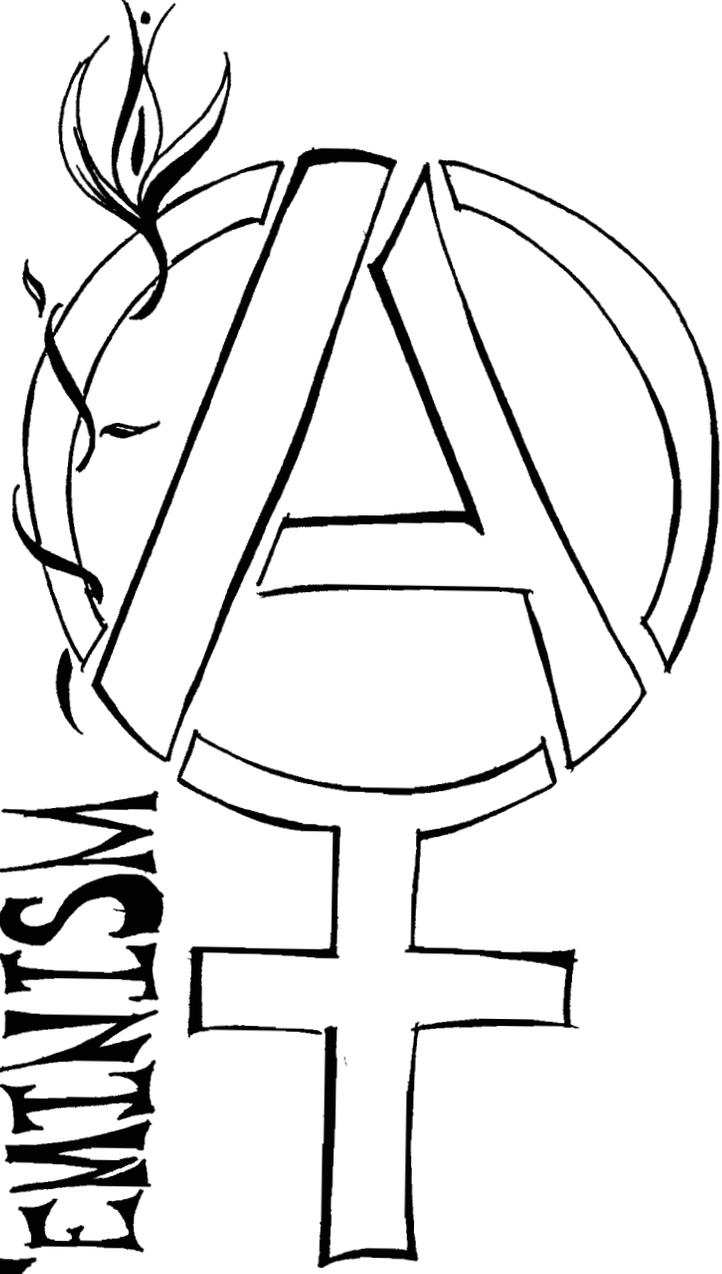




ANARCHA-  
FEMINISM





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## INTRODUCTION

This zine was compiled at the completion of a quarters worth of course work by three students looking to further their understanding of anarchism, feminism, and social justice. It is meant to disseminate what we have deemed important information throughout our studies. This information may be used as a tool for all people, women in particular, who wish to dismantle the oppressions they face externally, and within their own lives.

We are two men and one woman attempting to grasp at how we can deconstruct the patriarchal foundations upon which we perceive an unjust society has been built. We hope that at least some component of this work will be found useful to a variety of readers. This Zine is meant to be an introduction into anarcho-feminism, its origins, applications, and potentials. Buen provecho!

We acknowledge that anarcho-feminism has historically been a western theory; thus, unfortunately, much of this zine's content reflects this limitation. However, we have included some information and analysis on worldwide anarcho-feminists as well as global women's struggles which don't necessarily identify as anarchist. Furthermore, we see changes taking place. There are now anarcho-feminists on every continent, and there has always been indigenous resistance which is egalitarian and essentially anarchistic in nature. Besides, it would be hegemonic and colonialist to insist that all people around the world claim a western label. So, as long as a struggle is feminist and antiauthoritarian, we owe solidarity and support.

We look, with you, the reader, to a future(s) free of oppression and hierarchy of all kinds, based instead on feminist, multiracial, eco-centric, trans-inclusive, egalitarian principles and solidarity, love, and free association.

### **Glossary of useful terms**

Anarchism - political theory adopting the notion that systems of hierarchy and domination, whether they be governmental, socio-economic, or interpersonal, need to be abolished in





order for human beings to live freely and gain control over their own means of survival.

Anarcha-feminism (or anarchist feminism) – a branch of anarchism that focuses on placing women’s emancipation at the center of the struggle towards achieving the goals layed out by anarchist theory. Anarcha-feminism attempts to further develop the understanding of women’s roles in creating relationships free of subordination and oppression. Historically anarcha-feminism has placed emphasis on the home and nuclear family as a foci of women’s oppression, and therefore advocates free love as an alternative construct.

Free Love – as opposed to traditional marriage, sanctioned by both Church and State, free love offers that relationships be based upon organic love and compatibility as it immediatly exists. Rather than life-long commitment, free love pushes for non-binding understandings among lovers, freeing them to separate at will if their beings become incompatable over time.

Patriarchy – there are many definitions of patriarchy specific to cultural contexts and individual perception. A general definition includes masculine domination over the feminine. These terms are also subjective, but can be at least partially understood as a result of the sexual division of labor, (i.e. woman as mother and housekeeper, man as breadwinner and paternal disciplinarian).

Sexism – although the two are closely related, sexism differs from patriarchy in that its focus is women’s subordination to men. Although gender identity muddles the clarity of these terms, they are much more direct than masculine and feminine, which could be considered much more broad than mere sex. Sexism includes economic discrimination based on gender as well.

Direct Action - actions taken to achieve a certain ends. A tactic often used by anarchists, as well as other groups and individuals. Through direct action people confront directly either the institutions or the machinery that they perceive to pose any of a variety of threats to general well-being.

# NOTES:

Manarchy/Manarchism – aggressive, competitive, elitist, and macho attitudes and behaviors of anarchists that follow traditional oppressive male gender roles. Not to be confused with militancy. Some believe that manarchy is not limited by gender, so women can also be manarchist.

Transgender/genderqueer – transgender is the state of one's gender identity not matching one's assigned gender. Genderqueer is a gender identity. A genderqueer person identifies as a gender other than man or woman, or identifies as neither, both, or some combination thereof. Transgender and genderqueer overlap, but the meanings are not identical. Genderqueer can also be used more broadly to refer to someone who challenges gender roles and binary notions of gender.

Global women's struggles/movements – self-explanatory. The political struggles and movements from women around the world, which are varied and diverse. There is disagreement over whether women around the world share a universal experience of oppression based on sex. These struggles and movements around the world are important to anarcho-feminists because anarchism and feminism tend to be western-centric, and the experiences of other women are valuable. The experiences of women of color within western countries are also important.

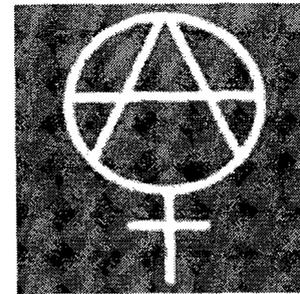
Fighting patriarchy and creating a new egalitarian society is hard work. It involves us on emotional, psychological, mental, physical, spiritual, interpersonal, and other levels. Men, women, trans, and genderqueer folks need to become comfortable with each other and learn to support each other in our individual and collective struggles. While fighting patriarchy and capitalism, we must simultaneously dismantle racism, heterosexism, sizeism, ableism, ageism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, sexual violence, government, religion, marriage, and all forms of hierarchy, oppression, and domination.

There are many things we can do and ways we can start to dismantle patriarchy and create a new society. A suitable first step (though not the only one) is to check out writings, music, collectives, etc in the "Anarcha-Feminist Resources" article. Toward the destruction of patriarchy and outdated systems of thought! Toward the creation of a better world free from domination and based on love and sharing! We'll see you there (and in the organizing we do to get there)! With rage, passion, love, and solidarity!

The findings in this zine represent the ideas and interpretations of those writing it. In the spirit of diversity we hope that each reader will both question as well as expand upon its contents. We are by no means experts, and would not expect our views to be interpreted as such. We do hope, however, that the information here will be at the very least considered, and helpful to the reader in one form or another. Feel free to reproduce, elaborate upon, burn, or do otherwise with the contents of this work. To each her own...



## Anarcha-Feminism: what it is and why it's important pongo pygmaeus (22 May 2007)



### Definition

Anarcha-Feminism (AF) has been defined by sally darity<sup>1</sup> as:

*being against all oppression, domination, and authority, but focusing on gender oppression, not because it is most important, but because it affects so many of us and must be dealt with. i say gender oppression instead of just patriarchy or sexism because i think feminism needs to be broader than just women's issues. gender oppression includes patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, heteronormativity, transphobia, the gender binary, fatphobia + other body image issues, sexual violence, etc<sup>2</sup>.*

Anarcha-feminists have changed the definition of anarcha-feminism since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century since Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre developed early anarcha-feminist theory. Anarcha-feminists have made AF theory and practice more inclusive of women of color and women around the world. I have heard current criticism of a tendency of some middle class, white, male anarchists, in which they perceive and define the struggle against oppression mainly in terms of fighting capitalism and the State. This is because most white male anarchists only experience oppression from capitalism and the government, rather than from racism,

<sup>1</sup> Anarcha, "What is Anarcha-Feminism?" SallyDarity Anarcha-Feminist & Gender Anarchy Resource Guide, <http://www.anarcha.org/sallydarity/whatis.php> (accessed 22 May 2007).

<sup>2</sup> For more definitions and additional information about AF, see Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarcha-feminism> and An Anarchist FAQ: <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/secA3.html#seca35>

sexism, classism, ableism, etc. So one task of anarcho-feminism is to help other anarchists, and everyone in society, understand that people are oppressed by many forms of hierarchy and authority, and it's not sufficient to merely fight capitalism and the State.

It seems that anarcho-feminism, early in its development and possibly until the 1960s, lacked this more sophisticated understanding of anarchist struggle. That is, in Goldman's and de Cleyre's general definitions of anarchism and authority, they focus on the state, church, and capitalism as the main oppressors. They are, nevertheless, eloquent in describing the oppression of women, but they don't cite patriarchy as a main source of oppression. They may have seen sexist oppression as inherent to the church, state, or capitalism, but perhaps the concept of patriarchy didn't exist then.

### **Development of anarchism**

To broadly define anarchism, it is a political-economic-social philosophy which opposes all forms of hierarchy, authority and coercion, and seeks to create a society in which individuals interact in voluntary cooperation and free association. AF is a school of thought within anarchism, and the diversity among anarcho-feminists reflects the differences within anarchism. Some anarcho-feminists are individualist, some collectivist, some green/primitivist; but for the most part are cohesive based on the oppression they experience as women.

Anarchist theory developed in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe, although anarchistic ideas existed in ancient Greece and anarchistic movements started in the medieval period. People have suggested that Taoism and anarchism have much in common, and it can be argued that traditional indigenous communities (including all human societies for 99% of our history—roughly 3 million years), are essentially anarchistic.

The modern philosophy of anarchism has spread to Asia, South America, Africa, Mexico, Central America, Caribbean, and other parts of the world. However, anarchism has historically been (and to some extent currently remains) a

## CONCLUSION

We hope that you gained from the experience of reading this zine, as we gained from studying Anarcho-Feminism. The study of theory, analysis, and practice should not stay within the confines of mind and text. While theory is important, there is no point if one does not act on the information.

We hope that reading this zine has helped you learn about anarcho-feminism and will help you develop your own analysis. And we hope that you will be in a better position to act on this knowledge and analysis and fucking tear down patriarchy and capitalism! (While simultaneously building up alternative institutions and communities based on love and nonhierarchical relationships.)

We have learned from this class, and we hope it's somewhat evident from this zine, that patriarchy is embedded within all of us, as well as in the institutions of society. It takes more than a verbal commitment to fighting sexism to actually fight it. We must fight patriarchy and all forms of hierarchy within our minds, and in the commodification of relations among us which capitalism and patriarchy have produced.

As Carol Ehrlich, an anarcho-feminist from the 1960s and '70s states in *Quiet Rumours*:

*We must smash all forms of domination. That's not just a slogan, and it is the hardest task of all. It means that we have to see through the spectacle, destroy the stage sets, know that there are other ways of doing things. It means that we have to do more than react in programmed rebellions - we must act. And our actions will be collectively taken, while each person acts autonomously. Does that seem contradictory? It isn't - but it will be very difficult to do. The individual cannot change anything very much; for that reason, we have to work together. But that work must be without leaders as we know them, and without delegating any control over what we do and what we want to build.*

- 2) Brenna Sahatjian and Adhamh Roland of Riotfolk (<http://riotfolk.org/>)
- 3) The Witching (<http://www.thewitching.com/history/>),
- 4) Subduction (<http://flagstaff.wemoonsarmy.com/subduction.html>)
- 5) Bench Press Burlesque: radical multi-gendered, sex-positive, queer-positive, feminist feast of political performance art (<http://benchpressburlesque.circlebox.org/>)
- 6) Undressing the Other, Addressing One Another: annual truly anti-racist-sexist-classist-elitist-ethnocentric-homophobic-xenophobic transnational feminist/womanist production at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA
- 7) Condenadas: feminist all-women hardcore punk, Chicago
- 8) Cojoba: anarcha-feminist, hardcore punk band Puerto Rico
- 9) Lili Brigadera: Boston
- 10) Swift: Olympia (now broken up)

#### WEBSITES

- 1) Anarcha-Feminism: Wikipedia article (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarcha-feminism>)
- 2) "What is Anarcha-Feminism" in An Anarchist FAQ (<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/secA3.html#seca35>)
- 3) Anarcha-Feminism at infoshop.org ([http://infoshop.org/afem\\_kiosk.html](http://infoshop.org/afem_kiosk.html))
- 4) Anarcha: Anarcha-Feminist resources (<http://www.anarcha.org/online>)
- 5) Spunk Library, Anarcha Feminism ([www.spunk.org/texts/anarcfem](http://www.spunk.org/texts/anarcfem))
- 6) Colours of Resistance: Anarchists of colour

western philosophy. As an extension of basic anarchist theory, anarcha-feminists have displayed this.

#### Euro-American hegemony

As I have explored in my papers for this class, AF has evolved. Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre, early anarcha-feminists, while ahead of their time in their revolutionary ideas, tended to be unaware of their sisters' struggles outside of Europe and the US. Anarcha-feminists in the 1960s and 1970s became more aware of global women's struggles, and this continues today as anarcha-feminists around the world connect via networks. Much work has to be done, however.

#### Struggle against patriarchy

Additionally, anarchism has not been immune to patriarchy and sexism. The three main founders of anarchism, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, and Peter Kropotkin, while theoretically opposing all forms of hierarchy and products of their time, were and espoused patriarchal beliefs. Anarchist women have experienced resistance from men when they push for real change. This and some call this "manarchy."



No one in a sexist, racist society is immune from harboring prejudiced ideas and behaviors. Anarchists have come a long way in fighting sexism and racism and other forms of oppression, but we all have to work hard, individually and collectively, on emotional, psychological, and institutional levels, against the dominant society's attitudes and behaviors. We all must continue to struggle.

#### Importance of anarcha-feminism

Why is AF relevant if anarchists and feminists already oppose sexism? As we can see from history, being an anarchist doesn't make one automatically non-sexist. Likewise, being a feminist doesn't make one opposed to other forms of

domination and violence. Anarchists must actively oppose sexism, patriarchy, racism, and all forms of oppression, authority, and hierarchy. Claiming a feminist-anarchist politics is one way of prioritizing feminism and anti-oppression in individual and collective struggles. For feminists, it is necessary to struggle for anarchy, as no form of hierarchy or domination is acceptable.

Red Rosa and Black Maria (Black Rose Anarcho-Feminists), in the essay "Anarcha-Feminism: Two Statements" in *Quiet Rumours*<sup>3</sup>, discuss the importance of anarcha-feminism as they see it:

*We consider anarcho-feminism to be the ultimate and necessary radical stance at this time in world history, far more radical than any form of Marxism. We believe that a Women's Revolutionary Movement must not mimic, but destroy, all vestiges of the male-dominated power structure (11).*

Because society has changed but superficially in regard to the treatment of women and because oppression of women persists, anarcha-feminism has retained its radical, systemic analysis of society's institutions of domination. Its critiques of marriage, work, and voting have retained their cogency. The call for revolution to end all forms of oppression and create a new world based on gender equality and egalitarian principles has been echoed throughout the various stages of anarcha-feminist evolution.

### What about men?

Anarcha-feminism is not exclusive to those socialized as women. People of all genders are comrades in the struggle against hierarchy and oppression, and it is imperative that those socialized as men take up the cause of anarcha-feminism and develop analysis, politics, and practice rooted in AF theory.

<sup>3</sup> Dark Star. *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-feminist Reader*. Edited by Dark Star. (Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press/Dark Star, 2002).

12) Take Back Your Life: A Wimmin's Guide to Alternative Healthcare (<http://olymedia.mahost.org/takebackyourlife.pdf>)

13) "Women in the Spanish Revolution" (<http://olymedia.mahost.org/womeninspain.pdf>)

14) "Gynocracy Song" (<http://www.omnipresence.mahost.org/annie.htm>)

15) "Sex, Class and women's oppression" (<http://struggle.ws/pdfs/women.pdf>)

### ARTICLES/WRITINGS

1) "The not very 'natural' oppression of women" (<http://struggle.ws/ws92/oppress36.html>)

2) "Setting up and keeping going Anarcha-feminist groups" (<http://www.spunk.org/texts/pubs/sekhmet/8/sp001231.txt>)

3) "The Question is not 'Organisation or no organisation?' but 'what sort of organisation?'. And the same goes for structure" (<http://www.anarres.org.au/essays/qorg.htm>)

4) "Politicizing Gender: Moving toward revolutionary gender politics" (<http://www.spunk.org/library/pubs/lr/sp001714/gender.html>)

5) "Anarcha-Feminist Manifesto" (<http://www.powertech.no/anarchy/maf.html>)

6) Deal With It.: anti-sexist anarchist men's journal (<http://fruitiondesign.com/dealwithit/>)

7) "Take Back Your Body: A D.I.Y. Gynecology Primer" (<http://www.anarcha.org/sallydarity/atf4.html>)

8) "Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers" (<http://tmh.floonet.net/articles/witches.html>)

9) A selection of modern anarchist writings by women (<http://www.struggle.ws/wsm/womenwriters.html>)

10) "He Zhen and Anarcho-Feminism in China" ([http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-9118\(198811\)47%3A4%3C796%3AHZAIC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-9118(198811)47%3A4%3C796%3AHZAIC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C))

10) "Love and Colonialism in Takamura Itsue's Feminism: A Postcolonial Critique": Japanese Anarcha-Feminism ([http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0141-7789\(199823\)60%3C1%3ALACITI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0141-7789(199823)60%3C1%3ALACITI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y))

11) "Anarchy or patriarchy?" (<http://www.zpub.com/notes/aan-lyon.html>)

### MUSIC/ARTS

1) Wemoon's Army and Co: Eco-Anarcha-Feminist Traveling Ritual Theatrical Troupe (<http://troupe.wemoonsarmy.com/>)

## BOOKS

- 1) Dark Star. *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-feminist Reader*. Edited by Dark Star. Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press/Dark Star, 2002.
- 2) De Cleyre, Voltairine. *The Voltairine de Cleyre Reader*. Edited by A.J. Brigati. Oakland: AK Press, 2004.
- 3) Goldman, Emma. *Anarchism and Other Essays*. Filiquarian Publishing, 2005.
- 4) Brown, L. Susan, *The Politics of Individualism: Liberalism, Liberal Feminism and Anarchism*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2003.
- 5) Mies, Maria and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993.
- 6) Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.
- 7) Ehrlich, Howard (ed.). *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*. Edited by Howard Ehrlich. Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press, 1996.

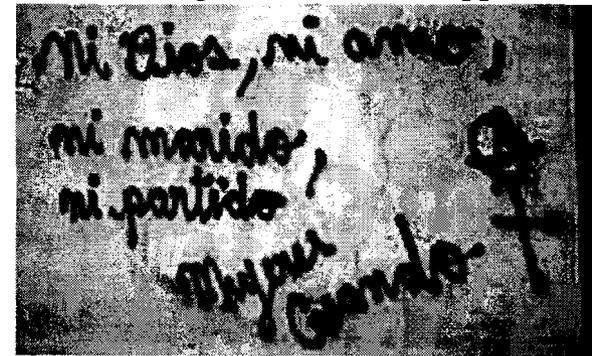
## ZINES

- 1) "Pieces of Self: Anarchy, Gender, and Other Thoughts"  
(<http://anti-politics.net/distro/download/pieces-imposed.pdf>)
- 2) "Breaking the Manacles: an anti-patriarchy reader"  
(<http://olymedia.mahost.org/breakingthemanacles.pdf>)
- 3) "Manual for trans inclusion for women's orgs"  
([http://www.anarcha.org/Policy\\_Manual3.pdf](http://www.anarcha.org/Policy_Manual3.pdf))
- 4) "Getting Louder Every Day"  
([http://www.geocities.com/soar\\_ceress2001/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/soar_ceress2001/index.html))
- 5) "Let It Be Known - experiences of women activists"  
(<http://www.cs.ubc.ca/spider/cronauer/zine/>)
- 6) "Getting to the Roots of Domination"  
(<http://www.wemoonsarmy.com/roots.html>)
- 7) "Herbal Abortion: the fruit of the tree of knowledge"  
(<http://www.zinelibrary.net/zines/herbalabortion.pdf>)
- 8) "Hot Pants: Do It Yourself Gynecology, Herbal Remedies" (not available online)
- 9) "Jane: Documents From Chicago's Clandestine Abortion Service 1968-1973"  
(<http://olymedia.mahost.org/Jane.pdf>)
- 10) Transgender Liberation: A movement whose time has come  
(<http://olymedia.mahost.org/transgenderlib.pdf>)
- 11) Fighting Back: Self-Defense for Womyn and Girls  
(<http://olymedia.mahost.org/FightingBackSelfDefense.pdf>)

## Global Women's Struggles

All over the world, women struggle against exploitation and oppression based on gender. They struggle against forms of oppression locally and globally. Not all women experience oppression equally, however. Indigenous women, women of color, queer women, poor women, middle class white women, etc experience oppression (and privilege) in different forms and at different levels.

Nevertheless, women around the world have found common cause and at times linked together in global networks of struggle. Significant insights can be gained and experiences shared among the women's struggles and movements around



the world, including non-anarchist struggles. The insights gained from non-anarchist global women's struggles and writings are important, regardless of

ideology or label. Furthermore, some global women's struggles follow anarchistic practices but don't use the western word "anarchist". Part of anarchism is allowing local struggles and communities to develop and exist on their own terms, and it would be imperialist to insist that all people embrace a western word. Many indigenous cultures are anarchistic, but again, don't use the word. Anarcha-feminists should support these struggles and communities as well as those claiming the anarcha-feminists label.

## Conclusion

Anarcha-feminism has always been a positive force for revolutionary social change, challenging anarchists, other movements, and society to consider the importance of women's oppression. Over time, it has become more inclusive in its analysis and practice. Like other strains of anarchism, it has roots in, and a tendency toward, Euro-American people and ways of thinking. Most anarcha-feminists are white. However,

western hegemony within anarcha-feminism has been challenged, as demonstrated by groups such as *Mujeres Creando*, a Bolivian anarcha-feminist street art activist group<sup>4</sup>; thus the Euro-American focus is not universal.

Indeed, anarcha-feminism has come a long way from its roots in Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre, who often were not aware of women's struggles in other parts of the world. The definition of anarcha-feminism has changed to explicitly challenge patriarchy, and it has developed a broader, more inclusive analysis which considers movements of people of color in Euro-American countries and global women's struggles.

As long as anarcha-feminists continue to embrace and work in solidarity with global women's movements and its analysis reflects the issues of women of color in Euro-American countries and women in other parts of the world, there is reason to be hopeful that it can continue to be a positive, challenging force for social change and has the capacity to become a globally accepted analytical and practical framework for anyone serious about ending all forms of authority, domination, and oppression, and creating a new world based on equality, sharing, and love.



<sup>4</sup> Dark Star, *Quiet Rumours*.

- 8) The Anarcha Project: history project ([anarcha.org/project.php](http://anarcha.org/project.php))
- 9) Philly's Pissed: working against sexual assault in Philadelphia's radical communities (<http://www.phillyspissed.net/>)
- 10) INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (<http://www.incite-national.org/index.html>)
- 11) The Women's Center: Cambridge, MA (<http://cambridgewomenscenter.org/>)

#### **HEALTH CLINICS/COLLECTIVES**

- 1) Brighton anarcha-feminist health collective (<http://www.geocities.com/anarchofeministhealth/>)
- 2) Pomegranate Health Collective: Chicago (<http://www.pomegranatecollective.org>)
- 3) Women's Health & Justice Initiative: improving women of color's health in New Orleans (<http://www.pomegranatecollective.org/resources.php?articleincite>)
- 4) Aradia Women's Health Center: Seattle (<http://www.aradia.org>)
- 5) Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (<http://www.barcc.org/>)
- 6) Boston Self Health Collective
- 7) Doohickey Project: cross-country tour about abortion options, reproductive, and sexual health ([http://www.infoshop.org/wiki/index.php/Doohickey\\_Project](http://www.infoshop.org/wiki/index.php/Doohickey_Project))

#### **INFOSHOPS**

- 1) Lucy Parsons Center: radical bookstore and community space in Boston
- 2) Red Emma's Bookstore Coffeehouse: worker-owned and collectively-managed bookstore and coffeehouse in Baltimore
- 3) In Other Words Women's Books and Resources: feminist bookstore and community resource center in Portland (<http://www.inotherwords.org>)
- 4) Jane Doe Books: bookstore and community space in New York - all texts about women's issues or written by women (now defunct)

#### **CONFERENCES**

- 1) LOVEKILLS Anarcha-Feminist Festival, organized by LOVEKILLS Collective: July 2007 in Romania (<http://www.infoshop.org/inews/article.php?story=2007051406032189>)
- 2) Against Patriarchy conference: annual conference, usually in Eugene, OR (<http://fruitiondesign.com/againstpatriarchy/>)
- 3) Anarcha-Feminist Fest 2007: festival in Croatia in April 2007

## Anarcha-Feminist Resources pongo pygmaeus (30 May 2007)

There are several forms of organizing that anarcha-feminists take on. These include women's health clinics, conferences, media collectives, theater groups, alternative schools, antiprofit businesses, community centers, and many others. This resource guide is not comprehensive, and is largely a result of web searches. However, we have gathered a diverse list of different types of resources.

Not all resources listed identify as anarcha-feminist, but do overlap with anarcha-feminist ideas and practices. While we have gathered a few resources from around the world, unfortunately, these resources are predominantly American. If you want to find resources for a specific country, try searching online, which is how we found most of these resources. Tracking down and compiling worldwide anarcha-feminist resources is an important project that hopefully someone will undertake.

### **DISTROS** (literature distribution)

1) Feral Feminine: books, zines, menstrual products  
(<http://www.feralfeminine.com/>)

2) paper trail distro: feminist zines (<http://www.papertraildistro.com>)

3) ladymen distro: anarcha-feminist zines, books, music, patches, etc  
(<http://www.ladymen.8m.com>)

### **RADIO**

1) Anarcha-Feminism on Odeo: AF radio (<http://odeo.com/audio/7533/view>)

2) The Feminist Radio Collective on Free Radio Santa Cruz  
(<http://www.freakradio.org/feministradio.html>)

### **COLLECTIVES/ORGANIZATIONS/PROJECTS**

1) LaRivolta!: currently inactive Boston anarcha-feminist collective  
(<http://www.larivolta.org/>)

2) LUNA from Praha: anarcho-eco-feminist group  
(<http://www.cs.ubc.ca/spider/cronauer/zine/issue1/luna.html>)

3) Wemoon's Army: international collective made of autonomous cells that deconstructs patriarchy and capitalism in creative and direct ways  
(<http://www.wemoonsarmy.com/>)

4) Pink Bloque (<http://www.pinkbloque.org/>)

5) Bitches Brew Boston: feminist home-brewing collective

6) Women's Resource Center: The Evergreen State College, Olympia, WA

7) Mujeres Creando: Bolivian anarcha-feminist street art  
(<http://www.mujerescreando.org/>)

## Anarchism, Feminism, and the Affinity Group

Conceptualizing Anarchism and Feminism together might create a strange pair of images, formulated by the common stereotypes of either Anarchism, or Feminism, or both. Anarcha-Feminism, however, can be seen as the "logically consistent expression of feminism." The only legitimate expression of oppression comes individually from those who are oppressed, and the free expression of this experience cannot happen in large, structured organizations, but best in an atmosphere of free association and structurelessness.

"The basic anarchist form of organization is a small group, volitionally organized and maintained, which must work toward defining the oppression of its members and what form their struggle for liberation must take," writes the Black Rose Anarcho-Feminists. This form of organization is a breath of fresh air for many who have become disillusioned with the functioning of traditional, structured, male-oriented leftist organizations.

Peggy Kornegger writes in "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection" that there are three basic qualities of anarchism: 1) the abolition of authority, hierarchy, and government. The creation of co-operative, anti-authoritarian organizations serves this end by making the state and other oppressive entities obsolete; 2) the belief in individuality and collectivity. The individuality to which Kornegger refers can be seen as radically different from the rugged individualism that is commonly seen in Western societies.

The needs of others must not be disregarded in the expression of one's own individuality. "In terms of social and political organization, this means balancing individual initiative with collective action through the creation of structures which enable decision-making to rest in the hands of all those in a group," says Kornegger. 3) A belief in spontaneity and organization. These two are not antithetical: expression of spontaneity can exist within an organization, as long as the organization is not oppressive in itself. Anarchists do not necessarily criticize organization, but top-down, structured organizations.

Indeed, it is in the structurelessness of organization that some feminists find Anarchism to be most appealing. Though it is debatable whether humans follow such essential gender differences, Lynne Farrow writes that women have a predisposition to act according to Anarchist principles: "first because women apply themselves to specific projects like abortion clinics and day-care centres; second, because as essentially apolitical women for the most part refuse to engage in the political combat terms of the right or the left, reformism or revolution, respectively."

This disposition is threatening to traditional leftist organizations because it presents a group which is generally uncompromising in its demands and not willing to be alienated from its position in regard to oppression. Frequently in the history of the political left women's struggles have been co-opted by political parties and other groups fighting for issues other than women's liberation. In the era of the Civil War, for example, women were expected to not be so selfish as to fight for themselves when slaves needed assistance.

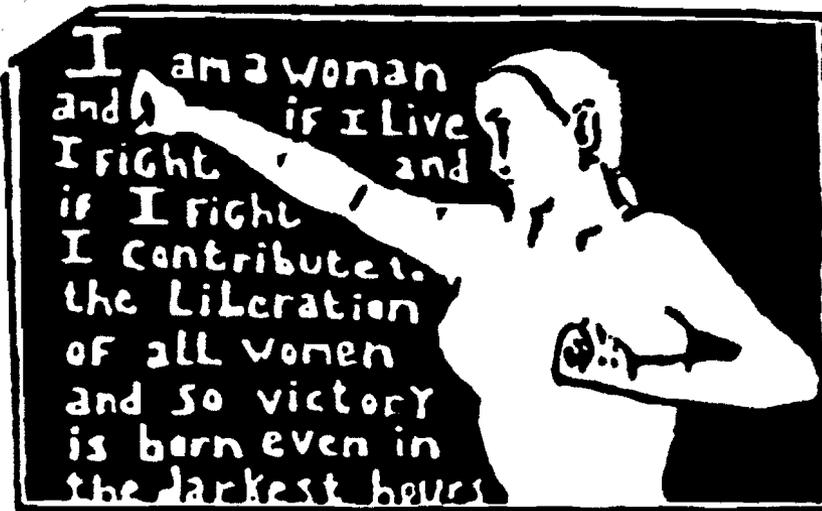
This type of "conceptual imperialism" is a serious threat to groups who see their struggles as very specific and personal. Totalist theories seek to incorporate specific conflicts within the rubric of a larger struggle, whether real or imagined.

These attitudes seem to work in a cyclical fashion: by creating a perception of a single cause of oppression, the nature of struggle must be therefore be total. Social movements that are characterized by this totalizing nature will subsume what would otherwise be specific struggles with possibly little relation. There might then be created a totalizing force that will pull more people further away from their actually existing circumstances.

Furthermore, any totalizing ideology must be centered on a large amount of theory. Lynne Farrow writes that women's lives generally center on survival and reproductive processes. This leaves little room for developing theory, at least in relation to the amount of free time men have: "Observing and evaluating life routines must be the occupation of the comparatively idle, those with less responsibilities, i.e., men."

change. Puritanism, on the other hand, rests on a fixed and immovable conception of life; it is based on the Calvinistic idea that life is a curse, imposed upon man by the wrath of God. In order to redeem himself man must do constant penance, must repudiate every natural and healthy impulse, and turn his back on joy and beauty.

Beauty is necessary to sustain difficult conditions, and it is this most practical reason that EG advocated its enjoyment. "The propagandist of an unpopular cause needs, even more than other people, occasional light-hearted irresponsibility. How else could he survive the hardships and travail of existence?"



Does structure less always lead to democratic decision-making, then? Jo Freeman, in "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" writes that there is no such thing as an unstructured group: "The very fact that we are individuals, with different talents, predispositions, and backgrounds makes this inevitable."

According to her argument, because structurelessness only prevents formal structures, and not informal ones, people are at the mercy of informal structures without room for recourse in a formal setting. This is particularly undesirable because it is from the informal structure of most groups that a handful of elites emerge. Removing the formal structure of an organization has no effect on this.

Freeman continues her argument by acknowledging that informal structures of communication can be useful, but only in the context of the existence of a formal structure. "When informal elites are combined with a myth of 'structurelessness,' there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power."

One might wonder where the idea of free association fits in with Freeman's complaint about structurelessness. Acknowledging freedom of movement and association would make her argument difficult to understand. If there is no coercion to remain in a group, the limit on the use of power in that group is never relinquished by those who can simply decide not work within that specific group.

Freeman continues her criticism of structurelessness by describing the characteristics of the informal elite: "middle-class background; being married; not being married but living with someone; being or pretending to be a lesbian; having at least some college background; being 'hip'; not being too 'hip'; having children or at least liking them; not having children; having certain 'feminine' personality characteristics such as being 'nice,'" and so on.

What Freeman seems to be listing here are general characteristics, some of which could describe just about anyone. Furthermore, it would be silly to assume that any group of people who freely associate would not have at least a few common characteristics. Individuals should not be chastised for relating to each other on common principles and characteristics.

As a result of the rejection of theories of single causes of oppression, and therefore the natural rejection of homogenous movements in response to these causes, the idea of a "movement" has little bearing on individual Anarcha-Feminists. This is advantageous in that it cannot act to shape individual and collective action, which must necessarily remain free of constraints by any account of Anarchist thought.

The role of the unfettered group, then, is to make the state obsolete through providing services locally and acting as the basic form of social organization. The small group is the means *and* the end of a revolution that may or may not happen. Charlotte Wilson, in "Social Democracy and Anarchism," writes that "anarchism is not a system, but a theory of human development; not a Utopian dream of the future, but a faith in the present; not a nostrum for the cure of all human ills, by the alteration of the moral conditions of society, but a protest against certain definite evils." The small group's focus has no other option than to be at the center of all members' lives, and its function will always be practical in addressing oppression.

To the extent that any lasting change can happen is going to depend on the success or failure of these groups. "Tear it down" must be coupled with reconstruction. "Society can relieve itself of monopoly by force; but social formation is the work of silent growth, not of conscious, sudden effort."

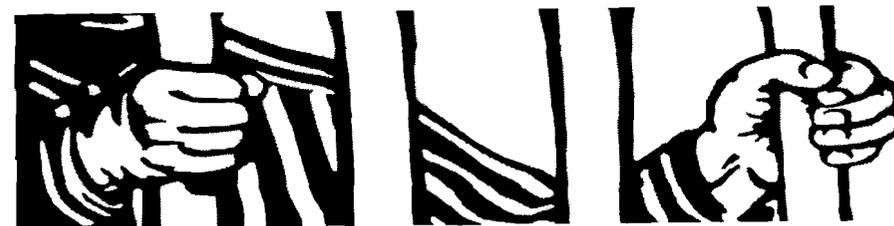
The abolition of government and authority, being replaced by informed and voluntary association, is the natural condition for the fullest growth of the individual and the fostering of an atmosphere in which the best aspects of spontaneity and organization can thrive.

of gratefulness and joy toward seeing an opera or attending a ball or finding natural beauty in the world: "Our poverty-stricken life in Königsberg had been made bearable to me only by the occasional outings with our teachers in the open."

EG didn't want a revolution she couldn't dance to, and there's good reason why. Anarchist principles are generally derived from a conception of an ideal society. Because the means *are* the ends in Anarchist practice, joy and the fulfillment of human potential should best be realized to whatever degree possible.

EG saw the root of many social problems in the Puritanism remaining from the original colonists. The victims of this prevalent denial in American culture were women, as laws against prostitution, for example, punished only the prostitute and not the patron.

Prohibition laws, as well, only punished the poor drinkers, while upper-class drinkers were all but granted amnesty under the laws. EG saw the structure of the legal system as being primarily a tool of oppression – of women, of the poor, of people of color. The semi-frequent moral outrages that resulted in increased restrictiveness did nothing but create an overwhelming prison population composed of the dispossessed.



"More than art, more than estheticism, life represents beauty in a thousand variations; it is, indeed, a gigantic panorama of eternal

## Emma Goldman and the benefits of fulfillment

Emma Goldman is known as a hard-working immigrant who spent time in factories and prisons, sewing and aiding the ill. This ascetic lifestyle seems to lend itself well to the façade of Anarchism, with its rejection of capitalist consumption and the seriousness with which it views suffering. But can one live in constant rejection as a way of transforming the world? Perhaps EG's life can give some suggestions.

One of EG's main criticisms of her contemporaries was their abstinent and austere lifestyles. Though she admired the mind of Voltairine de Cleyre, she also criticized her for having no personality.

Her first impressions of Alexander Berkman were also strained by the tensions caused by Berkman's criticism of those who spent money for their own pleasure. These sentiments by Berkman would create an inner dialogue in EG about how someone fighting for social justice should live. "Yet, at heart, I felt that Berkman was right. Revolutionists give up even their lives – why not also beauty? Still the young artist struck a responsive chord in me. I, too, loved beauty." The "young artist" was a friend, Fedya, who would become a long-time friend of EG.

Speaking of a group of friends in San Francisco, EG writes "we still found time for frequent social gatherings jovial enough to be disapproved by the purists. But we did not mind it. Youth and freedom laughed at rules and strictures, and our circle consisted of people young in years and in spirit."

Under the surface of EG's childhood memories are feelings of negativity toward the austere elders who denied her of pleasure, and





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Her argument against marriage was not abstract. Marriages were spaces of domination and sexual violence. "The earth is a prison, the marriage-bed is a cell, [and] women are the prisoners," de Cleyre wrote in "Sex Slavery." Marriage does nothing to protect purity, she wrote. The institution actively undermined women's ambition and freedom of movement.

Voltairine's essays and lectures have been widely translated, published, and read, and her ideas remain an integral part of individual Anarchism and Anarcha-Feminism. In her writing is a specifically American take on Anarchism. Her criticism of modern society is firmly rooted in the experience of American worker and sex relations, much of which has not undergone radical change. It is for this reason that de Cleyre remains so relevant today.



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people, de Cleyre wrote, it is still necessarily supported by coercion and violence. In this sense, political action can act to negate concrete change by direct action.

The events surrounding the Haymarket Affair pushed de Cleyre to adopt the label of Anarchist. Though initially inimical towards those who would become the Haymarket martyrs, she would soon express tremendous remorse about her reactionary attitude. In her memorial oration, "The Eleventh of November, 1887," de Cleyre writes: "I did not know what Anarchism was. I had never seen it used save in histories, and there it was always synonymous with social confusion and murder. I believed the newspapers. I thought these men had thrown that bomb, unprovoked, into a mass of men and women, from a wicked delight in killing. And so thought millions of others. But out of those millions there were some few thousand – I am glad I was one of them – who did not let the matter rest there."

After Haymarket, de Cleyre moved away from an earlier position in which she saw the frontiersman and early American settlers as the ideal of a revolutionary society. Marian Leighton, in her essay "Voltairine de Cleyre: An Introduction," writes that de Cleyre "made a constructive transition from a style of fairly narrow left-wing individualist anarchism to an anarchism more attuned to the evolving economic realities of an expanding industrial age." This transition was necessary for de Cleyre to remain relevant in the emerging syndicalist atmosphere.

De Cleyre's essays on sex and marriage contain some of her most impassioned writings. She believed firmly that love and marriage were not consonant, and that the integrity of the individual is frequently forfeited in the constraints of a permanent, dependent relationship. In her "Those Who Marry Do Ill" speech, she said "I believe that the only way to preserve love in anything like the ecstatic condition which renders it worthy of a distinctive name is to maintain the distances. Never allow love to be vulgarized by the indecencies of continuous close communication."

## Anarcha-Feminist Practices and Organizing pongo pygmaeus (30 May 2007)

Anarcha-feminist practices and organizing today are various and diverse; additionally, they have changed since the times of Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre. Despite changes and differences across time and space, however, common to anarcha-feminist projects and activism is a rejection of large, hierarchical organizations, legislative and electoral politics, reformist tactics, marriage, the state, organized religion, capitalism, and sexism.

### **Early practices**

For early anarchist women, who lived around the turn of the century, the main forms of anarcha-feminist practice were writing/propaganda, public speaking, and education. Emma Goldman wrote extensively, including publishing a journal and delivered public lectures. She spoke in favor of direct action and propaganda by the deed (political assassination) and was arrested for advocating birth control. Her writing and speaking had broad messages and purposes. She wrote not just about her own ideas, but about movements and struggles of other anarchists. She wrote and spoke in support of arrested and murdered anarchists. The same can be said of Voltairine de Cleyre's writing and speaking (minus getting arrested). Additionally, de Cleyre taught anarchist ideas to immigrants.

### **Contemporary organizing**

Anarcha-feminists have come to embrace many forms of organizing, including health clinics, writing and publishing (books and zines), education, literature distribution (distros), radio shows, direct action, music, conferences, theater, community centers, book stores, rape crisis centers, food co-ops; parent-controlled daycare centers, free schools, radical cheerleading, militant protests and property destruction, political assassination and attacks, creative actions at protests such as the Pink Bloc, discussion and consciousness-raising groups, psychological healing groups, men's allies discussion groups, community centers, graffiti/street art, and others. Many of these are used by other anarchists, though health clinics and radical cheerleading are more-or-less only used by

anarcha-feminists. Anarcha-feminist projects may also be problem-centered, like health clinics.

Lynne Farrow, an anarcha-feminist writer during feminism's second wave, argued that anarcha-feminists' energies should be "problem-centred rather than people (or struggle) centred".<sup>1</sup> Peggy Kornegger, another second waver, also points to the problem-centered nature of some feminist organizing:

*On the positive side, the emerging structure of the women's movement in the last few years has generally followed an anarchistic pattern of small project-oriented groups continually weaving an underground network of communication and collective action around specific issues.<sup>2</sup>*

### Examples

There are many examples of anarcha-feminist practices and organizing. I will go into a few here. Main historical examples are the Paris Commune and Mujeres Libres (Free Women of Spain). Some more contemporary examples include Rote Zora, Mujeres Creando, and Pomegrante Health Collective.

### Historical Examples

In 1871, revolutionaries (some anarchist) in Paris fought the government to take control of their city, and set up what came to be called the Paris Commune. A small number of women became actively involved in revolutionary activities. Louise Michel (who later became an anarchist) was one of the leaders, fighting at the barricades, and continuing to lead demonstrations after the commune was broken up. Some women organized an anti-capitalist feminist movement. They demanded gender equality, wage equality, right of divorce for women, professional education for girls, suppression of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lynne Farrow, "Feminism as Anarchism," in Dark Star. *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-feminist Reader*. Edited by Dark Star. Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press/Dark Star, 2002, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Peggy Kornegger, "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection," in Dark Star. *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-feminist Reader*. Edited by Dark Star. Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press/Dark Star, 2002, 28.

## Voltaire de Cleyre - An Overview

Voltaire de Cleyre, anarchist, free-thinker, and prolific poet, wrote and lectured on topics including expropriation, marriage, religion, sex slavery, direct action, political violence, and the Haymarket martyrs. In these writings is a consistent rejection of authority, a belief in the inherent freedom and creativity of the individual, and a political philosophy in the tradition of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson.

De Cleyre's early thought was influenced by the circumstances of her upbringing. She was exposed to the dangers of the arbitrary exercise of power as a child, and was driven into a convent school by dire poverty. The punishment she received there for expressing personal opinion led de Cleyre to the liberating ideology of free thought and a rejection of the arbitrary use of power.

It was the American government that she argued against on its own terms, her argument drawing heavily from Thomas Paine. De Cleyre wrote that direct action was an integral part of the American Revolution, but its legitimacy was dissolved after the founding of the American government. Direct action was seen as a threat by those forming the new state. "The sin our fathers sinned was that they did not trust liberty wholly. They thought it possible to compromise between liberty and government, believing the latter to be "a necessary evil," and the moment the compromise was made, the whole misbegotten monster of our present tyranny began to grow."

She believed that rights could not be legislated, and therefore laws protecting them were without value. There was little accountability, moreover, by which people might change laws for their benefit. Government is as intangible and unapproachable as God, de Cleyre argued, since the seat of government is divided by various branches. Furthermore, these branches hold some responsibility to the people, but what "voters" want is always ambiguous with a popular government that does not act by consensus. In as much as political change is responsive to the

against in Europe. Anarchist ideals were easily transferable. *La Voz de la Mujer* (the Voice of the Woman) was a periodical written by women for women in Argentina, the first known of its kind in Latin America. It had an extensive following despite substantial opposition and often mirrored the issues addressed by women like Goldman and de Cleyre, a testament to their influence on this new ground.

The most concrete realization, however, of success in the women's and anarchist struggles was in revolutionary Spain around 1936. For two years preceding the revolution a group of women had been mobilizing around women's issues. They felt the need to organize autonomously from their male comrades for multiple reasons. They felt they were not being heard while acting within groups of men, and they felt safer overcoming their own obstacles in a supportive activist environment of other women. Said one anarchist, Federica Montseny, 'only when women respect themselves would they be able to effectively demand respect from men.'<sup>4</sup>

By revolution the group *Mujeres Libres*, or Free Women, had 20,000 members, published multiple periodicals, had established community spaces, met regularly in smaller groups, etc.<sup>5</sup> The group managed to create changes in the lives of many women, empowering them through both support and action. Their efforts, however, were fettered after the dictatorship of Francisco Franco came to power in 1939.

Although smaller and for the most part less organized, many groups of women still exist in similar fashions. Meetings between women, formal or otherwise, discussing their oppression as women, as workers, as wives, etc. are invaluable and are happening so frequently the world over. Organization against those institutions that contribute to their oppression is not a necessity that has waned, if anything the need for social organization has grown in the last century. Women will continue to fight, and will continue to listen to one another until equality is achieved.

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Ackelsberg, Martha A. *Free Women of Spain*. University Press, Indiana: 1991. Page 90.

<sup>5</sup> Ackelsberg 1.

distinction between married women and concubines and between legitimate and natural children, and the abolition of prostitution. They participated in several municipal commissions and organized cooperative workshops. Some women, such as Louise Michel, joined the National Guard. There was even a female battalion. However, they didn't get or ask for the right to vote, and there were no female members of the Council. Perhaps this reflects the tactics of the anarchist women.<sup>3</sup>

In 1936-1939, anarchists waged a revolutionary struggle against government and created alternative institutions. Women played a "full part" in the revolution and formed the "backbone of resistance".<sup>4</sup> The women were on committees, in the militias, and in the front line. They also took part in collectives around the country. Other women from Europe came and joined in the fight.

The Free Women of Spain collective, or *Mujeres Libres*, was created to break away from women's triple enslavement "to ignorance, as women and as producers." Their first journal appeared in May 1936, but they had been actively organizing among women for the two years preceding this. They realized that their male friends did not always treat them with respect, and the "only when women respect themselves can they demand respect from men." They were able to mobilize over 20,000 women and developed extensive networks of activities designed to empower individual women while building a sense of community. Newsletters were a major form of organizing.

They also recognized that unions were a product of capitalism and that it did not make sense to assume that they would be the basis for a transformed economy. During the Spanish revolution (and preceding years of prior organizing) the CNT (spanish workers union) had 850,000 members. Many modern schools were built during the revolution, following Francisco Ferrer's model. They served as community centers and libraries after hours. Parents contributed what they could to the schools in order to keep them running.

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<sup>3</sup> "Paris Commune", Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris\\_Commune](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_Commune)).

<sup>4</sup> Liz Willis. "Women in the Spanish Revolution." Johannesburg, South Africa: Zabalaza Books, (reprint of 1975 original), 2.

Despite these achievements of anarchist women, however, women's lives did not change completely; "the transformation in social relations, particularly in the status of women in the community, was a long way from being total, even in areas where libertarians had the greatest control over their own situation".<sup>5</sup> As in other cases, the mindsets of many men did not manage to escape traditional patriarchal thought.

### Contemporary Examples

A somewhat more contemporary example of anarcho-feminism organizing is Rote Zora, a "militant feminist anti-patriarchal wimmin's urban guerrilla group" active in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>6</sup> Rota Zora consisted of autonomous revolutionary cells and developed an anti-imperialist focus. They attacked "predominantly patriarchal institutes, companies, and persons representing and building up a male sexist society, which is oppressing and exploiting wimmin worldwide".<sup>7</sup> These attacks targeted property and people. Propaganda by the deed survived from the time of the early anarcho-feminists.

Mujeres Creando is a more recent example of anarcho-feminist practice. Mujeres Creando is a Bolivian anarcho-feminist street art activist group, who through graffiti popularized the slogan, "Ni dios, ni amo, ni partido, ni marido" or "Neither God, nor master, nor husband, nor party."

The final contemporary anarcho-feminist project I will examine is Pomegranate Health Collective. They are not a clinic, but a group of DIY (do it yourself) health activists in Chicago, dedicated to making health information accessible to everyone. They focus on outreach, education and referrals right now. They're a group of students and teachers, sex workers and parents, healthcare professionals and lay health enthusiasts, and everybody in between plus the kids next door. They are

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>6</sup> "Rote Zora", in Dark Star. *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcho-feminist Reader*. Edited by Dark Star. Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press/Dark Star, 2002, 97.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

unionists, these ideas began to permeate the minds of many within the European working class. Subsequent strike movements in Belgium, Switzerland, France, and other countries attested to the spreading of new ideals.<sup>2</sup>

The movements taking place throughout Europe were syndicalist in nature, and therefore focused on the organization of workers within the workplace. Considering the predominantly male composition within this demographic, women were excluded from changes that took place within this arena.

Additionally, the leaders of these movements, the intellectuals and scholars, were male. This led to a necessarily patriarchal trend within the anarchist movement, a movement meant to have been truly revolutionary. Women were often left in the home while the men took charge of the reformation of society through workplace organizing, and those who did work outside of the home often took a backseat to their male counterparts active within the movement.

Observing gaps within the scholarship and actions of their male counterparts, such as lack of a comprehensive analysis that included issues more specific to women, women like Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre, and Lucy Parsons wrote of the struggles of women. From prostitution to marriage and motherhood, these women, the pioneers of anarcho-feminist thought, wrote extensively on the plight of women within capitalist industrial society as it developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

More or less excluded from the formal workforce, claimed these anarchist women, women became resigned to 'parasitism' as a result of their economic dependency upon their husbands. Dependency led to lack of individuality, and the situation women faced within the home was a stunted, helpless one.

Refocusing on oppression from the workplace to the home was a significant contribution made to anarchist theory by these early female writers and activists. The empowerment of women, allowing women the true expression of their sexuality and individuality, was a bold move within the framework of the time, a setting within which women had few rights.

The ideas of feminist anarchism, and anarchism in general, traveled to Latin America with a population of newly settled European immigrants who took up life in Argentina, mostly in the industrializing urban centers. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, encouraged by the governments of Spain, Italy, France, and others, immigrants came to Argentina looking to find opportunity in a growing economy.<sup>3</sup>

With industrialization, economic conditions in Argentina, especially in Buenos Aires, quickly became similar to those the anarchists were fighting

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<sup>2</sup> Rucker, Rudolf. *Anarcho-Syndicalism, Theory and Practice*. AK Press, Oakland: 1989. Page 45.

<sup>3</sup> Molyneux, Maxine. *Women's Movements in International Perspective: Latin America and Beyond*. ILAS, London: 2003. Page 14.

For three and a half months these women held a presence in La Paz, and were not heard by the presidents of the associations they were attempting to confront. After this expanse of time, and at huge economic expense to those involved, 100 people resorted to occupying the offices of the *Defensoria del Pueblo* (People's Defense) as well as the office of the Catholic Archbishop, where hostages were taken. Those who took part were trained in non-violence before hand, and there were people designated to look after the wellbeing of those who were detained.

As a result members of *Mujeres Creando* were able to negotiate with the financial institutions and large banking establishments to which these demonstrators were indebted. Many were able to have their debt excused. "All social change is born," said one activist, "as creative action capable of breaking, of moving, of calling together."<sup>4</sup>

This is just one example of organization and actions taken by women; many have gone unnoticed, many have been successful. In the age of relentless neoliberal expansion the rights of women have continued to be further degraded, necessitating the intensification of struggle.

The usurping claws of the opulent "global north" have left those within its periphery with little choice but to fight, and to create. This is what is being done, despite unfathomable repression, and this is what will continue for a long time to come.

The ideals that anarchism holds: the abolition of domination and the realization of equality, hold pertinence in any struggle against the machinery that stands in the way of achieving these goals.

### A Brief History of Anarchist Feminism

Anarchism, historically, has been expressed in various ways. Non-authoritarian clans, tribes, and tribal federations often have exhibited anarchist tendencies, existing outside of the realm of government, as it is understood today.<sup>1</sup> Many religious teachings and schools of thought expressed the desirability of life without rulers, the Taoists in China being one example.

Anarchism as a philosophy developed alongside capitalism as workers became more and more dissatisfied with their conditions as producers. Anarchist thought was first developed in England, in the heart of booming industry. After the inception of the International Workingmen's Association, or the First International, in 1864 an association of collectivized workers and

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<sup>4</sup> *Quiet Rumors*, 108.

<sup>1</sup> Ehrlich, Howard. *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*. AK Press, San Francisco: 1996. Page 20.

*devoted to issues of health from a feminist, non-hierarchical perspective. We address issues of physical, mental, reproductive, and sexual health in a women-friendly, queer-friendly and trans-friendly framework. We are dedicated to offering resources and information on the mainstream healthcare industry and alternatives to it through education and outreach, including skillshares, workshops, publications, literature and actions. We encourage everyone to take their health into their own hands. We believe everyone should have equal access to good health information and care regardless of income, legal status, race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender or sexual preference, size, marital status, immigration status, religion, and physical and mental ability.*<sup>8</sup>

They organize by utilizing working groups, small groups dedicated to a focused topic that organize somewhat independently of the major group. They carry out their own actions and report back at a general meeting. They operate under consensus decision making. Their practices include giving lectures and workshops, distribution information and literature, distributing a menstrual calendar, showing films, and they have links to other resources and websites.

Another group of women is worth mentioning, although it is unclear whether they identify as anarcha-feminists. Several Animal Liberation Front and Earth Liberation Front activists are women, including some of the Green Scare defendants now in prison. These activists are anarchist women, although I don't know if they identify as such. But it's good to look at their tactics (property destruction, animal liberation, etc) as additions practices that anarcha-feminists utilize.

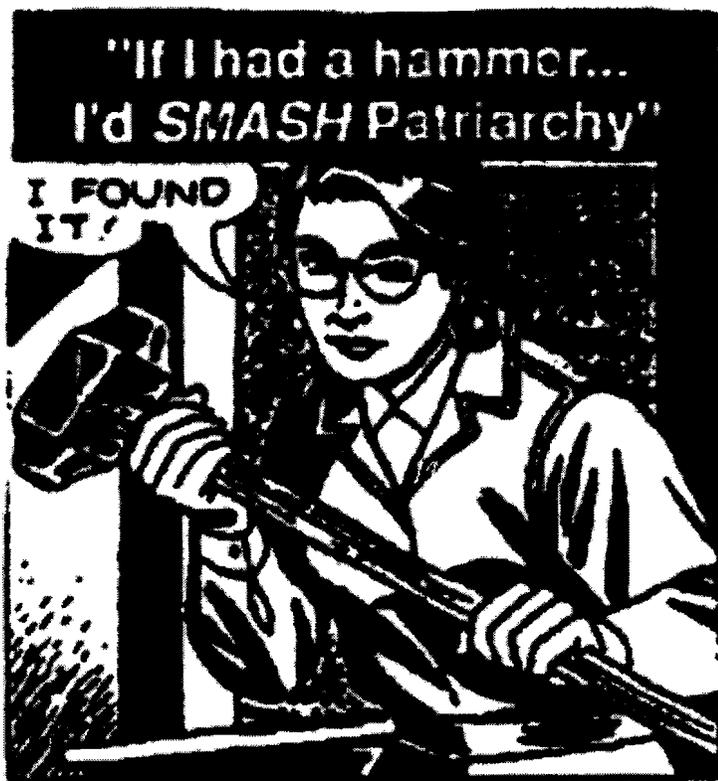
### Conclusion

We can see how anarcha-feminists practices and activism have developed over time, becoming richer and more diverse. While writing and education were the main forms of activism for Goldman and de Cleyre, they are still very important and serve as a predominant form of organizing. Yet

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<sup>8</sup> Pomegranate Health Collective  
(<http://www.pomegranatecollective.org/index.php?aboutus>)

many other practices now exist, perhaps showing the increased freedom which women have gained since the turn of the century. For anarcha-feminism to become a globally viable theory and practice, we anarcha-feminists need to branch out even more, and work in solidarity with other communities, sharing ideas, resources, and organizing practices. These were only a few examples of anarcha-feminist organizing. For many more examples, see the "Anarcha-Feminist Resources" article in this zine.



## Global Women's Movements Through An Anarchist Lens

*We are humane, and we know that social change comes not from hate or violence, but from hope and creativity.*

- Maria Galindo of *Mujeres Creando*<sup>1</sup>

While anarchism as a theory has Euro-centric origins, the nature of its ideas have surfaced time and again the world over. The essence of liberation movements, anti-globalization efforts, and other struggles throughout the globe often inherently value similar ideals, although they may not be explicitly anarchistic. In this since the definition of what may be considered "anarchistic" actions may be broadened and made to include countless forms of resistance throughout time and place.

Women's roles in these actions are unique. Various indicators over time have left little doubt that women, more often than not, suffer most profoundly in situations of exploitation and oppression. Lower literacy rates among women, unequal pay within the workforce, lack of access to birth control, etc., have left women in a dire position, often resulting in struggle. From China to Mexico, Bolivia to Spain, Palestine to South Africa, women have taken to the streets (and beyond) to demand an end to the coercive forces that oppress them.

While the needs of women in any particular are unique, there has been a distinctive trend the world over where women have put themselves at the forefront of revolutionary actions. This is partially accounted for in the discrepancy between the numbers of men compared to women living in poverty. Seventy percent of those who live below the poverty line in this world are women.<sup>2</sup>

In response women have taken up arms, both literally and figuratively. In 1992 in La Paz, Bolivia a group of anarchist women who called themselves *Mujeres Creando* (Women Creating) led a group of 10,000, mostly female, micro-credit loan recipients in an effort to demand debt cancellation. With interest rates set at upwards of 120%, these women saw no other option.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dark Star Ed. *Quiet Rumors, an Anarcha-Feminist Reader*. AK Press, Edinburgh: 2002. Page 115.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher-Hoffman, Cory. "Women's Unwaged Caring Work." *Z Magazine* April 2006: Volume 19 issue 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Quiet Rumors*, 114.