# Punk Rockers, One More Effort To Become Revolutionaries

CrimethInc.

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Hardcore punk must not be a merely self-referential "youth culture" if it is to make any real difference in our lives, let alone our world. Over the past forty years, subculture after subculture has come and gone, over and over and over, and not one has been able to create permanent change in the lives we lead. If hardcore is to be just another subculture, in which young people participate for a few years, it will be powerless to do anything for us. These so-called youth "movements" never move anyone anywhere at all; there's nothing like a youth culture to quarantine you with your peers, give you. a prefabricated identity as an answer to the insecurities of growing up in a hostile world, waste your outrage and passion in ritualized (and very safe) gestures of rebellion, and send you back out into the world dazed, disillusioned, and neutralized... ready to begin your adult life as a cog in the wheel of mainstream society.

We come to hardcore in the first place because we can see early in life that mainstream society has little of value to offer us. But if hardcore is to offer us something genuinely better, it must be about more than itself: it must be a part of a wider, more long-standing struggle for freedom and happiness. Just talking about hardcore bands, hardcore magazines, and hardcore labels will get us nowhere... especially if those bands, magazines, and labels are only talking about "hardcore" themselves! The more our community refers only to itself, the less it refers to anything real at all; in the mouths of those who speak only of "hardcore music, " "hardcore unity, " and "the hardcore scene, " "hardcore" eventually becomes a mere nonsense word that means nothing at all. We must look beyond the very narrow limits of our community to see what it is we want, what it is we are working towards-assuming we want anything at all.

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***REMEMBER***: The word 'revolution', as we use it, is not a word for an armed uprising that is supposed to take place in some far-off future. We use the word to describe the moment when an individual succeeds in taking a life that was boring and meaningless to him or her and making it fulfilling and worthwhile. It is a moment that could happen for any of us, at any time. Because we are mortal and will not live forever, rather than waiting for some promised 'day of liberation', we must strive to be able to make life worthwhile for ourselves and each other in the present tense.

***AND***: Exactly thirty years before this issue of Inside Front was published, a general strike swept across France and the rest of Europe in which thousands and thousands of workers, students, and others of all backgrounds revolted against the established order. They came close to overthrowing the French government and replacing it with something entirely new and -different, a new society free from the domination of power and tradition. This near-revolution was sparked by the efforts of a few young people, people not unlike ourselves... our history books and history teachers do not tell us about this, of course, because they don't want us to know just how possible something like that is. If world revolution might not be entirely out of our reach, how much closer then must personal revolution be for each of us?

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If we know what we want, if we decide what our lives and our world are lacking and use the hardcore community as a means of pursuing these things, it will no longer be just another powerless subculture; it will become a very powerful tool for the transformation of our lives. All of the energy and creativity within the hardcore community, all of the rebellious passion and social/political consciousness, all the vast personal networks, autonomous musical and artistic movements, and independent information distribution systems we have created could be used to really change our lives and our world. The means are in our hands; it is just a question of recognizing this and becoming focused enough to take full advantage of them!

Last Thursday I stayed up all night writing the "editor's corner" for this issue. I wrote about what has happened in my life since the last issue (a lot), what will be happening soon in my life (a lot more),

and how important it is to have the courage to follow your dreams, no matter what the risk. I was really excited that I'd finished the piece, what with the deadline for this issue coming up and all. Today I went back to look at it again and I just threw the whole fucking thing away, because I realized it wasn't honest. I wasn't writing about anything really important in my life right now.

The most important thing in my life right now is fear: the fear that I will slow down, that I will come to accept things, that I will soften up. No matter that the heater here is broken and it's freezing at night, no matter that we got evicted only a month ago from the last place we were staying (after a full-scale war with the landlady that lasted almost all of the three months I was staying there), no matter that I still depend on theft for my daily bread. I have something to lose now, for the first time in years, and I am terrified that it will cripple me.

I managed to accomplish what everyone told me was impossible: I built for myself a life in which I don't sell my labor to anybody, I spend all my time working on whatever creative projects I choose, and I live with the woman I love. I have minimized my participation in the system I oppose (a system almost inescapable in its omnipotence and omnipresence), and at the same time I am still able to survive and even have a place in a community where people care about me and understand what I'm doing with my life. For the first time, I have a sustainable existence that does not betray my dreams and desires... and I've never been in greater danger.

For what happens from here? Do I decide that all is right with the world, now that I too have a place within it? Do I now comfortably pursue my career as an opponent of the status quo, just as others pursue their careers as components of it? How many heroes and heroines have we seen neutralized, women and men who pushed so hard against the order around them, until, taken unaware, they were integrated into the very system they opposed? The punks, troublemakers, and revolutionaries of the last generation have become the pop singers, popular writers, and movie stars of this generation, taking the places of the celebrities that once symbolized the artificiality and oppression they sought to fight. From where they stand, it seems like they won the war ("fifteen years ago I was singing for Black Flag, starving, sleeping on dirty floors, and getting beat up; now I'm a popular speaker, writer, and movie actor!"); but from where we stand, everything is the fucking same, and only the faces that look down on us from the movie screens and political platforms have changed. How do I make sure that even though my existence is no longer completely unstable and unbearably difficult, I will never abandon my struggle against the system for a more symbolic, less genuine challenge, one that will not endanger the things I hold dear?

It is suffering that keeps you sharp, that keeps you hungry. When I was building this life for myself, I had to be able to abandon every comfort, every security that the ones around me clasp so tightly. When they refused to sleep in certain circumstances, to eat (or not eat) certain foods, or to go without certain amenities, I had to be willing to do all these things in order to not pay the price of mental and physical freedom that they paid for their convenience and safety. I almost made a religion out of going without things; for the less I needed, the more capable I knew I was of going to any lengths in the pursuit of the things I really wanted. In those days I wasn't afraid of any risk or difficulty; I would push myself mercilessly forward because I knew I had nothing to lose.

I have a few of those things I wanted now-love, a few creative outlets, some freedom, and even a modicum of security. I don't want to be satisfied with them alone, for I have only realized a fraction of my dreams, and I'm not willing to live and die without demanding the very most from life that I can. But I'm frightened that the little I do have will make it harder for me to fight for the things I still want. I sometimes think that the future can only belong to those who have nothing today-they are the ones who have nothing to lose, who could risk everything to change their lives, if they only realized that it was possible. The rest of us have very little ourselves, it's true, living as we do in this sterile world at the mercy of a thousand varieties of disinterested, inhuman power; but it is precisely because we have so little that we are afraid to risk any of it. This is why everything proceeds as usual in our society, why every day is the same even though no one believes we are living in the "best of all possible worlds." No one who thinks at all about their lives is satisfied with the way things are, with the ways people

interact, with what our species is doing to itself and to the planet. But, terrified to endanger the little consolations this system permits us, we all go on and on and on with our lives... and when we do that, we are saying "this is good enough, everything's just fine, there's nothing else I could possibly want for myself or anyone else."

I want to have the courage to take any risk in my pursuit of happiness, to act without fear, to know that I cannot be intimidated into accepting anything I haven't chosen for myself. I don't want to ever give up my ambitions, to be compromised or pacified or silenced. I want to always push harder at the world around me, to never be satisfied with less than my wildest dreams; I want to be brave enough to follow my desires wherever they may lead. I'd like to claim for myself the honor of living for the highest stakes, to achieve everything or fail in the attempt; I'd much rather live and die that way than slouch unsatisfied through the world, paralyzed by fear and inertia! I know that life isn't something that you can hoard up like wealth, I learned that long ago from watching the lives of my parents; it is something you must give away, something you must burn like fuel if you are to enjoy it to the fullest. Happiness belongs to those who dare to act without regard for risk or regret, who value their actions themselves over their results; for in the end, joy is to be found not in having things, but in *doing things*.

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I desire to live in a society different than the one around me. Like most people, I can live in this one and adapt myself to it-l am, anyway, existing in it. No matter how critically I look at myself, my ability to adapt does not seem to me to be below average. I don't ask for immortality or omniscience. I don't ask that society give me happiness. I know that happiness isn't something that could be dished out at the local Social Security office, or by the local Workers Council. If such a thing exists, I alone can create it for myself, as has happened before and may happen again. But in everyday life, I find myself up against a mass of things I can't accept. I believe that these things are not inevitable, and that they depend upon the way society is organized.

Firstly, I want my work to have some meaning. I want to approve of its purpose and of how it is done. I want to genuinely be involved in it, to make use of my capabilities, to become a more complete person. I think that this would be possible, for me and for others, if society were organized differently. It would already be a big change in that direction if I were allowed to decide (along with everyone else) what I will do and (together with those I work with) how to do it.

I — all of us — want to know what is going on in society, to control the depth and quality of the information we are given. I want to take part, directly, in all social decisions which will affect my existence, or which help shape the world in which I live. I don't accept that my fate should be decided, day after day, by people whose plans are hostile (or simply unknown) to me, and for whom I and everyone else are but figures in a plan or pawns on a chessboard. I reject the idea that my life and my death should be in the hands of people I never see, let alone people who never see me.

I know that bringing about a new kind of social organization and making it work won't be easy. But I would rather get to work on real problems than accept the cynicism, double-talk, and manipulations of our leaders. Should we fail, I would prefer failure in a meaningful attempt to this state of inaction, of passive acceptance of a status quo which we all know holds nothing for us.

I want to meet other people as their equal, but not as a numbered object, not as a non-entity perched on another rung (whether higher or lower, it doesn't matter) in the hierarchy of status, income, and power. I want to see others, and for them to see me, as another human being; that our relationship not be a battleground of aggressions, that our rivalry remain friendly, that our conflicts (if they can't be resolved or surmounted) be about real problems and real stakes. I wish that others may be free, for my freedom begins where that of others begins. [For too long we have been taught that "our rights end where others' rights begin"!] Without other free individuals around me, I cannot learn or gain anything meaningful from my interactions with others. I don't count on people becoming angels, I don't expect their souls to be as pure as mountain lakes-which have always bored me stiff, anyway. But I know

how much our system aggravates people's problems of existence-and of interacting with others-and how much it increases the obstacles to our freedom.

I know for certain that this can't be fully realized today. But I will not, under that pretext, spend all my time glued to a TV set or playing video games. My task is not to start an instantaneous world revolution, but to make life worthwhile and exciting for myself and the ones around me. The rest will follow. I'm not interested in living my whole life in the service of some far-off day of universal transformation any more than I am in accepting the world as it is today. My undertaking must be, first and foremost, to liberate myself and my companions from whatever constraints we have been convinced to willingly accept: meaningless work, meaningless leisure.' empty relationships. After we have thrown those off, we can move on to fighting against external restraints such as policemen and urban sprawl. But we must first create our "better society" among ourselves.

Do my desires constitute a refusal of reality? But who defines "reality, " anyway? *Must* one work? *Must* work necessarily be deprived of meaning and embody exploitation? *Must* we look at each other as objects, in terms of our market value, rather than as human beings? Is that the reality for everyone in this world? It certainly is not, if you look at other societies and other cultures. Up to what point does our conception of reality reflect nature and where does it begin to reflect our society? Why should we accept the "reality" that this society has created, if it does not satisfy us and others are clearly possible?

Is it childish to wish to change society rather than adapting myself to it? No, it is childish to accept what is given without questioning it. In the infantile state, everything in life is given to you, the law is prescribed for you from above. In the infantile situation you question nothing and accept everything, and if you refuse you are punished. No discussion is possible. What I want is the very opposite. It is to make my own life, and to give life if I can. I don't want laws handed down to me. I want to create them and to give them to myself. It is not the revolutionary who is childish. It is the conformist, the non-political person. It is those who accept the law without discussing it, without wishing to take part in its creation. Those who live in society with no thoughts about how it functions, with no political will, have only replaced their personal father with an anonymous social one.

What is infantile is the state of affairs where one receives without giving. It is the state where one does things, where one exists, just in order to receive. I want to do things for myself and for others, not merely be acted upon by higher powers than myself. It is today's society which is constantly infantalizing everyone. I want, instead, that society be a network of relationships between autonomous adults.

Is this desire to overthrow the existing order a lust for power on my part? But what I want is to abolish power in the current sense of the word: I want power for everybody. Power in its present sense means hierarchy; it means thinking of other people as things higher or lower than oneself, it means treating other people as things. Everything I want runs contrary to this. I don't want to be a thing, either to myself or to others. I don't want to interact with others as if they were things: one doesn't gain anything from the companionship of things. I want power, yes, but power over myself, power for each of us over ourselves.

Am I pursuing an illusion, the illusion that it is possible to eliminate the tragic side of human existence? It seems to me, on the contrary, that I am seeking to eliminate the melodrama from life, the *false tragedy — where* unnecessary catastrophes occur, where all would have been different if only the actors had known this, or done that. It is a macabre farce that people should be dying of hunger in Africa, while in the U.S. the government pays farmers not to produce "too much." This is not tragedy, there is nothing inescapable about it. If one day humanity perishes under atomic bombs, I will refuse to call it tragedy; I will call it a monstrous mistake. I want to stop people being turned into nonentities by other nonentities who "govern" them. When a neurotic man treads for the hundredth time the same path of failure, recreating for himself and for those around him the same kind of misfortune, to help him get out of it is to eliminate the grotesque farce, not the tragedy, from his life. It should help him discern the *real* problems of his life (and any tragic element they may contain) which the neurosis may partly have expressed, but more massively served to mask, —*plagiarized by CrimethInc. winter commando*

The Library of Unconventional Lives

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