody in those. Communities was on the same page about how they were doing something. You know what I mean like that? With that, like, the whole community came together. So in the end, if we're sort of like saying, well, these this violent act is OK because of Haiti, it's like that's not. That's disingenuous to say, like, well, violence works sometimes so therefore. Dance works here. It's like it's a context and the way that those decisions were come to are very, very important and the other so you're talking about like the fear creating the community is that authoritarian regimes thrive on fear. Their they love fear they want fear to be happening because that keeps people indoors that keeps that keeps people from wanting to participate. That keeps people from rising up against them.

SIMRAN: And it justifies funding the authoritarian state.

CATHERINE: Right, and so like the so like if we're doing everything that we do that I heard from one beautiful anarchist. the cornerstones of the revolution are self-defense and self-liberation and causing fear. Even if it's a personal self. Liberation of being able to empower yourself by breaking a capitalist, helping break the capital state by throwing a brick through window. What the implications of like the self-liberation abilities of the community at large. Creating an atmosphere of fear, you know.

So like what is the balance there of like personal responsibility of like you know, sort of like individualist anarchism of like having making sure that you. Like have our liberated and empowered versus sort of whether or not that's helping the community at large become empowered enough to rise up all together. And I mean so like that's you know. So fear is a fear is really, really dangerous. We need the opposite of. Fear you know what? I mean so like. You know, kind of coming back to this sort of intersectional feminism and coming back to the idea that this. Is Mother's Day. And why that's still so important to like? Always be always concentrating on intersectional feminism and everything we do is like a basic revolutionary value that we're working from. Would love to see like I'm worried about. Sort of, this twisted gender gendered dynamic where you end up with our society being so messed up. You've got like women seen as weak and having the strength and you've also got this like toxic masculinity. You know, so like the way that we're gonna part, the way we're going to fix this is making sure that. We're fixing our. Are sort of like dynamics on that front. Front because I do see a real toxic masculinity element, especially when you look at the semantics of the situation. When you're talking about like the metaphors where you. Losing our war. And like sometimes, it's like glorification of pain, like glorification of murder, even and like this. Sort of like just real like hatred and all these things like. It really feels like a toxic masculinity to me. And then on the other side you've got this like sort of like repression and like devaluation of feminine power. And like so. So the I saw what changed my life as Valerie cower as an amazing woman, lawyer and activist in New York. She's sick and she gave a. She gave a speech on New Year's Day. I posted it on our Facebook page friendly anarchism. I pinned it to the top because it changed my life. Where she's speaking about that maybe this darkness isn't the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb, and that we're laboring to bring in a new society, and like how we do that, is, we breathe, and we push, and we breathe, and we push. And that if we don't push, we die. You know that Labor is an act of focused love and. You know, is this like and that instead of sort of focusing on war and destruction, it's this like and labor is painful. Labor is hard, labor is long, and it's also violent in its own right. You know, it's also bloody. It's also dangerous. You know what I mean, but then just it makes all the difference to sort of embrace this language and this like. Understanding of this as sort of like. A real like. Stopping devaluing women and stopping making sure that toxic toxic masculinity is not injecting itself into our into our birthing room. You know, and like, that's how we'll do it. You know, if we can all just like focus in on like the steely strength of love and creation. And instead of destruction, you know, and sort of like in this binary that we have of violence. Non violence that is like a damaging binary. You know, so like we have to break through those we have to break through those. But sometimes that takes a new language. So like the semantics of violence versus nonviolence is no longer helpful to us. And sort of all of. That nuance, and that's another thing. That ***** feminism and intersectional feminists are wonderful at is understanding nuance because they have. If you talk to a black trans woman like their understanding of identity and the way of moving through the world and like sort of juggling all these different types of oppression. Gives a real depth of like nuance that we really need in this conversation. You know what I mean?

SIMRAN: And you know also, like. When thinking about like violence like there's just. There's so many things going on, like when they think about like the Greek phrases for like there's five different Greek meanings of love different, like different phrases that all like would translate in English into into just like the word love, but have fundamentally different meanings. You know, we think about violence. There's just like all different kinds. We were sort of alluding to this earlier that there's direct violence. It's sort of like you know, if you punch someone, but there's also indirect violence, harassment, microaggressions threats and intimidation, and. Then there's these sort of like larger institutional things. Institutional violence, structural violence. But there's also like passive violence and things that happen by non action, like right? Like how many states neglect communities, right? Like the federal government not taking action on Flint means that people are going to be sick like that's a kind of violence. They're not doing something to make someone sick. They already did something. And now by not acting, people are going. To be sick.

CATHERINE: Right so then, sort of this like peaceful nonviolent. This non action is complicit in continuing structural violence and is, and is incredibly dangerous to all of those communities that are dealing that are being murdered and abused on a daily basis because of inaction. You know what I mean? So like that, yeah, that's a great point.

SIMRAN: I think it's important that, like individuals like violence can be carried out either by individuals or through community organizations through cities through economic corporations, through national governments and the potential to cause harm isn't limited to like just one of these organizations like there's so many different like sources of potential harm in our lives. That that's sort of like the big picture here is like, I think when like talking about the riots and anarchism and black bloc. It's like they're like there are. Big things that are happening and. You know, and it's not like you can, just you know, just remove the state or just remove corporations like you can have. You could in theory have a corporation list state that is still extremely violent or a stateless society which has corporations which is violent right when we think of like the Wild West or corporate domination in the Amazon. Or we think of like mobs like stateless violence through economic means. And you know, but also like wherever the state is not present, oftentimes there are militaries or paramilitaries, or like hired police forces or gun thugs, you know which, which are somewhat analogous to our police, right? Like here at the state, just like hires people to do the same jobs of like. Economic and like social status quo will.

CATHERINE: Yeah, so I mean the idea here is that overall this is a difficult, complicated subject. We're dealing with a very difficult, complicated world. You know, like and the way that we're going to get through this as a movement together. Everybody because now we're in this together. Whether we like it or not, everything that all of us do affects everybody else. All of everything we do and everything we don't do affects everybody else, right? So, but we can do it like I really feel like our strength is in an understanding of anarchic. Cooperative process. And we're learning that. And I see lots and lots of good things happening within that within our own anarchist community and within communities before. And I see like this beautiful interfacing happening between anarchists and other communities and it's very exciting. And I'm very excited to be a part of it. And I think that we really, really do have a shot at bringing it. This is our moment. We really can. Another world really is possible and we're getting there. We just keep these open dialogues with each other. Keep coming at these conversations from a place of love and desire to understand and desire to work together in a cooperative way that we're going to. Be fine.

SIMRAN: And I think that's something that both Quakers and anarchists share is is, you know, both can envision a better world where the draconian repression that we see through the state and through economic institutions is both unnecessary and the better methods of governing our society are possible, like that's available to us. And that they're you know despite these like big things that are happening in the world, that. You know the sort of structural and institutional violence you know? I think it's worth asking ourselves what are we doing to get there? What are the what are our ways of arriving at the goals that we want? And there may be places for violence, there may be necessary places, but there it's also important for us to ask. How are we getting there and what does this world? Look like.

CATHERINE: You know the intention. The intention behind something, the process behind something, intention behind something is everything. You know, that's really it's great, and I think I think we're going to be OK and. It's 4:00 o'clock so.

SIMRAN: Hey oh, there's an hour.

CATHERINE: There we go. We did. We talked for an hour. We've really enjoyed talking with you. Well, I guess we're talking to each. Other at you. Kind of hopefully opening these dialogues between us and everybody. And please, you can come like our. Facebook page at friendly anarchism. We also have a Twitter that's at friend anarchism. You can e-mail us. We'd love to hear from you at friendlyanarchism@protonmail.com that is an encrypted e-mail. So, just in case, that's something that you care about and thank you so much for listening. You've been listening to KEPW LPFM 97.3 Eugene Homegrown Radio.

SIMRAN: Thank you so much again for joining us. This is friendly anarchism.



The Library of
Unconventional Lives

Friendly Anarchism Podcast
Violence and Nonviolence
May 14, 2017

Friendly Anarchism

thelul.org