

Anarchism: The New Identity Politics

2002

After such recent anarchist events as the San Francisco Bay Area Bookfair and the Total Liberation Conference it seems increasingly clear that significant populations of the self-described anarchist movement in North America manifest anarchy in the context of either a historical society much like the society for creative anachronism (SCA), or a literary society. Anarchism has become an ideology to be debated, discussed, argued, while sipping coffee or re-enacting some historic moment in anarchist history (e.g. Mayday). These are the benign aspects of anarchist identity politics. These types are often thoughtful, just steeped in their own gray matter, or wrapped in whatever the hippest clothes of the scene are. What's missing ultimately is either revolutionary praxis or just as important the experience of anarchy in their daily lives. They have adapted a fiery and primal instinct toward freedom and non-domination into a form of social identity that is either solely hip, or content existing within the walls of the cranium.

The malignant form of the anarchist identity politics often takes the form of anarcho-philosopher-intellectual, who, while tragic, never seems to even attain the hip aspect of anarchist subcultures, is just left ensnared in the cortex endlessly picking from the anarcho-salad bar of ideas, though never finding the right dressing. This type of anarchist identity politics is unstable, unlike the syndicalist urbanites that accept 99% of the totality of modernity (capitalism, coffee culture, new CDs, book stores, hip clothes, clubbing, Sony Playstations, etc.), the anarcho-philosopher-intellectual stands alone, scratching the chin, peeling away layer after layer of thought in order to distill the most self-serving, unbinding, individualistic, holy grail of pure anarchism. This project must never be obstructed by action, nor the actual experience of anarchy, it must take place on internet discussion boards, in small circles of cynics, barricaded from the necessity of struggle, within the ivory towers of cyber-space, distant from accountability.

Both the benign and malignant forms of anarchist identity politics can be cured by the holistic traditional medicine of action and experiential anarchy. By leaving the coffee shop, hip clothing store, discussion board, or annual conference and taking a trip into either a wild place or taking action beyond going to meetings you will certainly break the spell of any case of anarchist identity politics. Does it seem strange to anyone that so many anarchists make no priority to leave the range of the police state ever, i.e. taking a trip to the forest or visiting tree-sit campaigns? Because it is not enough to say I'm an anarchist period. Even if an entire subculture in a hip urban scene allows this illusion to flourish, you must rebel. Because the species and cultures going extinct everyday don't care if you are an anarchist, your identity means nothing, its your action towards anarchy and your experience of anarchy that makes you an anarchist, or at least one that's worth anything. Anarchism as intellectual project and hip culture has sterilized the wild spirit of anarchy, which can only be regained through the experience of action and wildness.

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Retrieved on 1 January 2010 from
www.greenanarchy.info/anarchism-the-new-identity-politics.htm
This article originally appeared in *Green Anarchy* #9 (Summer 2002).

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