

# Letters to the Editors

Our readers respond

Various Authors

2017

Send letters to fe — AT — fifthestate — DOT — org or Fifth Estate, POB 201016, Ferndale MI 48220

All formats accepted including typescript & handwritten; letters may be edited for length.

## Rebellion Celebration?

I moved to Detroit recently from the suburbs, but wasn't even born when the 1967 Rebellion occurred.

I appreciated your coverage in the Summer 2017 *Fifth Estate* which had a much better analysis than what appeared in the local corporate media.

(See "How White Supremacy Progresses: Fifty Years of Lessons from Detroit 1967," by Frank Joyce, FE #398, Summer 2017.)

It was, indeed, a revolt against brutal, racist police and an economic system structured to assure that people of color remained on the bottom rung of the ladder.

As many observers have noted, the uprising shouldn't have come as a surprise. How much can people take?

Although much of what has transpired publicly has given recognition to the underlying causes of the Rebellion, there is also an unmistakable celebration of it as a positive reaction to repression and discrimination.

I was at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History that presented a number of important events about the Rebellion, but also t-shirts were offered saying, "Detroit Rebellion 1967," like it had been a rock concert. Among lots of people, there was an observable sense of pride that the lowest had struck a blow at the highest.

Outside of the museum there are large illuminated panels giving a shorthand history of those days in July and what has happened in the city since. The latter is presented much rosier than what your writer describes.

One panel gives the statistics of the Rebellion: "43 deaths, 1,189 injuries, 2,509 stores looted or burned, 388 families displaced, 3,034 fires."

However you want to label what happened in 1967, the toll borne by an already ravished community suggests that this Rebellion was defeated, producing a disaster whose results continue today.

Commemorated, yes, for an understanding of white supremacy and how it continues, but no to a celebration.

Alan Cunningham

Detroit

*Frank Joyce responds:* The letter writer makes an interesting point. But my interpretation is different.

The trench warfare over the message offered by the Detroit 67 Anniversary/ Industrial Complex was intense. The Charles Wright Museum very deliberately used the word rebellion as opposition to white dominated institutions such as the Detroit Historical Museum which preferred riot, civil unrest, etc.

I don't think the intention was to suggest "rock concert" comparisons at all.

## Very Glib

I've been reading FE on and off the entire 15 years I've been an anarchist and generally appreciate the range of topics, the depth of discourse, and the broad expressions of anarchism.

It is because of this appreciation that I want to express my disappointment at the inclusion of "Cultural Appropriation and Shaming: Dreads & Mohawks: To Whom Do They Belong," by Rod Dubey in your Winter 2017 edition (FE #397).

I found the article to be very glib and lacking in the presentation of new and engaging ideas. I really am excited to have uncomfortable conversations, and believe it is important to discuss nuance, especially around heated topics. In fact, I dedicate much of my life to facilitating heated conflicts and conversations among anarchists and radicals.

However, this article presented simple arguments that don't seem to respect or acknowledge the vast amount of engagement that anarchists have been having around the nuance of cultural appropriation and how we do or don't name it and face it.

While I agree that shaming tends to do nothing to actually shift power structures or face harm and conflict, there are reasons the stakes are so high in discussing these things.

There are generations of historical trauma, and in moments when the ongoing pain and history are illuminated, whatever ways we do or don't show up have the potential to either heal or pour salt on those very old wounds.

So, why include an essay that simplistically compares cultural heritage and ancestral knowledge to capitalist concepts of private property? This author had the audacity to suggest that naming real systemic racist harm would "insist on racial divides," as if calling it like it is makes it worse.

Fifth Estate, you have a great reputation and generally good editorial practices. Use your power responsibly and let's have these hard conversations in public.

From occupied Ohlone land,  
Mars Goetia

*FE response:* Since Rod Dubey already replied Last issue to similar criticism, let us say, at the risk of sounding glib, we didn't think the article did the things you object to, and did do what you said you look for in our essays—critically examining issues and actions.

Everything certainly does not need to be re-examined. The fundamentals of our politics—revolutionary opposition to capitalism, the state, racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia on the social plane, and the imperial war machine which defends the empire and is the basis of the economy—these are not open questions.

Your letter, and the one last issue, has very little in it to challenge Dubey's opinions except to say, this is a closed subject. A discussion about the social consequences of borrowing, using, or appropriating the dress and hair styles of repressed and marginalized populations has many implications worthy of examination which could have been extended if the dialogue was fuller.

## A Quibble

I would like to respectfully point out a minor quibble in your otherwise excellent article, "The Struggle to Get Back to Zero," (FE #398, Summer 2017).

The assertion that the phrase, "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common" was removed from the Preamble to the Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union, is partially incorrect. It is present online and in all printed versions of the IWW Constitution and was never, at any time, removed.

That being said, you are correct insofar as the phrase having been removed from the Industrial Worker publication.

It is good to know that the phrase has not been completely abrogated.

Will Hazlitt

North American Animal Liberation Press Office

animalliberationpressoffice.org

*Peter Werbe replies:* I'm glad that it remains in at least another format. I wrote in my article that this succinct phrase defining class relations had "disappeared from their publication where it was featured for over a hundred years."

## Get a Gun

As you know, you kick ass. But regarding, "An Anarchist Shot in Seattle," by CP and SM; in FE Summer 2017 (#398), I want to spout an opinion.

So we're clear. I'm a criminal, not an anarchist, and although criminality and anarchy overlap in various ways, both practical and theoretical, they're not the same. My reasons for never seeking recourse to the pigs aren't identical to Hex's [who was gravely wounded by an alt-right shooter], but they are very similar. I reject these people's law's as a matter of both principle and preference, so I'm not gonna turn to them for help when something goes left on me.

I appreciate Hex not snitching and particularly in his keeping it consistent even insofar as concerned the racist jerk who shot him.

Where I part ways with Hex, and with CP and SM, is in the response to what was done to him. The litany of abuse and aggressions that the writers provide as context for the shooting is not a case for restorative justice (Hex's preference), but one for war. Period.

What we're talking about here isn't your activism at all, but rather your response to people trying to kill you.

I encourage the writers, the FE, and all other thinking people to acknowledge that fascism is not just some rival subculture like when we were kids and used to beat up Nazi skinheads if they try to come to our shows. Rather, it is a threat to your lives and those around you.

You should lawfully purchase a side arm, learn to use it, and get a concealed weapons permit and keep it on you in public. This way, the next time one of these people try to kill you like they did with Hex, you can kill them instead. Simple.

We are confronted with an enemy for whom gun possession and use are cultural imperatives, who feel not the least compunction about shooting us, and who is frequently supported by (or often even draws a paycheck from) the state.

This neo-fascist shit isn't a game or some kind of street theatre, and people need to respond in a fact-based, real-world manner.

In any event, I continue to appreciate Hex, CP, SM, and the rest of you for your struggle toward a better world, and extend my love and respect to you for your work.

Leo Oladimu

US Penitentiary, Lewisburg

Lewisburg, Penn.

*Fifth Estate responds:* The fascists have, indeed, amped up the level of violence, including not just fighting with antifas, but attacking liberal anti-Trump marchers in several cities. They need to be taken extremely seriously and defense preparations for public demonstrations are in order.

Our article, we hope, makes clear that restorative justice can only take place between people who share the same values. Obviously, fascists are excluded from that equation.

We have no objection to people possessing arms and knowing how to use them. It's good to have a deep toolbox, but carrying them at demonstrations is something entirely different.

There's no reason to think that the accidents and rage moments that beset nonpolitical gun owners and carriers wouldn't also befall anarchists. At this point, the tactics groups of anarchists and others are developing at demonstrations seem sufficient.

## **Travel Freely**

Regarding your "No Borders" issue of Summer 2016 (#396): Borders only mattered for taxation until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Anyone could travel anywhere. The only exception was quarantine for crew and passengers on diseased ships.

J.Q. Adams  
Chatham, N.Y

## **Mutual Aid**

I have received every issue of your magazine since Spring 1988. I have been an anarchist since I turned 16 in 1982.

Please send me a stack of the Summer 2017 issue to give to very poor and ill people. Some of these are victims that can't fight back.

I've heard that there are demos on the way in Spokane, but it's only the Democratic Party line of shit every time! Everyone is so hooked on computers and cell phones.

I am on SSI, but I can send you \$50 on the first of the month as that is my pay day. I love the current issue!

For anarchy at all costs,

Chris Jones  
Spokane, Wash.

*Fifth Estate response:* Your offer to do distro for our magazine and offer of financial support is well appreciated. This type of distribution, which leads to increased subscriptions and donations, is what guarantees our continuation.

However, \$50 must be a big hit for living on a SSI government stipend, so our appreciation of your mutual aid is even more appreciated.

# fifth Estate

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/399-fall-2017/letters-to-the-editors>  
Fifth Estate #399, Fall, 2017

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