

The Abolition of Outreach

the Curious George Brigade

2003

The following is an excerpt from *Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs* by the Curious George Brigade (see facing page for a review). For more information, see www.ageofdinosaurs.net or contact yellowjack@ageofdinosaurs.net

Race is an issue that has long scared and perplexed radicals in the US. White anarchists today are especially dismayed by a lack of racial diversity, especially of blacks, among the folks who join them in the streets and collective work.

White anarchists have spent endless hours trying to figure out “where the color is,” whether at an anti-globalization demonstration or their local infoshop. Around the globe, the majority of anarchists are non-white. Over the last years, the anarchist community in America has started to become more like the rest of the world: ethnically and culturally diverse. A growing number—of Latinos, Asians, Arabs, and other people of color have identified themselves as anarchists, yet this does precious little to assuage the feeling that something is missing. There can be no mistaking the fact that what worries white anarchists the most is not the lack of Latinos or Asians in their groups but the lack of blacks. This may be a result of the unique racist cultural history of the US.

No genuine revolutionary challenge to either the State or capitalism in the United States can fail to ignore racism’s importance in maintaining the current system and neither can anarchists. Unfortunately, exploitive tokenism, demands for intensive outreach programs, and other failed holdovers from the Left, have not made anarchist communities a welcome place for blacks.

Some have suggested we need to work with authoritarian organizations in black communities in order to persuade them to the anarchist cause. This suggests that authoritarian organizing is typical of black communities. It assumes, implicitly, that only whites can truly appreciate non-hierarchical approaches to organizing and that blacks will be put off by such radical ideas. These attempts, although often sincere, are paternalistic and suggest an underlying disrespect for black communities. They ignore the long history of black anti-authoritarianism, from the slave revolts of Nat Turner to the Black Autonomy movement in the 1980s. Such paternalism also shows a remarkable ignorance of the number of authoritarian white institutions that have taken root in American black communities from evangelical Christianity to the Democratic Party.

There are Many ways for anarchists to achieve a greater diversity. One way is to create better and more open anarchist projects. By open we mean that regardless of which group initiates the project, any group can use it if they find the project useful. Openness facilitates the use of these structures by different communities applying their own resistance, in their own voices. The more successful and open a project, the more diverse it will become. People who suffer greater oppression or have fewer expendable resources, such as money and time, will be more willing to take the risk of joining the successful project. Different communities will only commit themselves to projects that are open enough (in resources and possibilities) to allow them to use it in their own ways.

If we are serious about making our communities, cultures, and collectives more racially diverse, then we must be serious about our projects. We must build them with great passion and spend the time needed to nurture them...

time can also be used to learn about other cultures and find ways we can create healthy relationships. When they are invited, white anarchists can support the initiatives of people of color, such as the recent, successful APOC Conference in Detroit. Anarchists should abandon the moldy concept of recruitment and focus on creating useful and inspiring projects open to everyone and anyone.

... after the 2002 riots in Cincinnati, an anarchist contingent planning to take the streets debated whether “blocking up” would confuse black folks and cause more police repression in the local community. These fears proved unfounded. When the masked anarchists showed up, a local black preacher remarked how he was impressed that the “Seattle kids” had come to Cincinnati and were marching hand-in-hand with the local community against police brutality. He even asked for a business card (!) to get back in touch with the anarchists for future collaboration. The anarchists also showed several groups of black teenagers how to turn their shirts into masks so that they could avoid police repression and being singled out. This small example illustrates that black communities are potentially eager to make alliances with people with different tactics, clothes, and cultures than their own, if the partnership is one of equals working in solidarity with each other.

fifth Estate

the Curious George Brigade
The Abolition of Outreach
2003

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/363-winter-20032004/the-abolition-of-outreach>
Fifth Estate #363, Winter, 2003/2004

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net