

AFFINITY

issue #4: patriarchy



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This here is the fourth issue of Affinity, an irregular zine providing space for critical reflection and analysis of strategies for resisting the dominant culture.

We want the words presented here to form part of a conversation, not a one-way communication, and therefore strongly encourage people to respond to what's written, or contribute articles of their own, which can be published in future issues.

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1.

Sexism is Driving Me Mad. Literally.

I am a naturally confident and outgoing person but sexism is making me feel depressed, withdrawn and unable to cope with social situations. Sexism is attacking me on two main fronts; firstly through physical, verbal and emotional abuse and secondly by silencing my attempts to challenge and articulate this abuse and its effects. Before the abusive comments pour in (oh the irony!) let me just say this: my case is not special, I am not unlucky and this is not my fault. I am only guilty of having been born female in a patriarchal society. While the odds may at times seem stacked against me, I am dedicated to resisting and I am determined to recover.

Abuse

It would be near impossible to describe in detail the amount of physical abuse men have inflicted on me over the course of my life. My memories of primary and secondary school are full of being slapped, punched, kicked and sexually abused by boys. Lacking self-confidence and self-worth, during college I was trapped in a physically, sexually

and psychologically abusive long-term relationship. At university, a man I had a casual relationship with threatened to “crack my skull open with one hand” because I had tried to refuse him sex when he appeared uninvited and very drunk at my house at 3am. Most recently, I have had a ‘relationship’ with a man whose extreme insensitivity and emotional manipulation compounded my lack of self-esteem and agency. These were not by any means my only experiences of this kind and these were not exceptions. Physical abuse has damaged my mental health by destroying the sanctity of my body and violating my sense of self. By inflicting pain on me with total immunity, these men have also reminded me of their physical power and social dominance.

As alluded to above, since raising questions of gender online I have been the victim of serious verbal abuse. Trolling and general nastiness is common on the internet due to the anonymity provided by cyberspace (by which I mean they would **never** get away with chatting like that to my face!) So I will not focus on these comments here. But I will remind readers of the real life verbal abuse men frequently subject me to, especially when their sexism and position of dominance is challenged. I will also briefly highlight the fact that the commonplace nature of sexist jokes, inappropriate sexual innuendos (for example from a male superior at work) and sexism in the media are all manifestations of a culture of

We see our men’s group as a very small contribution to the fight against patriarchy and recognise its limitations- as men we are likely to be blinded or ignorant to some of our sexist behaviour. We would like to contribute towards the creation of spaces with women in which the issues including those raised by the Sisters of Resistance can be discussed amongst women and men, with the aim of challenging patriarchal thought and action rather than seeking to justify the status quo. We strongly believe that patriarchy is entwined with capitalist society, and that if we wish to build communities of resistance then all the abuses and hierarchies prevalent within the dominant society must be challenged with equal determination. We would also be very willing to participate in the initiatives of others around these issues.

We have had enough of men’s denial and excuses – let’s work together to bring down the patriarchy!

tried to challenge our own assumptions and behaviours and support each other to change. We have discussed a wide range of issues that have come up for us, including consent in relationships, gender dynamics in meetings, who does domestic tasks in our homes and aggression. We have sought to pick through our own personal histories to identify how and where we learnt our patriarchal behaviour, thus better enabling us to unlearn and hopefully end these behaviours. We have tried to educate ourselves using the experiences of women, to identify our own failures to live up to our anarchist and anti-sexist ideals regarding gender, and to find ways to start changing our mindset and our relationships with the women we know for the better. We are trying to learn from the women we know as to how we need to change, asking them to challenge us on our bullshit without us responding with defensiveness, fear or hostility.

This is not an attempt to show what great anti-sexists we are – we know that we have many failings and that unpicking patriarchal thinking takes a long time. We write out of solidarity with you and to show that, despite the hostility and denial from some men, this is not the whole picture. Whilst it absolutely should not be left to women to criticise us, and face the aggressive response that inevitably follows, we try to use that criticism to challenge ourselves. We have found your suggestions for overcoming patriarchal behaviour a useful tool in helping us to progress.

sexism which normalises attitudes and behaviours which are hurtful to women.

I cannot speak

People who know me will ‘lol’ when they read this. I speak a lot, I am a talkative person. But because of sexist attitudes, despite being a loud, confident and articulate speaker, what I say is not always heard, listened to or understood (I can only *imagine* what this must be like for naturally shy and quiet women). Often I am not listened to due to an inability to accept that my perspective, as a woman, is valid; men often immediately disagree with me or attack me even when I am explaining *how I feel* about something. The most common example of this is when I state that a sexist comment or action made me feel uncomfortable and the type of man our Letter to Male Activists [*re-printed in this zine*] was written to immediately dismisses my feelings, defends the sexism and tells me why I can’t or shouldn’t feel offended. This type of man will often patronise women, will assume them to have “misunderstood” everything and will talk to women with the same tone a particularly arrogant headmaster adopts to calmly scold an irritating 11 year old.

Another example of men effectively silencing me arises when I tell a man “I am not interested” and because of sexist ideas about men’s ownership and control of women and our sexuality he hears “I am playing hard to get.” When I say “no” he hears “yes” or “maybe, just keep trying.” (See the “Translation” section of the Sisters of Resistance Terminology Tool Kit). If I become annoyed he is pleased: “Yea I like feisty women.” No matter what I say or how I feel, he only hears what he wants to hear.

When a man complains he is justified while women are “moaning”, “bitching” or “nagging.” Often women are not taken seriously; when I say “I am depressed” or “I am going through a mental break down” most people laugh or reply “oh yea me too.” This probably has as much to do with sexism as it does with the stigma surrounding mental health. But being systematically dehumanised, devalued and marginalised is enough to make anyone feel like they are going a bit mad. In the context of the abuse outlined above, women’s mental health becomes even more complex; how can you name abuse that is normalised? Mental health institutions are as sexist and racist as the society they inhabit; historically they have seen white, male, heterosexist, upper/middle-class norms forced upon the rest of us, who have been sectioned, electrocuted, drugged and sedated into compliance.

5.

Response to sisters of resistance

Dear Sisters

Thank you for ignoring society’s and the activist scene’s expectations and calling out male privilege and sexist behaviour. We recognise the behaviours that you describe and the consequent oppression of women that they result in. We are sad to say that we recognise many of these behaviours as ones that we ourselves have perpetrated. Although we recognise that this is not just about us, we are deeply sorry for any actions of our own that have had the effect of oppressing women and upholding patriarchy.

Recognising the widespread complicity in sexist behaviour that exists within our community, a group of men in Nottingham started meeting regularly in Autumn last year, to attempt to deal with our shit, be conscious of patriarchal behaviour and to be better allies of the women in our lives and community. Working from the basis that it is our own responsibility to do this work, not the responsibility of women, we have

making tea, cleaning, tidying up, looking after children, doing the food shopping, providing emotional support, washing and drying clothes, emptying bins, sorting recycling, listening to people, caring for the sick, etc. Take the minutes at meetings.

Make sure the male to female ratio of speakers, facilitators, participants or chairs is always 50/50. Type up e-mail lists and take over the other menial administrative tasks still disproportionately done by women. Become aware of what the women around you are doing, feeling and experiencing and help and assist them however you can. Notice the male-female dynamics in meetings, on demonstrations and in conversations and actively address this imbalance. Do not attribute the hard work and ideas of the women in your organisation to men; stop taking the women in your organisation for granted. Incorporate an awareness of gender and feminism into your everyday life; for if you want to bring about revolutionary change, you must begin with yourself.

Yours,

Sisters of Resistance

<http://sistersofresistance.wordpress.com/>

Sexism also creates an environment in which issues women are statistically much more likely to experience are not socially acceptable to articulate. This is partly because no one wants to hear them; they are difficult to hear. It is also because we do not live in a society that is sympathetic to these experiences; rather it is one that blames the victim. In addition to coping with the psychological effects of ill-treatment, the survivor must work through feelings of shame, guilt and rejection. In the above section on abuse, I did not talk about rape or incestuous sexual abuse for these reasons.

Resisting and recovering

As I hope readers of Sisters of Resistance are already aware, I am not a passive victim in any of this. I resist the abuse and I continually struggle to be heard. I am lucky to have truly supportive sistas and a number of strong male allies. I constantly seek to improve my mental health through a variety of methods including self-care, cognitive behavioural therapy, meditation, reading about Buddhism and counselling.

I have found reading Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery. The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* invaluable and both academically and personally enlightening. Herman,

a feminist psychologist, argues that the women's movement of the 1960s created physical spaces and a socio-political environment from within which women could start to articulate their traumatic experiences of incest, rape and male violence. She demonstrates that an examination of women's mental health must acknowledge patriarchy and she maps the course to recovery.

I have recently coined the term "celibacy for sanity" as I am currently refraining from intimacy until I meet a man (or woman, I'm open-minded) who treats me with the respect and compassion I deserve. I refuse to settle and I am not lowering my standards. I suddenly realised that I had spent way too much of my time loving men who didn't, or couldn't, love me back. I decided it was time to stop loving my oppressor and start loving myself. This decision has left me feeling empowered and happier. I no longer rely on men for my self-esteem and for once my love is reciprocated. This might sound really cliché, I know it did to me at first, but it's true; only I can give myself the love that I need.

This article first appeared on the Sisters of Resistance website - sistersofresistance.wordpress.com.

away. You must engage with our perspective and embark on a long and arduous journey of self-criticism, analysis and reflection. In doing so, you will see what has been clear to us all along: that your denial and refusal to self-criticise is a direct product and reflection of the power structure to which you are opposed, in which (predominately male) heads of nations, bankers and CEOs also deny culpability for systematic violence and oppression, while (male-dominated) police and prison systems protect and maintain this system. While we will continue to challenge this macro-oppression, we will no longer remain silent in the face of your oppression of us, your fellow female activists.

In closing, we ask you to listen. Listen to us when we speak, listen to our criticisms, listen to our experiences. Stop defending sexism, stop defending men, stop defending yourself. Do not interrupt women when they speak and stop immediately disagreeing with us. When it comes to sexism, you are not under attack, women are. We are under attack from this patriarchal male power structure all day, every day, and we need activist spaces to be safe and respectful places in which women are treated *as equals*. You will not win without us, so it is in your interests to work with us *as equals*. You can create these spaces of equality by actively challenging sexist gender roles, by taking over the chores and actions typically still carried out by women: washing up, cooking,

what you believe about sexism is based on a book you read, or a class you took, why you claim to have reason, logic and science on your side. Yet although your employment of imaginary scenarios and patriarchal dichotomies peeves us, these arguments are easily destroyed. The most offensive and astounding line of argument appears when you routinely inform us that you are not sexist, that you “respect women”. Well, as the women you are claiming to respect, let us tell you this: it is not up to you to determine whether or not you or other men are sexist. If we are offended by a sexist comment, act, film, song or cultural product, you have absolutely no grounds to tell us why we should not be. As the victims of sexism, *we* define, describe and delineate it. In preventing us from doing so, you make a psychologically and politically difficult task almost impossible.

Simply asserting that you are a “feminist” does not make it true. In fact, by calling yourself a feminist in the face of criticism of your attitudes and those of other men, you not only fail to actively reject and challenge the sexism within yourself and society, you also deflect our critique of your behaviour and silence our already marginalised and seldom heard voices. If you truly wish to join the fight for female liberation then you must listen to us when we are detailing our experience of your and other males’ oppressive behaviour – denying its existence does not make it go

2.

Men Confronting Patriarchy

In the Autumn of 2010 a handful of men in Nottingham began having some informal discussions about rape, consent, masculinity and their own patriarchal behaviours. We decided to meet as a group on a regular basis in order to challenge, support and inform each other in a more collective way as we attempted to tackle our gendered position. Below is an article I wrote as a call out for the first meeting, stating my own position and what I imagined the group could be, and inviting others along to participate. This is followed by something I’ve written 10 months and 20 meetings later. It’s an attempt to reflect upon the process we’ve undertaken, think about the mistakes we’ve made and the positives that emerged from it. Like all the articles in Affinity it’s not meant to be the final word, or an authoritative statement, it’s an attempt to start some discussions and continue some others.

I am patriarchal. I carry the patriarchy in my back pocket, and use it when it’s needed. Sometimes I’m conscious of this, but most of the time I’m not. When I am conscious of it I am disgusted with myself, in the same way I am disgusted with myself when I pull out my passport at the

border control. When I am not conscious of using it I am failing to live up to the ideals that I hold most dear. The ideals that say that I need to be vigilant, identify and then challenge power and authority in all its forms. If I don't even recognise my own use of power then how will I be able to combat and destroy it in its other forms. So, when I sit in another meeting and watch myself or other men dominate the proceedings uncritically and without thought then I once more feed into a system based upon domination and violence. A system which cannot be separated from other violent systems within this culture, those that relate to border control, wage slavery, ecological destruction, prisons and surveillance, to name only a few. All of which should be fought against constantly and continuously, and it's not as if I don't want to smash patriarchy. Just as my experiences have led me to believe that we must destroy all other aspects of capitalism and its culture, so do my experiences tell me that the patriarchy should be ground down until it no longer exists. I have seen my mother beaten and raped by male members of her family and stayed close to those men; I've seen my friends live through abusive relationships because the society from which they can't escape has told them that they have no other choice. I've witnessed my sisters learning to value themselves on the basis of how their looks correspond with those that the dominant culture position as beautiful, because they are taught that it is the only value they have, their

lifetime, where the Eurocentric white male perspective and the hierarchy of power that values men over women and light skin over dark are normalised with a system of reward and punishment. This is the all-important *context* to which we are continually referring, and which you continually choose to ignore.

We have watched you attempt to intimidate us with volume and tone, physicality and body language. Instead of listening respectfully to our experience of oppression, you consistently attempt to redefine yourself as the victim, when it is you who is in fact the perpetrator. You have tried to make us insecure and unconfident by patronising us and undermining our intelligence. But it is not that we have misunderstood you; it is that we do not agree. You should know your attempts to silence us will not be successful; rather, they will simply invite further critique, and further criticism will in turn infuriate you. Perhaps you are furious because you are unaccustomed to intelligent women who are not afraid to point out when you are wrong. Perhaps there are not many of us women who go out of our way, even sometimes risking personal safety, to be recognised as equals by men. Perhaps this is why you desperately draw upon unlikely examples and unbelievable hypothetical situations to support your badly structured arguments, why you insist

Whether drunk, stoned or sober, in responding to us with aggression, you were acting out your social conditioning. While masculinity is synonymous with aggression and strength, femininity is equated with submission, subservience and vulnerability. We are socialised into these roles of male and female, and they profoundly affect our sense of ourselves and how we interact with each other on a personal level. Therefore if men and women do not actively challenge their own sexist and oppressive or self-oppressive tendencies, over the course of our interactions a relationship of dominance will inevitably arise. But you fail to see that your masculine identity is formed on this social construct. This conditioning started the day you are born when the doctor declared “It’s a boy!” and continued, encouraged by parents, teachers, and the world around you, which told you that boys can run faster, jump higher and will eventually grow up to be smarter, bigger and better than girls. While baby boys are cherished the world over, mothers in some of the most densely populated places on the planet abort female foetuses and drown girl babies in milk. We point to the West’s hypocrisy in the face of its own insidious misogyny and reject imperialism’s attempt to hijack “female liberation” to justify illegal wars and military occupations. Femicide also survives in the “liberated” West where the majority of women who are murdered are killed by a current or former male partner, where one in three women will be beaten or raped by a man in her

confidence and ability to exercise agency having been shaped by their gender. And I’ve seen roles and skills determined by patriarchy. But at the same time I don’t fight the patriarchy within myself with nearly the same energy and consciousness as I fight against other aspects of this system. I want to, but somehow, perhaps because it has been so ingrained in me due to the culture of which I am a part, I still find myself playing the male defined role in my relationships with women and men. Sometimes I’m called on it, sometimes I catch myself and stop, but it’s often played out without anyone saying a thing.

Maybe it’s because it’s too easy to forget that the patriarchy is as much a mediating and destructive factor in men’s lives as it is women’s (and every other gender). All the examples above highlight the corrosiveness that patriarchy has on women’s lives. But it is important to remember that a) the two genders construct is not unbiased, it is used in order to create and enforce a hierarchy, through defining each gender as a set, prescribed thing which is then naturalised, and b) the patriarchy has had a role in limiting my capacity as a human being.

In the most basic sense it has encouraged me to repress my willingness to give and receive emotional warmth and support, it has pushed me towards aggression, and defined me as someone who should control and

dominate others around me, thus taking away from me opportunities to listen, learn and develop my capacities as a human being. The patriarchy limits my tendencies to accept tenderness and has pushed down my willingness to show love and care. It has told me that these are characteristics which belong to another gender, and that to allow them into myself would be unnatural. Needless to say the processes and mechanisms which the patriarchy uses are complex and multifarious. I am not trying to describe it as a single monolithic creature hell-bent on controlling us; it works in tandem with other processes of this civilization's culture, and it is reproduced by us all. And it's this reproduction which must be challenged, taken head on with a full heart and desperate passion, because if we do not confront the patriarchy within us and around us we will continue to feed into the culture of domination and destruction which is rapidly ripping this world apart.

The task of smashing the patriarchy cannot be undertaken alone, it is not a self-improvement programme, it is something that we must collectively organise around within our communities. It is something which we may not have the skills or the language to do yet, therefore we must create the language and build those skills together. Men confronting patriarchy groups are just one tool that may help us do this. At the very least it can

4.

A Letter to Male Activists

To so-called Male "Feminists",

We are writing this as we can no longer refrain from commenting on the problematic views and behaviours you exhibit. We hope you will read, listen and respect these comments.

You claim to be "leftist," "revolutionary", "conscious" and "feminist." You may even claim to study the subject of female oppression both academically and interpersonally. But the acts of oppression you have perpetrated on the women around you do not support these claims. Being the compassionate sistas we are, we made the effort (and it takes A LOT of emotional and psychological effort) to talk with you about your sexist behaviour. And time and time again, you've shocked us with the level of violence and force, verbal and physical, that you employ against us in a desperate attempt to silence our challenge to your male activist egos.

practising such an individual diversity of approach. And watching out for the deluded aspiration to be a superhero of awareness all the time!

This writing is a bloom of knowingly momentary confidence - I'll change my mind tomorrow.

Right now, I reckon that diversity is sanity.

Jed Picksley, Earth First Summer Gathering 2011.

be a starting place, a space to begin to share experiences and ideas we have.

10 months later....

When we had the first men confronting patriarchy meeting we wanted to be open, and to invite as many people as possible. Within a few meetings we decided that we'd make it a closed meeting, and the five of us who had been attending would suggest other people to invite. We also decided to make it men only. These decisions were not made without thought and are reflected upon and readdressed every month or so. We came to those decisions because we quickly realised how shit we often are at communicating about our weaknesses, our insecurities and our negative behaviours; that in order to work through these things collectively we'd have to create a space where we all felt safe and able to do so at our own pace. None of us were unaware of the irony of a group of men creating an all male safe space, when it's men like us who continually inhabit spaces and make them unsafe for women to participate in. The hope was that in creating a space safe enough for us to confront all our patriarchal bullshit we'd be able to go back into other spaces with less of that bullshit. That bullshit where we feel entitled to speak and drown out voices which are not encased with male privilege,

where we would not patronize, belittle, dominate and place our knowledges above anyone else's. In creating an all male safe space we have been able to become closer allies, men who trust other men with our thoughts and feelings, and thus able to challenge each other when we use our male privileges elsewhere.

I don't think this is without fault though. To start with there is possibly a case to be made for the idea that it was only our male privilege that enabled us to create that all male safe space. If we can find the time and energy to sit for two hours every couple of weeks to talk about the issues that come with our maleness, then we are having various other needs and wants taken care of. Our whiteness and our economic positions mean that we are not having to worry about shelter or where our next meal is coming from. Various forms of cultural capital intersect and give us differing forms of emotional and psychological comfort and security. And for some of us we have women in our lives who are emotionally supportive, thus empowering us to talk about patriarchy for two hours a week.

Secondly, about five months after the first meeting we organised a film night. We showed a mainstream American film, talked a little about our group, and initiated a discussion about the issues the film and our group

patriarchy.

When I described this in a "Confronting Patriarchy" discussion, one guy said "hang on, isn't that actually subverting patriarchy because you are a woman?" I said "No. It's not a matter of sex or gender, it's a matter of style". I believe that there are quieter, gentler, slower more learning-focussed ways to do things - not just this fast, loud, hard effective version that I catch myself falling back on. Being a female leader might confront a particular shade of 'sexism', but it doesn't touch "patriarchy" in the wide and tricky meaning of the word that we're developing in discussions like this.

Back to personal character though, in the worlds I live in, is it really a problem that I am sometimes bossy, hasty, loud and controlling? I think it would be pretty exhausting to be like that all the time, and maybe the dissatisfaction I sometimes feel in that mode is merely a warning about the onset of the exhaustion. Sometimes I am happy to be openly confused, inviting other opinions, creating pauses and making big space for a rethink. Sometimes I shut up entirely, sit back and do the silent facilitation of taking notes, drawing maps or just listening attentively.

Perhaps "confronting patriarchy" is as simple as accepting and

3.

One Woman Confronting Patriarchy

My own definition of patriarchy is the elevation of hardness, fixedness, speed, loudness and action over softness, flexibility, pauses/rest, quiet and reflection. I know this is just a slither of understanding from one instant of impermanent me, which doesn't even directly engage with sexism, disempowerment or oppression of other sorts, but I find it a good guide right now for confronting the patriarchy that I experience inside my own head.

I think it's radical in our culture to seek perspective, introspectively, about our own behaviours. Loud, bossy, interrupting and excitable behaviour is sometimes just brushed aside as individual character, but if it's the dominant feel of a sub-culture or a meeting, then surely that constitutes or contributes to the anti-empowerment features of hierarchy or patriarchy that - we anarchists assert - we can do without.

When I'm being a loud, hurrying, assertive leader in a meeting, agreeing a plan or during the erection of a marquee, I sometimes catch my blokey self with dissatisfaction - I internally accuse myself of just re-enforcing

raised. About a dozen people came, it was equally split between men and women, and the brief conversation we had showed the benefits of having a mixed gendered group as it provided a richer more varied discussion regarding gender positions and relationships with the patriarchy. Whilst all but a couple of people in the group were close friends, as a larger mixed gendered group we didn't have the time to create the same levels of trust and comfort; thus some discussions didn't occur which have occurred in our own smaller group and in other individual conversations with some of the people who came to the film night.

Since that film night and discussion we have been in contact with a couple of feminist groups to see if they'd like to organise mixed gendered space, but understandably they prefer to work on their group projects and it is not their responsibility to help us fix our behaviours, thought patterns and general bullshit. It's our own. Which is the tricky paradox. It's our responsibility to do the work, to break the cycle, to stop acting like men raised in this society and become the people we wish existed in the society we want to create. However, we're not always the most observant, we're not always the ones able to see our behaviours, the other people, both men and women, are. So, a major part of the process is to make us less defensive to criticism; the less

defensive we are the more able others will be to point out where we're acting like stunted, abusive, emotionally manipulative bullies. Which, in case it wasn't clear, is what we want to stop being.

What's next?

The group will continue meeting, we've lost one of our members whose gone off travelling, but there's four of us left, and we talk to other men we know to see if they'd be interested in coming along. We've talked about creating more mixed gendered spaces, and how we could make them safe for everyone to participate in. Perhaps another film night or discussion where we'd invite men and women in our community to come along. We'd like to work towards making it so all the spaces and all the meetings we attend have an in-built recognition of the gender hierarchies that are at play within them. There aren't any women I know who don't have stories of when men have used the patriarchy to their advantage. If the group has an aim then perhaps it's to have fewer and fewer of those stories repeat themselves.

For myself, I know that it in many ways the call out for the group I wrote ten months ago still applies. I am still patriarchal, it's how I was raised as a child and it's how I've been socialized throughout my life. But as soon

movement in the UK. Whilst my upbringing was specific, it wasn't due to any individual genetic condition; it was due to a large number of people being socialized in a certain way. They were socialised in this rather sick society, and that patriarchal society has similar effects on us all. My life has meant I've witnessed and been informed by particularly overt elements of the violence patriarchy can result in. This definitely leaves me with a fair amount of bullshit to dig through, and it's unpleasant to see how I respond to "softer" forms of patriarchal violence in the anarchist moment. Whether that be replicating aggressiveness in meetings or encouraging the glorification of "up-for-it-ness". I want a total transformation of this society; I want anarchy to be our way towards living in a society where everyone has total freedom, and often my desperation for this comes out as aggression, and often it comes out in me privileging "up-for-it-ness" above everything else. But both of these result in others having their autonomy, their freedoms diminished, thus they become the antithesis of how I believe the world should be. It's for this reason that I wish to deal with my bullshit, and want to encourage others to do the same. The patriarchy has distorted who we are, and I think we should work towards acknowledging this and challenging it within ourselves.

obligations. During this time I spent time in youth detention and care homes. In the latter there were a myriad of forms of abuse and assault as differently screwed up kids took out their bullshit on others around them. Similarly in youth detention, which were all male environments, there were very clear hierarchies and modes of behaviour which favoured physical domination and prized "masculine" characteristics. As a teenager growing up in council flats in a large urban environment the ways in which me and my friends identified physical strength, aggression and general hardness/"up-for-it-ness" as the traits with which we should define ourselves was, I think, connected to our home lives; but it was also reinforced by larger social values which trickled down to us. Values which focus on competition, strength, domination; which view women as primarily sexual objects, and men as weak and pathetic if they don't have any power/capital with which to purchase these objects. In the environments that I have found myself in during my adult life these values and these traits have looked different, but they are very similar.

I've never been to a people's kitchen where the women are forced to eat their dinner off the floor, and the physical violence that occurs is not as explicit, but the roots from which my family's behaviour grew from is also connected to the behaviours that can be found within the anarchist

I recognized it then it was my responsibility to myself as an anarchist, as a friend, as an anti-authoritarian, as a partner, as a comrade, and as a person to deal with my bullshit behaviours. Ten months into the group I haven't dealt with all my shitty patriarchal patterns. Just this week my partner has been away, and it's been startling how emotionally stunted I have become; it's because I'm reliant on her for vast quantities of my emotional well-being. I haven't taken responsibility for that myself. I believe that men are trained not to be emotionally responsible; in some cases they're trained to deny their emotions, and in others cases they always have women, whether that's mothers, lovers, sisters or friends to take care of them. In both cases (and there are exceptions, and there is a grey area between the two) this results in the emotional abuse of people around them. In this fucked up world (and if you don't think it's fucked up then you're probably reading the wrong zine) everyone is going to be hurt at some point, and that hurt will probably cause some anger or something equally shitty which is going to come out in some form or another. If you're a lover, an anarchist, a friend, a member of a community, then you have a responsibility as to what form that comes out in. You know the world's fucked up, and you know it's going to fuck you up, so if you sit back and let yourself fuck other people up without trying, without challenging yourself, without demanding more of yourself then I think that's patriarchal bullshit. I think that's how I

still am, mainly because it hurts and it's unpleasant, and it's hard work, and because pretty much everything in this society encourages me to not deal with it, not to face up to it. I'm lucky that there are a number of people who love me and care for me, and for a too large portion of the time I'm unable to respond to that love and care with respect, because I haven't made enough effort to deal with my shit, I haven't made enough effort to extinguish that little voice that I think is in lots of little boys heads that says "this is my world, what I think and say and do is important. It's more important than what that person thinks, says, or does. And because of that people will take care of what I want and what I need, because what I think, say and do is important. I don't have time to take care of what other people want or need.". I do want to extinguish that voice, and that's in part what the group is for.

I'm reminded of what a close female friend said to me recently, that within my writing there is always a push and pull between the general and specific, and the more general or generalising I am the weaker the writing and the points it's trying to make become. Whilst the more personally specific I am the stronger it is. With that in mind I can see that the previous few paragraphs do seep into generalisations, and therefore I should try to be more specific. I'll offer one example up for brevity, and try to keep it brief though.

I grew up in households where women were by any definition terrorised by men. Grandfathers forcing grandmothers to eat their dinner off the floor, fathers punching mothers until teeth dangled from their gums, male cousins forcing female cousins into giving them hand jobs; the men of my extended family were given carte blanche to treat the women as they pleased. This pattern of behaviour was extended to physically stronger men assaulting weaker men in order to maintain order. I can see the root cause of this behaviour stemming from the two Grandfathers, and the ways in which they treated their wives and children, and everyone else imitating them. I can't be sure whether my grandfathers learnt their ways of behaving from their fathers, but I don't think it's a bad guess. I lived amongst this for around nine years, and it leaves me with a bitter taste in my mouth as well as a fair bit of bullshit in my head as to how to be a man.

For reasons somewhat unrelated to this my mum moved me and my siblings away from this situation, but due to this situation she had very few ways in which she could survive away from her family, which led her to becoming a prostitute for the rest of her life. She would often bring her punters back to the flat she lived in with me and my sisters, so I saw a large number of men treatinher very much as an object which they could purchase for as long as they wanted without any other