

In Conversation with 'Dreams of Black Revolt'

THE POTENTIAL FOR EVERYTHING



Images from the revolt in Minneapolis

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In Conversation with 'Dreams of Black Revolt'

by the destruction workers communication group



The George Floyd Revolt is a moment in history, another deep wound below the rib of modernity, its rationality, its humanism, and the logical conclusions reached at the rotten core of its ultimate expression: western civilization. We must continue to acknowledge as much and keep that moment in a present tense, for minds and voices that once sought to sequester racial oppression to the recesses of non-priority (in spite of their fetishization of anticolonial and Third World Liberation struggles) will continue to do so but render it a flare up of which they couldn't seize control. Black liberation, total abolition, and absolute freedom are in the hands of the socially dead, the genocided, the colonized. To no one's surprise, the descendants of the ships' captains, the first mates and crews, the traders, the overseers, the plantation owners and their wives, the missionaries and the civiliziers are all merely in the way.

I believe the time of revolution has passed, specifically in the United States. What a revolutionary struggle would look like here, especially after the 70s, is up for incessant debate, but the old modes of black liberation have dissipated, with many of what would be considered the rank and file of those organizations retiring into the bustle of daily life, at worst bought out by the comforts not afforded to those who remained underground and on the run for their lives. It's not to blame the retirees, it's just what happened. Countless revolutionaries of that period were caught by the jaws of American justice, a hideous rendering of the state's monopolized violence where the force doled out on one end greatly paled in comparison to the highly militarized response from a state apparatus that was truly shaken by the almost suicidal militancy of those who decided they had nothing to lose and everything to win. That is a time and space we won't get back. No, instead I believe we are in a time of spontaneous social rupture, where each explosion is alive with the desire to unmake the present, even if they don't share the characteristics of an organized New Left or the fringes it ventured out into. 'Colonialism' and 'imperialism' may be on the tongues but an unfiltered, antipolitical rage is in the hearts. Spontaneous social ruptures, not taking swipes at what many falsely conclude are universal economic factors but at what, while hyper-specific, is twistedly as universal as, and tangential to, economics: racial terror. So I want to make one thing very clear: black rebellion has been constant, even if not precisely politicized through this or that analysis. There hasn't been a single decade where revolt wasn't on the mind and in the streets, but that's because racialized police killings have never ceased. It's been an innate response, never planned, always at the gut level. Instinctual. Less about the spirit of Slave Revolts of Yesteryear and more so the ever present condition that marks the killing of black people as essentially mundane: social death. We are aware of this condition, even if we have different names for it, and we have always and will continue to lash out against it. These days, however, we shouldn't resign ourselves to defense as we've been caught doing. We need to attack. The forms in which we search for solidarity need rebuilding, not through a common yet fragile political affinity but along the lines of desire*: how do we desire to relate to the world? How do we desire to relate to each other? Far flung from

* I want to emphasize something about black desire. Throughout national liberation struggles and anti-colonial movements in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, the desire for freedom, for liberation, tended to be steeped in narrow political contexts of the time, chiefly through socialism as being the antithesis to colonialism and fascism. The gut instinct for the colonized to rid themselves of their psychic and material masters had to be articulated back to them through the ideas of dead Germans and Russians, thus framing their desire, black desire, within a sort of box imbued by European answers to European problems. I reject that. I want to establish that our desires for liberation don't have to be contained within a marxist/socialist/communist lens, one firmly rooted in Europe, in order for them to be valid, real, and tangible.

the social organization of our present, how can we go about creating what we want irrespective of modernity, civilization, and Europe as a whole? The organizer role and classical approaches to affinity would have us reconstituting colonial categorizations in order to increase the numbers for an effective revolution, but we should want to leave that world behind. We shouldn't look to replicate the feeling of revolutions past but stake out our own claim with newer visions in mind. Demolish the horizons set by ultimately limited perspectives, refuse the concerns of the core of the mother country and blaze a path of no return to a place we can't know and can't conceive of but are all the more eager to reach. A place uncharted by the enlightenment and its worst proponents. A place of emphatic possibility; the possibility for anything and the potential for everything.

I, too, lament the missed opportunities of that summer, and I, too, am riddled with a residual despair of what could have been, jumping around the board and laying the blame: state repression, leeching leftists, recuperative liberals. However, I don't feel that a lack of preparation was the big hinderance in our success within those first few months. I know that here in Chicago, for instance, the initial march that took place in early June was already in the works for something completely different prior to George Floyd's death. It was a terrible accident that the two events coincided but the subsequent riot that took place here could have only happened with the power exploding outward from the burning of the third precinct. But we shouldn't dwell too greatly on what will surely come around again...

To frame the revolt properly is to not look at it merely as another riotous response to a police killing but as a landmark response to a police killing, because prior to that riots by and large remained regional, save for those over the 2016 killings of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling literally one day apart from each other. Lockdown measures had everyone glued to social media for two months already and having the video of Floyd's death reach every eyeball on the internet propelled a coast-to-coast response that was unprecedented and, truthfully, astounding.

Yes, astounding, for there is a mundanity about black death. People generally don't care. It's normal, it's a typical occurrence in daily life, it's a part of the social fabric, a building block necessary for the maintenance of civil society. The violence practiced and perfected on black people (especially black women and black queer people), consequently diluted and then exported around the world to non-black populations is needed in order for the rest of the world to understand it's place within it: as definitively other than black. There exists a middle ground that is heavily invested in from all corners of this fabric, where as much as some people fight to cross the threshold into whiteness (many have succeeded by footing a hefty, violent bill) many others refuse that entry altogether while fighting against their own moribund slide into blackness. If they can't be white, they for damn sure don't want to be black, for blackness means the void, the non-existence of the non-human. It means the mundanity of death. That middle ground needs to be categorically destroyed as much as, and in tandem with, whiteness.

Some would have us believe that that plane was already obliterated on May 28th, with revolt across cities being largely multiracial and multiclassed. I saw it with my own eyes. It happened. Uncertainty springs from spontaneity and the important part is how that uncertainty is responded to. Who was doing what feels almost

inconsequential when looking at the riots wholesale: the antagonisms of civil society reared their ugly heads across color lines (Chicago, the most segregated major city in America, saw intense racialized gang violence and the self-deputization of white people who were finally able to live out their libidinal fantasies of harming random black people) while matches were struck in similar fashion. Conversely, I find that there is also a morbid power about black death that runs parallel to that mundanity, a fascination that might inspire a maximum fill of dead black people necessary for non-black people to find their own intolerance toward it. In other words, there is such a thing as one too many lynchings. If the amount of disregard for the deaths at the hands of police prior to George Floyd are of any indication (Breonna Taylor that prior March 2020, Elijah McClain in August 2019, etc.) then his death was just one step over the line.

The periphery is where the rage lives, as dormant as it may be right now. Among the socially dead, the tools-turned-impossibly-lumpen, the precariously “human”. There exists a fire that can’t be doused because it remains indecipherable to the academy (which is totally disconnected from the streets), to the political machine, and to the left. Modern politics can’t grasp what happens in the slave quarters so they seek to render it legible, a process of compartmentalization within a contained sphere of understanding. That’s how we get professional revolutionaries, activists, academics, liberal electoralists, centrist pundits, and the spiritual successors of the settler class on the right making sweeping generalizations from shallow understandings and dictating back to the periphery what it is, who they are, and what they want. It’s a place of non-visibility that can’t serve the interests of those in the core nor those fighting for inheritance of the core (they of that hallowed middle ground), lest they dig trenches to ward off almost certain future revolts from those far off edges.

I declare The Future to be inconceivable, therefore not my concern. I do not fight for a utopia I’m never going to experience, but for the destruction of right now. The destruction of the knowable world. To destroy the world is to destroy the last vestiges of colonialism, of empire. It’s to destroy Europe. It’s to destroy the categorical human. It’s to set fire to the periphery and disinherit the core. To storm that blazing path of no return, screaming, “we have no intention of going back!” I used to (and kinda still do, in a way) bemoan the cheesy hopes and dreams of building out a world in the shell of the old, but these days I’m less inclined to think it useless to at least set something on fire. After May 28th 2020, I’m open to possibility.

In turn, I imagine a freedom in the Un-Knowable, an expanse untarnished by the blood-soaked hands of European idealism, where black people can reinvent ourselves without input or commentary from the middle ground or the white world it borders. To trample through ash and soot on our way to whatever we want.

“Sometimes that summer feels like it was a dream. I’m not spiritual, but during those few days in May, I felt ancestors laughing at the revenge that Black people were getting on our oppressors, our jailers, and our exploiters. I only wish for that moment again.”

Me, too, dammit.

– TACKY, 09/2022

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IT'S ALL GOTTA GO!