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The cover presents an impossible cartography, an attempt to conceive of the border - an apparatus that features repeatedly in the articles bound between its pages.

base — This publication is funded solely by donations and is sustained by the voluntary efforts and enthusiasm of the base collective, contributors and readers. It is printed on recycled paper using vegetable inks by Aldgate Press.

base #2 / print-run 1,000 copies.
London / June 2017

basepublication.org

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SHIFTING GROUNDS

An argument is presented - that a socialist left is best equipped to run a capitalist economy, security, policing, trade and welfare in the interests of all. Corbyn's project is not alone here. Research from within the International Monetary Fund has argued that a more interventionist state may be able to leverage solutions to a neoliberal consensus that has failed on its own terms to stabilise geoeconomic relations. Despite the spectacular resistance of European states against these alternatives on the continent, Corbyn went for them; initiating a rearguard pursuit of post-Keynesian economics as a means of levering an end to Tory rule. This strategy, coupled with an ethical socialism rooted in the humanist steer of the British left, was originally laughed off by people within his own party and everyone else in the 'common sense' press. Yet the Corbyn project can now claim to have accrued considerable damage to the Conservative platform and those various media factions - liberal and tabloid - that have held sway over public discourse for as long as we can remember.

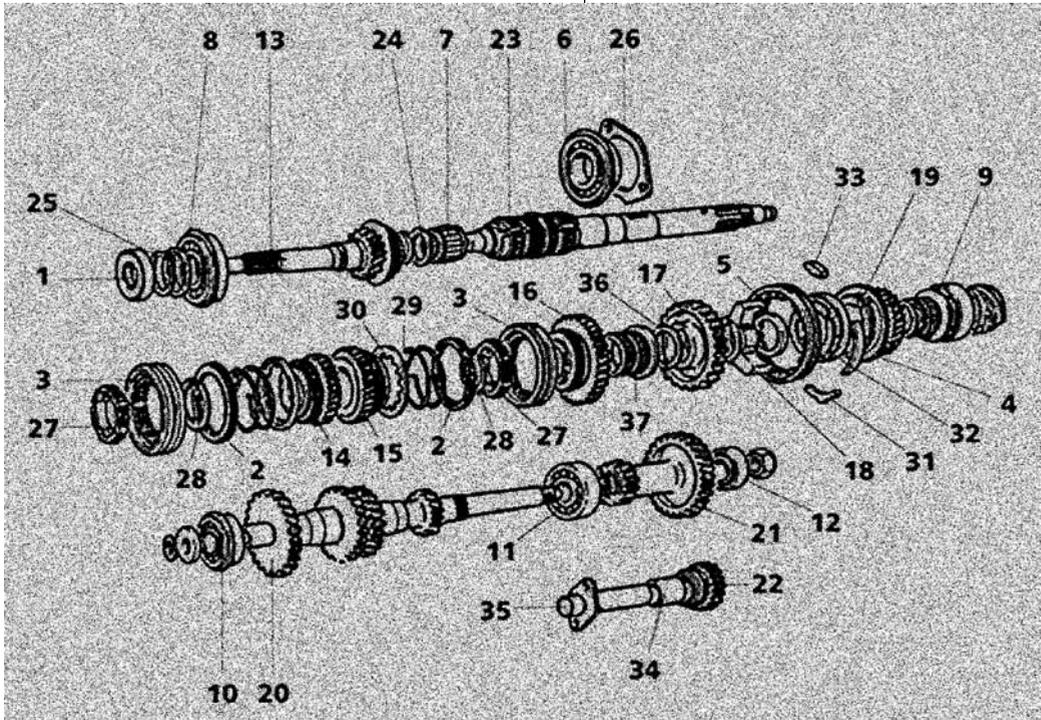
Most striking about the June 2017 election is that conspiratorial smears mobilised in viral hate campaigns and in tabloid headlines - aimed squarely at 'terrorist loving' Corbyn, yet importantly mediated through an Islamophobic subtext - failed to square a Conservative majority. This failure of capitalist power blocs to move the election through an embedded history of racist and chauvinist touchstones is a cause for celebration. Corbyn, on the whole, managed to substitute this racist-Hobbesian pact between government and electorate for a moral egalitarianism. Much of this, including the confident presentation of a social democratic manifesto, has burnt a hole into the liberal pragmatist consensus that has mediated nearly ten years of austerity, promising, amongst other things, an end to the Work Capability Assessments that have led to thousands of deaths and suicides since their introduction by Labour in 2008.

Though we should also not forget the peculiar transgressions of this socialist breakthrough. Most alarmingly, the ease with which Labour managed to bolster its law and order platform, which helped to score political points and gazump the Government's record on policing, especially in the wake of the attacks in Manchester and London. The argument from a parliamentary left perspective is that concessions to the right with regard to the expansion of militarised policing are required to garner wider support for a socialist manifesto that aspires to social transformation. In the process, left-ist positioning becomes embroiled in celebrations of the police and of national or metropolitan togetherness. Failure to reflect and scrutinise these positions - and their potential to scale as stable campaign building blocks - disavows the reality of identifying with the state. Put simply, claims to ensure credibility on security and policing will have to be defended and implemented with the same determination as a strong welfare provision.

Within the dynamic of immediacy that conditions election campaigns, degrees of critical language and focus can therefore become increasingly absent. The everyday violence of the border regime that sits on either side of Brexit, and the focus of a broader anti-migrant and anti-black continuum, are most clearly obscured by parliamentary positioning. Against the claim that political discourse is opened up asunder by left-electoral battlegrounds, we should neither forget how in the lead up to the ballot, there was a distinct closure of arguments and considerations over the violence of policing, detention and deportation: forcing this reality - this violence - out of focus. Against these tendencies, it is the structural continuities of a protracted capitalist crisis that we think must be restated. Included in this issue is analysis

of the long trajectories of racial animus and Islamophobia that are structural to British statecraft; their crystallisation in post-crash appeals to nationalism; the unviability of restarting capitalist accumulation in the old heartlands and reviving "golden age" industry; the relationship between capitalism and climate; the impossibility of a future under these present terms.

As the left parliamentary project looks to scale, its tendency to foreclose a critical conception of the state as a composite of antagonistic agencies and violent machinations, is at risk of collapsing into economic positivism. Such a movement presents a real threat of drawing extra-parliamentary organisational formations under the rubric of the Labour Party. Community self-defence around instrumentalised housing provision, against immigration raids and police violence, can find no allies in the state. The autonomy of this activity from state actors reflects the necessary distinction between these tendencies: to police and manage a new acceleration of capital accumulation / to survive and organise through this instrumental objective. The interplay between these disparate social forces will determine the long-term possibilities of the Corbyn project, and others like it.





An aerial night photograph of a city, likely Tripoli, with a grid overlay. The city lights are bright and concentrated in the center and right side of the frame. The grid lines are faint and white. The word "TRIPOLI" is visible in large, white, capital letters at the bottom of the image, partially obscured by the text.

“As a simple priority, «lived multiculture» has to be defended, in thought as well as practice.”

THIS ESSAY ATTEMPTS TO OFFER INSIGHT INTO THE COMPLEX WEB OF RELATIONS BETWEEN CAPITAL, FASCISM, COLONIALISM AND LIBERALISM WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE CENTURIES-ESTABLISHED RULE OF EUROPEAN WHITE SUPREMACY. THIS IS AN ABRIDGED VERSION OF A LONGER ESSAY, WHICH CAN BE READ IN FULL AT [BIT.LY/WHITEWORLD](https://bit.ly/whiteworld)

“The Last Days of a White World”

In September 2000, Anthony Browne penned a sombre report for the Observer newspaper entitled “The Last Days of a White World”. Browne, latterly an advisor to Boris Johnson during his time as London mayor and now head of the British Bankers Association, informed readers that “40,000-year-old indigenous white populations” of Europe were soon to become minorities in their own lands. The report is written with the objective restraint of a journalist who has held senior political and economic briefs at the BBC, The Times, The Daily Mail and The Spectator. Browne quotes liberally from Far Right nationalists, sitting politicians in the US and Germany, and black and Asian British journalists and commentators, each with different takes on the demographic changes brought about by South to North migration and divergent birth rates.

What Browne describes with seeming neutrality is what might now be familiar to people as the “White Genocide” meme prominent in far right online networks. Leftist professor George Ciccariello-Maher found himself the target of both online and mainstream media attacks when a tweet he made welcoming “White Genocide” was picked up and circulated. Leaving aside any judgement on the effectiveness of the satire, what we do learn from this case is that some liberals took the “white genocide” trope seriously, as a form of hate speech, rather than recognise the perversity of its construction, which amongst other things imagines the coming death of the “white race” at the hands of multiracial relationships and mass immigration.

Never one to miss an opportunity for self-promotion was “Alt-Right” Klansman, Richard Spencer, who immediately appealed to Drexel students to bring him in. Spencer has publicly called for a 50-year moratorium on “non-European” immigration to the United States, “[They] have got to go home again,” he said. “They can connect with their real iden-

tity... reconnecting with who you really are for a Mexican-American would be about being in Mexico. For an African, it would be about being in Africa.” What Spencer refers to as “race realism” states in common sense tones that everyone has somewhere they belong, that tightened controls on immigration and increased deportations - such as the recent “Muslim ban” - are good for immigrants too because they can only truly flourish in their “natural homes”. Such logic is redolent of the 19th Century Colonization Movement in the US which saw sending slaves and free black people born in America “back to Africa” as the only solution to the problem of racial slavery in America.

The naturalisation of arguments about the civilisational threat posed to the West by “Islamisation” or by immigration in general, while not couched in the most explicit lexicon of white nationalism, have nevertheless gained traction in recent decades among large parts of the right but also many liberals and even leftists. Often framed in a narrative of decline and decadence, the objects of critique are the same: “multiculturalism” and “cultural relativism” have led European nation-states to lose their identity and the continent itself to lose its moral fibre and grounding in Enlightenment principles, while the corrosive force of immigration and “globalism”, particularly of confident and aggressive Muslims, pulls it down from within.

Recent essays from environmentalist Paul Kingsnorth and former editor of Prospect magazine David Goodhart join the canon of writers announcing that they’ve been mugged by reality and left “the Left”, Goodhart for a “post-liberal” progressive racism and Kingsnorth for a sort of National Trust proto-fascism. Both men react against trends they ascribe to liberalism or the Left (which they conflate), try to position themselves as tribunes or translators of a “white working class revolt” and root their politics in a defence of place, culture and tradition - a benign nationalism to shield social cohesion (and, for Kingsnorth, “nature”) from the depredations of “globalism” and “multiculturalism”.

Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley have written about how the imagined “failed multicultural experiment” has been a vehicle through which to “launder” legitimised racisms via the language of religion, non/integration and culture (as if “race” and culture haven’t always been interlinked in the history of racism). Seeing as multiculturalism doesn’t refer to any clear and consistent state project, the term instead acts as a signifier. The “failure of multiculturalism” is a means through which to attack both immigrants who may yet come as well as those already here. The term “multiculturalism” thus becomes a mobilising point to undermine the reality of “lived multiculturalism” - i.e. the reality of human beings from different parts of the world sharing the same city or town.

As we both reside in the shallows of the British imperial state, the British context is as good a place as any to tunnel into the dynamics of the present crisis of capitalism. Especially since after Brexit, the racialised character of the crisis has sharpened. Though we find little motivation to mourn the depress-



ing features of the present through an obsessional critique of “evil” characters or sham governments, while hoping for better times through the spirit of times passed. Following up on the critical bearing Lentin and Tittley develop through the ever-important mobilising object of “multiculturalism”, there is a need to recognise - and in what ways - fascism grows out of capitalism and liberalism, including the residue of its ‘progressive’ side, social democracy.

In his writings on post-war labour, race and class, Ambalavaner Sivanandan makes the British state a central focus of his analysis. The British state, unlike many other European states, could call on the migrant labour of British colonies and former colonies in the Caribbean and the Indian Subcontinent - to fill labour shortages, especially in public services, infrastructure and the most unappealing, gruelling jobs, which were not strongly affiliated to union memberships. Though as competition for work increased and working class communities were immiserated, they were also stratified by race. Sivanandan shows how the British Parliament responded by making settlement and citizenship progressively harder to obtain, ensuring the state management of racism became institutionalised, while political measures for “integration” and anti-discrimination were introduced to alleviate the effects.

Sivanandan notes a particular change in the form of post-war immigration from 1962 onwards, when the state restricted the admission of Commonwealth immigrants to those who had employment vouchers. This allowed the state new controls over the conditions of life for migrants, whose citizenship and rights to social welfare would then be tied directly to their capacity to labour. What Sivanandan noted as an “institutionalisation of race” opened up secondary potentials for super exploitation by landlords, bosses but also unions, which could more easily subordinate these lower tier workers to the priorities of institutional or individual self-preservation. This racialised tier of labour was then shaped through “race relations”, which intended to mitigate the economic need for flexible, seasonal and contractual migrant labour

against racial antagonism between “indigenous” and “black” workers, including competition for work and housing.

The concept of “race relations” pointed to a consensus formed across Westminster parties that black people (Sivanandan refers to all colonised African and Asian peoples as “black”) were a problem and that immigration control was needed to limit their numbers (supposedly for the good of immigrants already in Britain). An example of this approach to “race relations” was a policy of 1965 stating that no school could have more than a third immigrant children making up its student body. Immigrant children were bussed to schools further away (“indigenous” kids were never bussed to other schools), making it clear that the state saw immigrant children as a problem which could be solved by ensuring their minority status through legislation and showing white parents that their prejudices were a priority. Increased restrictions were always accompanied by measures to encourage integration/assimilation as well as some to supposedly ward off discrimination. What Sivanandan returns to again and again during this period is how the state must balance its role of superintending cheap labour-power in the form of immigrants - cheaper because they grew up elsewhere and they were entitled to fewer rights and benefits, so they could be used up and thrown away - against the state’s need to maintain social control over labour in general. Two needs that didn’t always align.

The language and context of racism changes over the course of the 1980s and 1990s through new, more comprehensive policies to encourage “integration” and fostering the growth of a black middle class - though historical continuities from the 1960s racialisation of migrant labour persist. As a generation of migrants settled, and the children of migrants were then born in Britain, the relations of class society stratified racialised communities and new, more bourgeois, interpretations of antiracism also materialised. The dominant forms of antiracism in the 1970s and 1980s largely consisted of struggle against the state, the police, landlords, bosses, aimed at transforming social relations. State co-option of this period

of rebellion and resistance through the language of “diversity”, individual social mobility and aspiration, initiated a decoupling of “race” from class, which had been relationally entwined for decades. A division between good and bad immigrants, violent policing of boundaries not to be transgressed and a constant process of separating new from settled waves of migration has since prevailed.

Against the grain of liberal democratic appeals to ‘post-racial’ unity, Sivanandan connected the era of “equal opportunities” - which Lentin and Tittle examine through the signifier of “multiculturalism” - to an intensification of the processes and logics of state racism, now trained upon different social groups. ‘Xenoracism’ for Sivanandan is a racism that coheres around *newcomers* and “*don’t belongs*” - the Greek “xeno” translating as alien or strange. New migrants and asylum seekers must prove their worth, economically, but also prove themselves worthy of the national imaginary. While towards the bottom of the pecking order, the Roma and unemployed or homeless migrants are priority targets for deportation.

As Arun Kundnani argues with great clarity in his book “The Muslims are Coming!”, the 9/11 event came to largely define this specific period of race relations and provided massive

people of colour. The Muslim label, abstractly conceived, acts as a signifier and cipher which substitutes “race” for religion, when in actuality the two are continually conflated. All the while police and state violence are meted out to black people in Western countries hugely disproportionately, citizen or not.

The divestment of “race” into a new legislature of different races and ethnicities, which ran parallel to the expansion of the service economy, was thought to be a sign that Britain could shed its colonial history and the “rivers of blood” of the bad old days, but only substituted this racial animus (to the extent that it actually did) with a repressed authoritarianism that demanded newcomers were to be both “tolerated” and relentlessly interrogated, or just silently deported in their thousands. Systematic Islamophobia and xenoracism was the reality of the “post-racial” consensus, especially post-9/11, cultivating spores of conspiratorial actors and “clash of civilisations” commentators - and their careers.

For UK parliamentary heavyweights after the financial crash, the unprecedented collapse of stable liberal oppositions in Europe ensured “immigration” became the central cross-parliamentary yardstick of competition. Against the consensus over austerity, which was something tautologi-



opportunities for pervasive narratives of nation and nationhood. Where once the Jew of the 19th and 20th centuries was the unwanted, unassimilable, rootless and rumoured-to-be disloyal subject of the European nation-state, the Muslim has become the hard target of state repression and surveillance. This doesn't mean to say that the persistence of anti-blackness as the structuring lodestar of racism can be in any way minimised. Indeed, the most important contribution of Kundnani's book is his appraisal of how Black Power movements in the 1960s and 70s were historically intertwined with people of Muslim faith. This history is obscured because after 9/11 it was impossible to be anti-capitalist and Muslim without also being suspected of being a terrorist. That represents the disciplinary principle of the “Prevent” policy operative in British schools, colleges and universities today, which promotes social cohesion, while obliterating whatever potential was left in these institutions for radical dissent, especially for

cally explained by the need to bring down the deficit, most at stake in Britain for parliamentarians of these years was immigration. Especially for a Labour Party hoping to stem their slide into obscurity. The tit for tat of post-crash immigration duels has now completely unraveled, along with the duplicitous theatre of the Labour Party, leaving only the bare bones of the imperial corpus. Without apology or appeal to diversity, all that's left is the giddy speculations of racist politicians and commentators accounting for the categories of bodies amenable to Brexit Britain.

The particular expression of political authoritarianism in Britain today, animated by nostalgia for imperialism and wartime national unity, should not distract from the historical relationship between race and class, state and capital, which writers such as Lentin, Tittle, Sivanandan and Kundnani have helped to acutely dissect. Contemporary ap-

peals to national unity and British sovereignty, alongside straw-man critiques of multiculturalism, however jingoistic, are actually proving necessary for the state to manage a protracted crisis of capitalism.

To the “race realist”, national borders aren’t scars of colonialism carved out by war, imperialism and revolution, they mark the boundaries of timeless bonds of blood, soil and culture. “Race”, for fascism, has no history: it is not ascribed by power, ideology, legal systems or labour relations. “Race” is a given, handed down through the ages, conferring social meaning and innate difference. The typical charge is that multiculturalism has fractured European societies, hasn’t sufficiently “integrated” newcomers and has allowed communities to become segregated, damaging social cohesion. But this evocation of social cohesion is a mythical conjuring. It summons up a society or community of the barely memorable past where gender, class, racial and spatial division never existed, whilst affirming racial difference through the historical categories of colonialism and bourgeois political economy.

The mythical cohesiveness of nation serves only as an imagined obverse to the particular focus of difference in the dominant frame - the racialised, the Muslim, the immigrant, the asylum seeker, are foregrounded as *the* antagonist of economic crisis and threat to stability. There is no non-reactionary vision of national cohesion in the context of political economy. As a simple priority, “lived multicultural” has to be defended, in thought as well as practice, which means every racist deportation fought, communities of resistance and solidarity deepened, and the borders enforced by state and capital exposed as divisions of who lives and who dies.

African American communist Harry Haywood wrote of “race” in 1930: “Race, as a social question, exist[s] only for the ideologists of the bourgeoisie and in the minds of those deluded by them.” [This ideology existed to imbue] “differences within the human species, such as color of skin, texture of hair, etc [with] social meaning,” [in order to claim] “the existence in nature of master and slave races.” Race is a category of bourgeois reality, but racism plays as salient a role as ever in ordering and dividing societies, and structuring global flows of capital and labour.

In this context of this systematic racialisation of capitalist crisis and an emboldening of the politics of white masculinity, racial/sexual/gender minorities are constantly in the dock for derailing supposedly general or universal political struggles in favour of their particular interests or individualism, as too preoccupied with identity or “virtue signalling”. The term “identity politics” is almost always accusatory. This characterisation erases the fact that these struggles for liberation or justice or recognition challenge the heart of the *general* (the state, prevailing modes of accumulation and reproduction) which are largely treated as objective facts of life. “Race”, which has been our main focus, is “depersonalised” and systemic, and yet, personifies human beings. This ‘identity’ is not freely appropriated by any one person; to be *racial* is an ascription reinforced from the outside. The need for such organisation of “races” results from a history of social control that the capitalist state has used to supplant class antagonism. While consistently, for decades, groups who are most marginalised and oppressed in Global North countries have been at the forefront of the most radical social struggles that have forced concessions from the state and challenged and troubled mainstream society in order to bring about change.

Contra perceptions in the West, Global South to North migration is actually very low owing to it being massively & lethally restricted. It must be considered low especially in the context of imperialist wars and climate change fuelling record levels of displacement and migration, the vast majority of which remains internal to the Global South. The production of relative surplus populations inherent to capitalist development, that sees both agricultural labour expropriated from access to means of subsistence as well as wage-labour functions being continually automated, are leaving growing sections of the global labour force only partially, casually or seasonally needed by capital, if at all. This tendency has proven to be highly gendered and racialised. The trends suggest that the crisis symptoms we are living through will only intensify and the catastrophic effects will be distributed as unevenly as the wealth has been abstracted from material life. To understand the causes and to struggle against them at their root will be the struggle of our lifetimes.



COMMEMORATING THE HISTORIC GRUNWICK STRIKE OF 1976, THE "GRUNWICK 40" EXHIBITION CHARTED THESE WORKERS' IMPORTANT TWO YEAR STRUGGLE, LED BY MIGRANT WOMEN, FOR BETTER PAY AND CONDITIONS WHILE ALSO FIGHTING BROADER RACIAL OPPRESSION.

We Are The Lions

'What you are running here is not a factory, it is a zoo. But in a zoo there are many types of animals. Some are monkeys who dance on your fingertips, others are lions who can bite your head off. We are the lions, Mr Manager.' *Jayaben Desai*

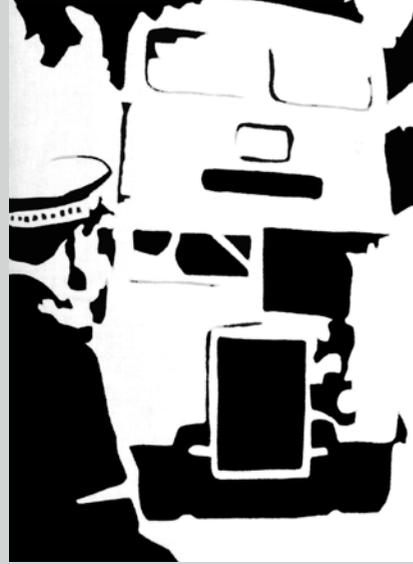


The Grunwick strike [...] came at a time when trade unions were beginning to be challenged on their failure to address racism and sexism, and it was the first time foreign-born and ethnic minority workers were accepted as part of a largely white, male trade union movement.



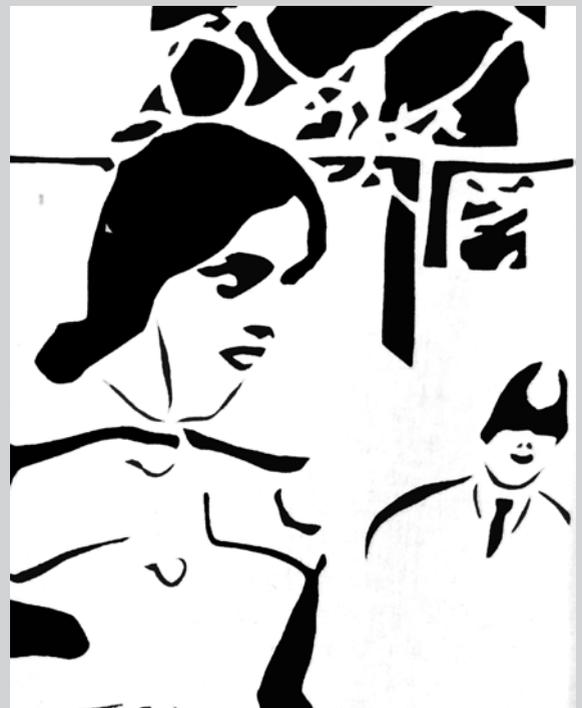
Suppliers of photographic paper and processing chemicals refused to do business with Grunwick, the print unions refused to print materials in newspapers that described the strikers as thugs, drivers working for the police refused to drive them to Chapter Road and even members of the National Union of Bank Employees moved to stop handling Grunwick's bank accounts ...

... one of the most celebrated acts of solidarity in trade union history. In June 1977, following violent scenes on the picket lines, UPW [the Union of Postal Workers] members at the Cricklewood and Willesden sorting offices re-instated an unofficial boycott of Grunwick mail.



Although the strikers used methods that initially seemed to work, such as the postal boycott and mass picketing, they ultimately found they had to battle forces on their own side.

The unions' desire to control the direction of the dispute, and negotiate with a company that had no wish to do so, meant that the strikers and their supporters became isolated.



Perhaps the most important lesson of Grunwick is that we cannot rely on legislation or leaders to guarantee rights. Pay and conditions need to be fought for, while industry leaders will use all of their resources to protect their interests. In this context, reclaiming the solidarity we saw at Grunwick has never been more important.

The work reproduced here was originally featured at Grunwick 40, an exhibition which ran at the Brent Museum and Archives in London from October 2016 - March 2017, close to where the strike took place. The writing offers selected text from the exhibition itself. The images were produced during a communal print workshop hosted at the Museum. grunwick40.wordpress.com



JAMIE O'BRIEN RECOUNTS THE EXPERIENCES OF GROWING UP IN PORT TALBOT, WHERE THE STEELWORKS INVADE ALMOST ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE. AN INTIMATE INSIGHT INTO JUST SOME OF THE HARMFUL AND LASTING EFFECTS OF CAPITALISM AND INDUSTRY.

The Works

November 8 2001. My grandfather had just brought me home from rugby training. Walking into the living room and seeing my mother's parents there. The grave looks. Before a word is uttered it's very clear something terrible has happened. Who's died?

"Daddy has been in an accident!"

I run to the toilet. I still remember screaming out loud to a God I thought was merciful. Asking Him why he'd let this happen. The Catholic faith that had been ever-present in my upbringing had delivered its first major betrayal. How does an eleven year old process this news? You don't.

We got lucky. My father survived. Three men didn't. It happened on a Thursday night. Me and my sister were not allowed to go to the hospital right away. I've seen the pictures since. Good call, mam. Allowed off school Friday but back in Monday. People ask how I am. I guess I mumbled "I'm ok" but I can't remember. Teachers talk about what happened. I receive stares. A surreal feeling. I was never one for being centre of attention.

I pride myself on my memory but I can barely recall the next twelve months. In and out of hospital. Not being able to perceive the suffering he was going through but I remember the atmosphere. Grief. Loss. Intangible. Mourning for a time you've already forgotten.

The steelworks had gone from provider of sustenance to killing machine. I could see it outside my bedroom window. Every day, every night, never resting, not subject to circadian rhythms yet I can't help but see it as a living entity. To my mind it's always breathing. There's no escape from it. For a while I keep the curtains closed. My awareness of it never ceases. I can block out the sight but not the sound. Still it breathes.

I only have secondhand knowledge of PTSD. I saw the terror in his eyes when he was startled. I was aware of how often he replayed the night in his head as if he was watching a recording.

"It should have been me. Why wasn't it me?"

I can't make sense of this. Of course I can't. The years pass by. The injuries still very much visible. I wouldn't wish burn injuries on my worst enemy. A protracted inquest. Incompetence. Neglect. Negligence. Imperatives of profit. Machine logics.

"Daddy's on the news!"

The verdict comes in. Accidental Death. Disappointed. Disgusted. Justice indeed.

Life goes on but there's a lack. It's hard to remember how things were before this but they had to be different. We receive compensation. We move house. At least I no longer have to hear our neighbour beat his wife through the walls. At least we don't have to worry about our other neighbour stealing our car (again). No more hearing the train tracks rattle as I try to sleep. Despite this I was resistant. Most of us hold affection for our first home.

I can no longer see the works. Still it breathes, but at least I don't have to hear it now. Life becomes a lot more peaceful. Outwardly at least. I guess this is how middle class people live. A perverse form of social mobility. I pray before bed every night. It becomes a compulsion. Please keep my family safe, God. He was merciful last time so I guess I owe him my attention.

If you live in Port Talbot there's a very good chance that at least one member of your family is currently or was previously



employed in the steelworks. In the case of my family, almost every man in my immediate family has worked there. My grandfathers, my living uncles, and of course my father, have spent almost their entire working lives there. Stories about the works. Rants about the works. News about the works. It's the common ground that links the men in my family together. Even if it's the same story for the hundredth time, nobody will object to it being retold. There's clearly a comfort in this shared experience. More of a unifying force than the familial ties in many regards.

Save Our Steel. More of a plea than a demand. Depending on who you are, it can be read as a death cry or a battle cry. We don't need to look too far afield to point to what we want to be saved from. The consequences of defeat echo all around us. The ghosts of an industrial past are forcefully kept out of our industrial present. Through it all, it has remained. It's all we've ever known.

Save Our Steel. How to personally relate to this? You may think of production. You may think of the workers. You may think of history. You may think of the uses of steel. You may think about identity. You may think it can be saved. You may think it cannot. You may welcome its demise. You may not be able to comprehend it.

Save Our Steel. When I think of 'our steel', I think of sulphur fumes. I think of smoke. I think of the coughing fits provoked by its proximity. I think of fire. I think of corporeality. I think of burned flesh. I think of death.

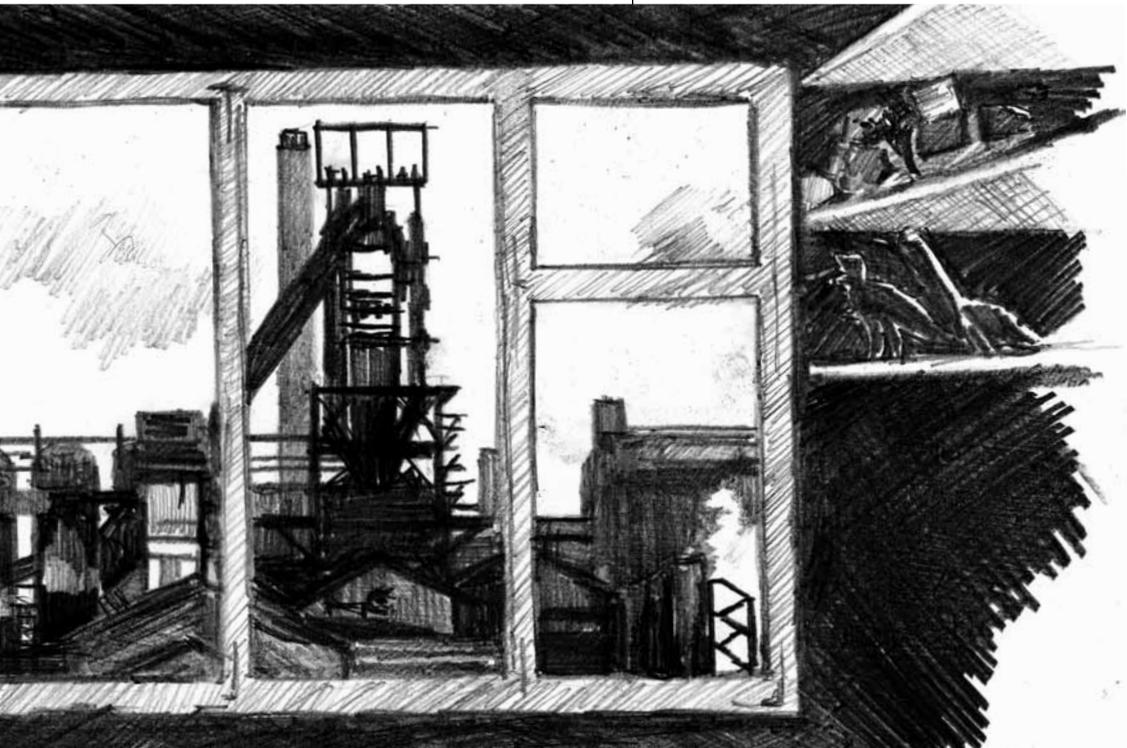
What once seemed incomprehensible seems possible if not

inevitable. Melancholy for how things used to be soon give way to mourning for what will never return. To think of what comes next is difficult when you cannot accept what may be soon to go.

Michael Sheen 'crucifying' himself down the beach lamenting what had been lost may have been heavy on the symbolism but it expressed a truth that is felt throughout the town. Of course this isn't exclusive to us. In comparison to the post-industrial towns that surrounds us, we've been relatively fortunate. However, the steady degradation of the world you know effectively contracts your horizon. To know others are worse off is merely a reminder that worse is to come.

As indelibly linked as the works is to my family, I feel like an outsider. I have never worked there. I will never work there. Through imposing a trauma on us that we could never have prepared for, the works allowed me to be the first one to go to university. It provided a financial comfort we would not have attained otherwise. In many ways, it may have saved my life. It still, however, remains fundamentally unknowable to me. My understanding, my stories, my images will always be secondhand.

If I am here to see it close down completely, I don't know how I will feel. All I do know is that it will represent the destruction of a way of life that has shaped mine more than I can ever appreciate. Its history and its scars will be carried with us as long as we stick around. The works will never be far from the periphery of our thinking. It will remain a reference point for those who may have little else in common. Even when it no longer breathes, its presence will remain inescapable.



BILL ROLSTON OFFERS A VIEW INTO THE HISTORY OF THE SIX COUNTIES OF NORTHERN IRELAND OVER THE PAST CENTURY THROUGH AN EXAMINATION OF THE MANY POLITICAL MURALS THAT CAN STILL BE FOUND THERE.

Murals in the North of Ireland

The political mural tradition in the northern part of Ireland is over 100 years old. For most of that time, it was confined to one community and overwhelmingly to one theme: the victory of King Billy over King James at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. This victory copper-fastened the Plantations of the early 17th century and told the settlers that, with a Protestant king at the helm, they were here to stay. Incidentally, this is a reassurance that they have needed constantly in the centuries since, leading one prominent cleric to remark that, for all that they are descended from settlers, they are a remarkably unsettled people. Before the state of Northern Ireland was created in 1921 and with greater intensity afterwards, the Unionist population celebrated Billy's victory on the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, July 12th, with bunting, flags, arches, marches and, beginning in 1908, murals. For the next 60 years the bulk of the murals on the streets of Belfast and other northern towns ritualistically displayed King Billy on his white horse, the victorious general and the bedrock of Protestant 'freedom, religion and laws' in Ireland.



With the recent conflict in the North from the late 1960s, the mural scene was transformed. Nationalists began marching for civil rights and were met by an authoritarian one-party Unionist state that was resistant to change. In a short time the guns came out and a three-decade long conflict ensued. Contrary to some views from outside the North, this involved three protagonists: militant Republicans (in particular the Irish Republican Army, IRA), militant Loyalists (especially the Ulster Volunteer Force, UVF, and Ulster Defence Association, UDA) and the state forces (British army and local police, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, RUC). As the bullets flew and the bombs exploded, working class areas became increasingly militant and often besieged. Every side was involved in a battle for hearts and minds and murals began to play a key role for two groups of protagonists. The murals in working class communities propagated the Republican or Loyalist message: mobilising support, confirming ideology, comforting the afflicted and calling on waverers to join the struggle.

Not surprisingly, in this context, many of the murals were unapologetically military in content. Republicans painted few murals before 1981, but with the hunger strike of Republican prisoners of that year, in which ten prisoners died, there was a sudden emergence of mural painting in Republican areas, calling on people to support the prisoners and their demands for, in effect, prisoner of war status. Meanwhile, with direct rule from Westminster, Unionists came to feel increasingly estranged from British policies and goals, and in that situation Loyalist paramilitary groups were the vanguard of a militant assertion of identity. In the mid-1980s the Loyalist commanders took over control of the walls in their respective areas; from then until the present, mural painting in loyalist areas is at the behest of or, at very least, with the permission of the local UVF or UDA commander. Not surprisingly, these commanders were happiest with murals which were advertisements for their organisations. Thus, a proliferation of murals depicting hooded men with guns emerged in loyalist areas.





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Republican areas were markedly different. For a start, there were sometimes murals of women with guns. But the difference went much deeper; IRA commanders never sought a monopoly on mural painting in their areas. Admittedly there were numerous depictions of armed IRA members, to the point where the stranger walking into an area might be forgiven for not knowing whether it was a Republican or a Loyalist enclave. This was not the case for locals; the segregation, physical and psychological, between communities has been so profound that no local needed a mural to be informed of the complexion of the area, especially if one had the misfortune of straying into the wrong area.

That said, Republicans had an advantage. Loyalism is a relatively narrow political ideology, seeing itself as the defender of British Ulster against all assaults, real or imagined. Coupled with the military monopoly of mural painting, this does not make for a rich palette, either in terms of subject matter or artistic expression. Republicanism is a broader church. It can look to its own history, going back centuries, of resistance to colonialism and imperialism.



It can scope the wider history of Ireland for instances of repression and resistance. Celtic mythology can be a rich seam to be mined for ideas and images. Republicans can look around the world and identify with what they see as similar struggles in South Africa, Palestine, Kurdistan, the Basque Country, Cuba, etc. and that resonance allows them to paint messages of support. In addition, as the peace process advanced from the mid-1990s, their identification with the possibilities of change offered by the process allowed space for commentary in murals on their aspirations and their frustrations regarding the rate of progress.

This ensured a greater range of themes and styles in Republican murals than has ever been the case in Loyalist areas. As Loyalist muralists showed a preference for the British colours of red, white and blue and, more recently, have painted numerous murals in black, white and shades of grey, the vibrancy of colour in many Republican murals is sometimes the most obvious badge of difference, even before one begins to consider the content and the message.

The murals of each side have dealt with the peace process in different ways. Because of the range of themes they could explore, Republicans had the luxury of being able to reach an important conclusion with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. They decided that, with two exceptions, there would be no more guns in murals. One exception was in relation to memorial murals to dead comrades, the other in relation to historical murals. In both cases, the message was clear to local audiences: these are not contemporary guns. Murals still appear on history, mythology, international connections and local current affairs so that there is no apparent diminution in the number and vitality of Republican murals. This was not an opening available to Loyalists. They had metaphorically painted themselves into a corner by monopolising the imagery of armed conflict, which meant that to abandon guns in murals would be to threaten the very continuation of their mural tradition.

- 1 King Billy mural, Coleraine 1982
- 2 UVF mural, Mount Vernon, Belfast 1995
- 3 UVF mural, Albertbridge Road, Belfast 2011
- 4 Republican mural with James Connolly and Emiliano Zapata, Ballymurphy Road, Belfast 1992
- 5 Republican mural with women from IRA, PLO and Swapo, Falls Road, Belfast 1983
- 6 Guernica, reproduced jointly by a republican and loyalist muralist, Falls Road, Belfast 2007

There was, of course, one obvious solution: return the walls to the wider Unionist community so that the aspirations, fears and needs of the whole community would find expression there and not simply the obsessions of the armed section of that community. There has been some progress in that regard, not least as a result of a government scheme, the Re-imagining Communities Programme, which pays for the replacement of the more offensive, usually militaristic, murals. The downside of that is that the programme in effect works on the principle, 'Don't mention the war'; the need to be inoffensive results in murals which are frequently bland.

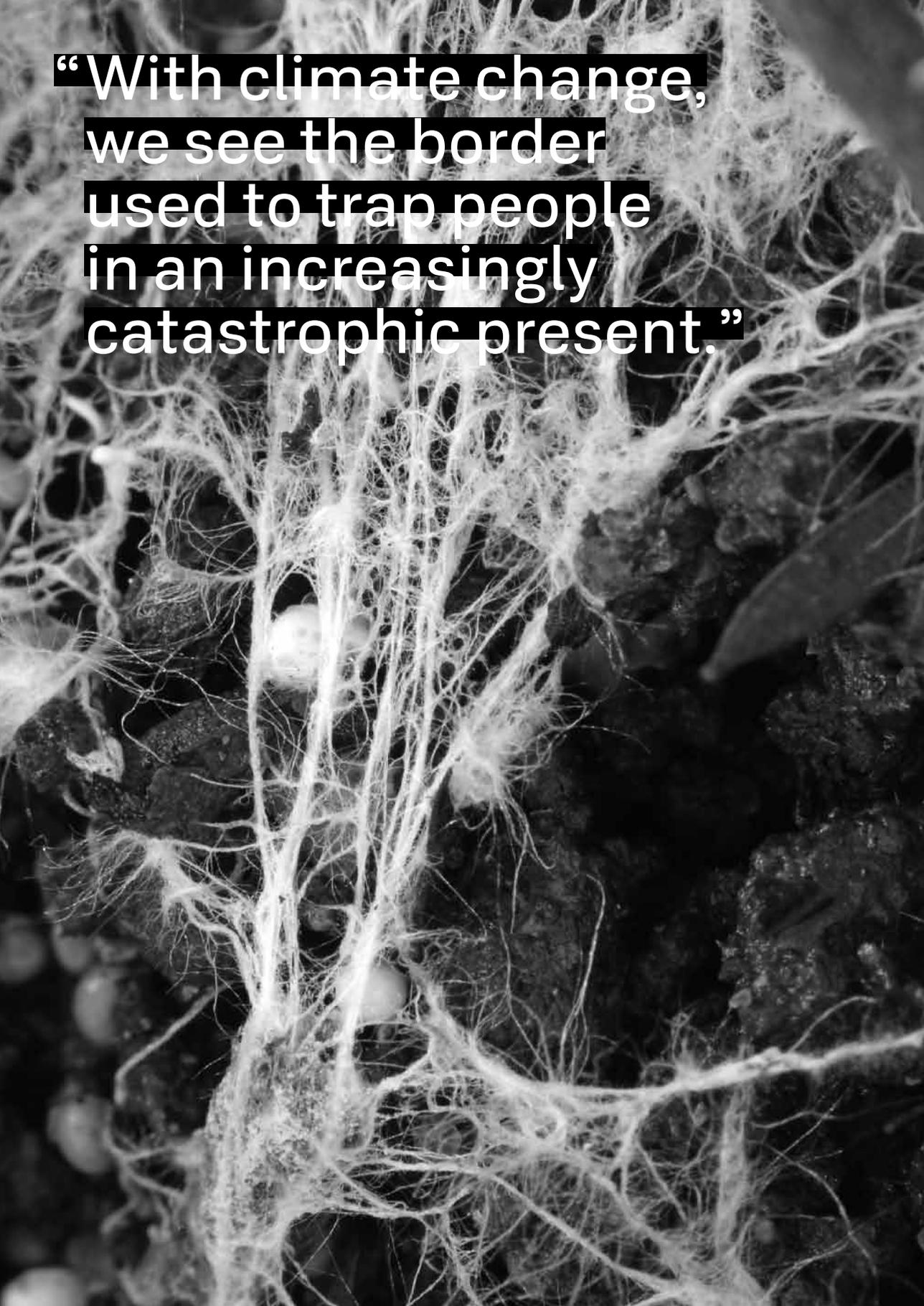
The difference between Republican and Loyalist murals in this respect is highly significant. The Loyalist muralists' reluctance to remove the guns speaks volumes of the Loyalist paramilitary groups' attitude to the peace process. Conversely, the Republican ability to remove the guns from their murals is symbolic of their relation to the peace process. Put simply, Loyalist paramilitary groups have been often, at best, ambivalent about the peace process, while, in a remarkable turn of events, Republicans, although still anti-state, are among the most ardent supporters of the state institutions which have emerged from the peace process.

The apparent anomaly can be explained. As historical underdogs, Republicans see change as opportunity. They had a military strategy based on the notion of a 'long war' and they have been able to transform this into a commitment to a 'long peace'. In other words, their strategy is based on exploiting the opportunities and contradictions of the peace process to inch them inexorably towards their goal of a united Ireland. Loyalists, on the other hand, tend to see change as threat: threat to their hegemonic position within the small theatre that is Northern Ireland, threat to their culture of marching and flag-waving, threat to their very existence as British subjects, loyal to the monarchy and committed ad infinitum to the union with Britain. One position leads to imaginative expression, visual and otherwise, while the other position is more confined.

There are a few riders which need to be added to this picture. First, there are Republicans who have not abandoned the guns. The so-called 'dissidents' who disagree with the mainstream Republican commitment to the peace process spear-headed by Sinn Féin, like Loyalists see the peace process as a threat, in this instance to the possibilities of achieving a united Ireland. Second, it needs to be reiterated that Loyalism is only part of Unionism. The wider Unionist community has historically and currently been able to boast of trade unionists, feminists, environmentalists and others; what these groups could paint on their walls if that space was available remains to be seen, but it is unlikely to be portrayals of armed, masked men.

Belfast in particular has a vibrant mural scene which attracts countless tourists. Apart from the Republican and Loyalist murals there has been the recent and belated emergence of street art, some of which can match the best of international practice. There have also been a few tentative explorations with Loyalist and Republican muralists working jointly on projects. The first major example was a 2007 reproduction of Picasso's *Guernica*. Significantly, this was painted in a Republican area given the feeling of all involved that a Loyalist muralist painting in a Republican area was likely to be in a safer situation than a Republican in a Loyalist area. It would be a mistake to presume that such joint endeavours represent the future of mural painting in Belfast. But suffice it to say that the century-old tradition is still alive and well, stuck in a rut in some ways, but in other ways, exploring new expressions.



A black and white photograph showing a dense, intricate network of white, fibrous roots or mycelium against a dark background. The roots are thin and numerous, creating a complex, web-like structure. The lighting highlights the texture and depth of the fibers, which appear to be growing in a dark, possibly soil-filled environment. The overall composition is abstract and organic, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the root system.

**“With climate change,
we see the border
used to trap people
in an increasingly
catastrophic present.”**

THE OUT OF THE WOODS COLLECTIVE HAVE BEEN PUBLISHING VITAL ANALYSIS INVESTIGATING CAPITALISM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE ON LIBCOM FOR OVER THREE YEARS - ALL OF WHICH CAN BE READ AT LIBCOM.ORG/OUTOFTHEWOODS. WE SAT WITH TWO MEMBERS OF THE COLLECTIVE - A AND D FOR A CONVERSATION THAT WE HOPE WILL ALLOW THOSE WHO STRUGGLE TO CENTRE THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE WITHIN THEIR ORGANISING. WE FEATURE AN EDITED VERSION OF THE DISCUSSION HERE. THE FULL VERSION CAN BE READ AT BIT.LY/OOTWINTERVIEW

On Climate / Borders / Survival / Care / Struggle

In much of your writing, you talk about the relationship between mass migration and climate change. How can climate change be more consciously linked to existing opposition to borders and everyday struggle against the border regime?

A One place to start would be the estimate of 200 million climate migrants by 2050, which Norman Myers devised over a decade ago. This is seen as a conservative projection, yet even this would mean that by 2050, 1 in every 45 people in the world would have been displaced by climate change. A report for the International Organisation for Migration notes 'that on current trends, the capacity of large parts of the world to provide food, water and shelter for human populations will be compromised by climate change.' The framing of this 'capacity' as a series of absolute, 'natural' limits is of course problematic: 'carrying capacity' is a product of racial heteropatriarchal capital as it works through nature, and of nature as it works through racial heteropatriarchal capital. However, climate change will certainly further erode people's capacity to reproduce themselves, and in a manner that forces movement. The majority of these climate migrants will be racialised people, and it seems highly unlikely that those states least affected by climate change and/or most able to adapt to it (the white powers of Europe and America), will approach these climate migrants any differently to those racialised people already being murdered by their borders or imprisoned by their camps. Climate change is another reason to have to move, but it is not a reason for states to treat moving, racialised people any differently.

When Black Lives Matter UK shut down London City Airport they were very clear in stating that climate crisis is racist. It disproportionately affects people of colour both because they can't cross borders with the ease that white people do, for a whole host of reasons; and because they're more likely to live in areas that are worst affected by climate change, both in the UK and elsewhere. Connecting up struggles that might be seen as 'single issue' in this sense is really important because, in a sense they *are* single issue: climate change and racism reproduce each other.

Since it features heavily already, and will likely appear again, could you speak a little more about the nature of borders – their composition and politics?

D The violence of the border isn't just at 'the border' - schools become borders, hospitals become borders. I broke my knee recently, and whilst I - a white person who speaks English as their first language - was very well-looked after at A&E, a woman of colour who came in a few minutes after me - her English wasn't great, she was not able to think clearly because of the pain she was in, and staff were insisting she gave an address - and she didn't understand what they were saying. Whether that was the language barrier or the stress she was under, because we know the NHS will withhold treatment it becomes a form of violence - banal from the point of view of the people handing it out, but not for those on the receiving end of it. So struggles that might seem quite distant from ecological issues - hospital workers resisting the imperative to behave in this sort of way, for example - are really important for a transformative ecological politics.

A I think when it comes to climate change what we're seeing is the way the border can be used to trap someone within an increasingly catastrophic present. Achille Mbembe has written extensively about necropolitics, of holding people within a situation where their life is more defined by their proximity to death. The border keeps people in places where they cannot find food or at the mercy of floods. This is coercive, conscious violence orchestrated by states.

That will persist, both in countries outside Europe and within it. I think we must also emphasise that there's a globalised institution of anti-blackness, and the forms of violence which reproduce it are very much in common. The necropolitical obviously operates against black people in the US or the UK, as well as in Libya or the Mediterranean. In terms of the way climate change, and natural disasters might interact with this existing necropolitics, it is perhaps important to think of police operations in New Orleans, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. On Danziger Bridge, seven police officers opened fire on a group of black people attempting to flee the flooded city, killing two of them and seriously injuring four more. To a certain extent, that event - black refugees being murdered by the state - encapsulates the necropolitical violence of attempting to hold people, and particularly black people, in a place where life is untenable, and then extinguishing that life as soon as anyone tries to move out of that place. That's the murderous double bind of anti-black violence in the policing of crisis.

D I also think it's really important that we challenge environmentalism's history and ongoing complicity with racism (and outright white supremacy) - arguing for closed borders, population control, and sterilisation, for example. In the UK we've recently had prominent members of the Green Party arguing for reductions in migration in the name of the environment and a 'sustainable economy'. There was a Paul Kingsnorth essay in the Guardian a couple of months ago that's abhorrent: it repeats so many of these tropes.

Most of us know very little about climate science, and whilst a great many people work very hard to translate an overwhelming amount of data and field work into accessible writing, the point where trends and patterns meet the daily effects of climate change can feel elusive. Is there more that could be done to orientate the energies of existing struggles and how far into the future should we be looking?

D We often understand climate change as leading to a spectacular future event, something often understood visually: images of ruined, flooded and depopulated cities are common. But I think this is flawed: it suggests climate change is heading towards something that is going to happen in the future rather than something that is already happening, often in less visually perceptible forms. It becomes harder to grow certain crops, for example, and food becomes more expensive. That drives both migration and conflict: climate change has undoubtedly played a role in the Syrian Civil War.

So it's wrong on an empirical level to figure climate change as this thing that will happen in the future, but I think it's also unhelpful politically, because that kind of future threat I don't think works as a sufficiently motivating force to affect things in the present. That parsing of climate change as spectacular future event affects how we behave politically as well, leading to a kind of fatalism whereby people just accept these things. I think they empower a certain white, male, heterosexual subject too: they can project themselves into that catastrophe thinking they can start anew - the sort of 'cosy catastrophism' that John Wyndham was accused of. You know - 'oh well, all the poor people have died, but we can have a jolly nice time with our new community on the Isle of Wight.'

A So we have to think about organising against climate change as mediated through a world dominated by racial, heteropatriarchal capital. The violence is organised and differentiated by these structures and it is in the struggle to destroy those structures that we might also survive. It seems quite evident to me that we can draw learning and realise a particular imagination that has always been practiced in struggles against catastrophe - struggles founded on care, on reproduction and warmth. Those have always been the things which have made it possible to survive every catastro-

phe of the past 2,000 years. Those people will still be fighting those battles even if white environmentalism does nothing about it - that's another thing to insist on.

Disaster communism is a concept we've featured in older publications, but it seems that the manner in which it is evoked often relies on the kind of grand "event" which you've just warned against - for instance, the organising in the wake of hurricane Sandy is often brought up as an example of disaster communism in action. The description of care and survival feels a very comfortable fit to the organising many of us who produce this publication are familiar with (for example, the struggle against the housing crisis and border violence in London and against abusive components of our own social movements). Could we talk more about: if the catastrophe is now, how do we survive it?

A I've been thinking about disaster communism in terms of what Fred Moten writes about as planning: this operation that's always going on underneath the surface of social life because it's the precondition of social life; it's the means of a certain form of collective living. I guess what's confusing about the way we've been thinking about disaster communism is that there's an uncertainty or vagueness about whether we are calling for something to come into being, or whether we are observing something that's already happening and merely recognising a certain way of extrapolating it. I think the complexity is that we do kind of use it as both.

D There's a distinction between the two modes - there's the 'communising' stuff that's already happening that we can observe like the kinds of communities that form around disasters, collective relations of care, mutual aid, etc. And then there's the idea that the term 'communism' also names the linking of those struggles on a much larger scale. So communism-as-movement connects these otherwise isolated communising practices that can actually help reinforce capitalism because capitalism will co-opt the common: "thanks for self-organising all this, now we don't have to pay anyone to do it! Also, you've helped increase property values in the area!"

A I guess that's why I was thinking about Moten and planning because, as Moten is saying, against planning there is always policy - the attempt to extract value from planning, to strip mine the social commons. So all those forms of reproductive labour can easily be exploited by an increasingly desperate state or state-capital formation. This is really notable in frontline care in terms of people being discharged from the NHS early on in the expectation that their family will just look after them - the policy formation of the state has turned towards care in the NHS being home-based rather than hospital-based, which is in no small part a cloak for the incorporation of planning into policy, and the subsumption of

“Climate change is another reason to have to move, but it is not a reason for states to treat moving, racialised people any differently.”

a certain form of social life into the antithesis of that - state and capital.

I think something which has been the undercurrent to this conversation is the spectre of what has now quite openly and explicitly been called fascism. Something we have talked about with Kingsnorth, and early on in relation to 'Lifeboat Ethics', can be seen in visions of dystopian films, which recently has been that either the rich people go and live in the sky or a magic island: an extrapolation of the way that the city breaks up into increasingly small fragments in which extreme privilege and protected privilege is surrounded by a mass of those who don't have the power to defend themselves, and that plays out around moments of disasters as well. There's several accounts I remember reading after Hurricane Sandy of people watching the streets of New York, just as the hurricane was about to hit, filled with carloads of rich white New Yorkers going to the countryside or going to stay in hotels - and they were being filmed by black and latino workers who had to stay and work. There's something strong there about the nature of the disaster - some people literally in the absurd, nightmarish situation of not being able to escape the disaster because their boss wouldn't let them. So to go back to what D was saying earlier, it's not an apocalyptic event in the future, but a differentiated catastrophic present. For some people this present is a catastrophe, for others, it isn't that far from normality.

When it comes to activities to support and build on, people often point to the numerous struggles, many on indigenous / first nations land, aimed at preventing the extraction of resources which directly lead to climate change - but much of this seems far beyond the reach of this island. Meanwhile, similar UK based activity around anti-fracking seems also to have been rooted in a reactionary nationalism - somewhere between NIMBYism and a defence of the English countryside. How might we better confront and resist the causes and effects of climate change or, if the determining moments are to be far from these shores, how might we better offer solidarity?

A I think part of the problem is that people start making easy equations with the land and start thinking about things in terms of 'Nature.' What we have always been trying to insist on in OoTW is that there is no pure nature to go back to, and that any implication of some kind of perfect wilderness is colonial dreaming, and a dreaming which will only vivify an incredibly dangerous form of enclosure. And, what we've been talking about more in OoTW is cyborg ecology or the cyborg Earth, in which there is no perfect nature to go back to, and in which we have to face up to the complexities of the interrelation between human and non-human life. We also need to be certain that we don't become some kind of 'techno-futurists' who'll happily embrace a sort of technological

invasion of everything existing, with no regard for the colonial paradigm, and the advent of European technology as both weapon and arbiter of colonial 'progress.' To a certain extent we are between a rock and a hard place here - between a romance of wilderness and a romance of technology, and both are worse.

D That binary is troubling. If you criticise the fetishisation of the slow, the local, the authentic and the romanticisation of nature, then you are often accused of being in love with the global, the fast, or of being a technological fetishist, and vice versa. It's this kind of binary thinking that structures both the accelerationist-oriented, techno-futurist Left, and 'back to nature' leftism. I think unpicking that binary, in fact rejecting it as a structure, is really important. Indigenous ways of organising life in specific locations across the globe are important here - not so that we can apply them to a wholly different context, but because they often completely undercut those binaries - they are 'local', but have dynamic, relational understandings of 'local', or 'place' that eschews cosy romanticism.

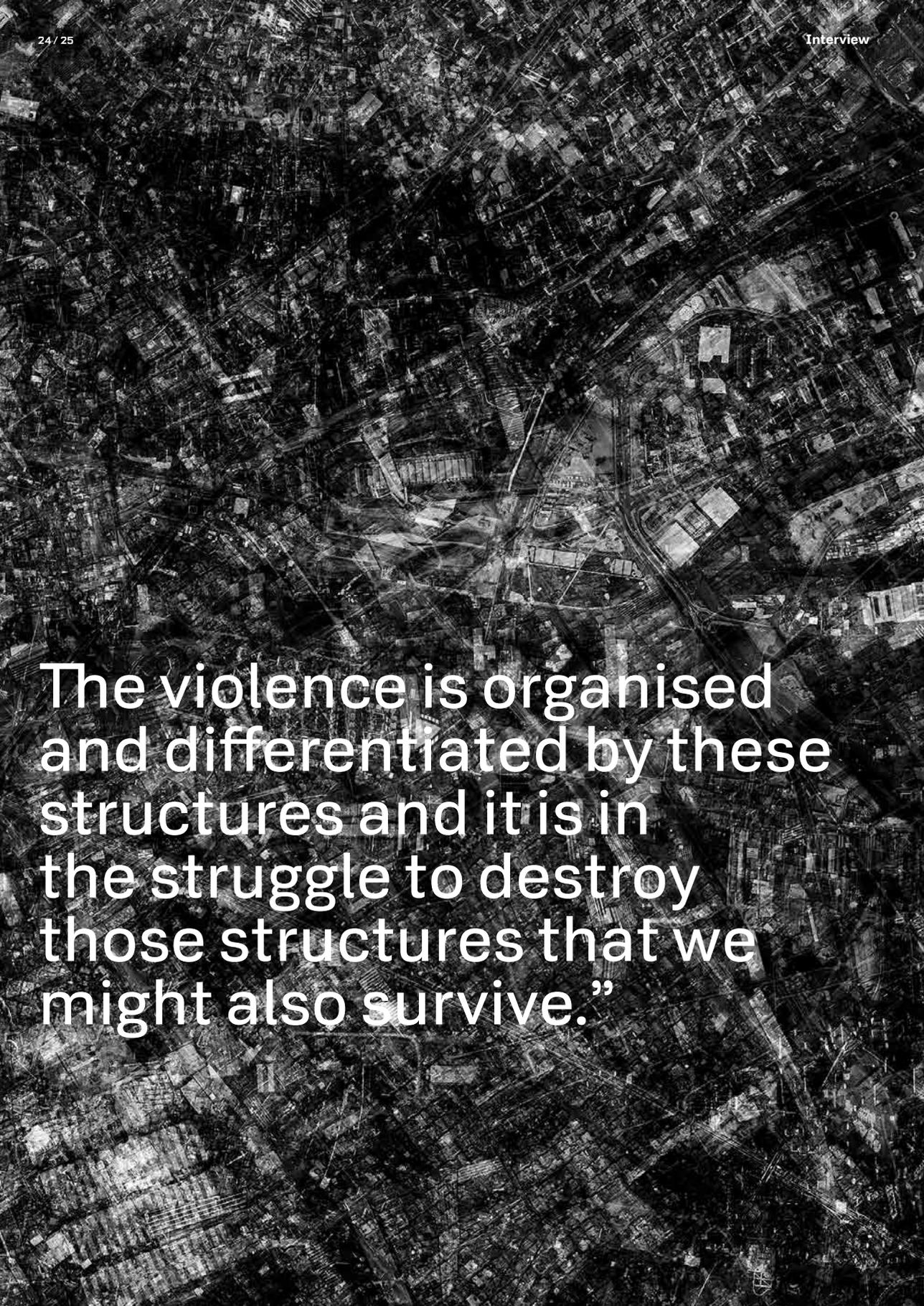
I also think there is still a danger of white settler activists; or white activists in Europe or Britain - and it's a tendency I recognise in myself - fetishising indigenous struggles and placing too much hope in them, or just abstracting bits of knowledge without attending to the need for decolonisation as a political project. We saw it with the Zapatistas a lot: because things are so shit over here, something that looks brilliant, exciting and a little bit different (perhaps there was a degree of exoticism in it as well), people overly invest in and overly identify with it, but of course it can't be transplanted wholesale to a different context.

So it's important to look at what's happening more locally too, rather than depoliticising hope by displacing it elsewhere, and thinking where the connections might be. We've got anti-fracking campaigns, migrant solidarity campaigns, and certainly with the anti-fracking campaigns I think the political content of them is yet to be determined - a lot of it is NIMBYism, a lot (though not all) of it is middle class and white, but that's what we've got.

People don't come into struggle with perfect positions, people get involved in struggle because something is affecting them or something they care about, and through contact with a whole host of people - activists, other people struggling, people reading texts - their political positions can change. Green and Black Cross are doing some really important work in anti-fracking struggles, sending observers to villages in Sussex that perhaps haven't seen a lot of political struggles or protest previously and aside from the direct role they play in facilitating protest there's a pedagogical function in that too. Of course, not all of that struggle might take the direction we want it to, but I think it's really important that we don't give up on it as inherently flawed from the beginning because then it will be captured by the Kingsnorths.

“It’s really important that we challenge environmentalism’s history and ongoing complicity with racism (and outright white supremacy)”

“We have to think about organising against climate change as mediated through a world dominated by racial, heteropatriarchal capital.”

A high-angle, black and white aerial photograph of a city, showing a dense grid of streets and buildings. The image is somewhat grainy and has a high-contrast, almost monochromatic appearance, emphasizing the intricate patterns of urban development.

The violence is organised and differentiated by these structures and it is in the struggle to destroy those structures that we might also survive.”

Out of the Woodwork pt.2

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR AN EVENT THAT BECAME THE FOUNDING OF THE LONDON COALITION AGAINST POVERTY – 2007

CONFRONTING THE RAIDS – 2017

My phone vibrates. I find the text. My heart is pounding. I check my clothes are indistinct and make sure I have a cover for my face. There is no time to hang around; time is against us. I jump on my bike and cycle as fast as I can down the road. There are already a dozen officers. A couple of people in handcuffs. I decide to go and look for the vans.

They're all parked in some backstreet. Easy enough to disable. As I get near, a lonely cop and their radio stare me out. I exchange a few insults and move on. Inside I feel paralysed. My desire rots away in indecision. In the distance I see them on their way back with the people they've kidnapped. I stay around until they come, exchange a few more insults with the border officers. I am still on my own and I wish I could only have a familiar face around me. I hate seeing myself feeling weak. I am watching them manoeuvring around in the narrow street. Them looking smug with people in their cages. Me feeling so disgusted with the situation, with myself for not acting on it. My frustration and anger reaching new levels. And yet I am letting them go.

I can't let them go. Following them further down the road, at my surprise: some friendly faces, covered. And as they appear, a rush of joy overtakes me. Finally moving me into action. Desire and determination burning. My blood rushes from head to toes and back again. I go on the attack.

Direct Action Against Poverty Network Discussion
7:30 - 9:00pm Thursday 26 April 2007
62 Marchmont St, WC1N 1AB

We are a group of advice workers, community activists and poor people who deal with the impact of poverty and social exclusion on a day to day basis. As advice workers, we know our work is beneficial, but often feel like we are treading water. Therefore, we want to explore ways that we can take radical action concerning the issues of poverty that we and our clients face...

...We take some inspiration from the work of Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), based in Eastern Canada. OCAP uses direct action, combined with legal work, to make the institutions involved take swift action on a person's case. These actions can take the form of delegations to government/council offices, picketing businesses in the private sector, etc. Examples in the past have included targeting airliners which carry out deportations, squatting council housing to prevent privatisation, and occupying local housing/benefits offices. These tactics have been incredibly successful over the last fifteen years, both in terms of solving people's cases quickly and in bringing poor people into an empowering movement for social change...

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss what elements of common ground we can find and explore ways of starting this type of movement in London...

REPORT FROM A LONDON COALITION AGAINST POVERTY MEETING [ABRIDGED] – 2017

Despite compiling a long list of the problems we face – including issues relating to organising our groups, common housing problems we face, as well as much bigger issues and policies that affect and will affect us – our list of successes is longer.

Our most recent LCAP general meeting was hosted on Saturday 1st April. These general meetings bring together other groups in the coalition and other sister groups from across London who organise practical solidarity, mutual support and collective action. As well as the regular LCAP housing groups from across London, Housing Action Southwark & Lambeth were joined by Housing Action Greenwich and Lewisham, North East London Migrant Action, and Latin American Women's Aid. The LCAP general meetings (which are supposed to happen every three months or so) are really valuable chances for our local groups to meet together to share tactics, ideas, problems, and experiences, as well as to discuss how we can co-ordinate and link up better between our groups.

During the meeting we split into smaller groups to focus on a topic or issue that we wanted to work on and to make it easier for people to contribute to the discussion. We looked at internal group issues: how to increase membership and build a group up and how to share out work within our groups. For wider issues we looked at: housing and migrant rights, private landlords, and the introduction of 5 year council tenancies as part of the Housing and Planning Act. We made sure our discussions were action point focussed so that we could return as a big group with some concrete steps.

Many of our members have children and children's activities at all of our meetings is something we are trying hard to improve. For this LCAP meeting we had three adults who helped facilitate children's activities, including the creation of a beautiful 'homes not borders' banner. The children themselves also provided a helpful reminder towards the end of the meeting that it was time to finish and have cake; they did this by running around us in a circle with increasing ferocity.

STARTING A PROJECT TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WHO WANT TO MAKE A COMPLAINT AGAINST THE POLICE — 2016

There was something really clarifying about drawing up plans for how the project would function, what role the small number of organisers who were trained lawyers would play, versus other volunteers that would be recruited. What would be the relationship between them? How would that work out in practice when working with a complainant? We thrashed this out in a couple of meetings and drafts and re-drafts of strategy documents. It was in these moments that I saw that we could actually name and describe what it was we wanted to do. And if we could describe it, we could imagine it, and we could do it.

CONFRONTING THE RAIDS — 2016

At about 7:30 on a Thursday evening, saw a guy coming out of the big tesco on Morning Lane wearing full navy blue – his shirt had unmarked epaulettes so I thought he might be from immigration. He walked towards 3 immigration enforcement vans that were parked together in the car park. A group of them were clustered around the vans, most of them also in unmarked epaulettes... When I asked where they were going he said they were finished and going home for the day. I asked if they had a warrant for the raids today and he said yes, then launched into a massive rant...

... *"We just carry out the law, and the law isn't there for us to question. You voted in the election, and you reap what you sow. I don't vote in elections because whoever the government is, I just have to carry out what they say"*. He talked for a long time – he said that his job is to protect people like me, just like the police. *"I'm paid with taxpayers money, and if I don't do my job you'll be complaining. It's like the police – you might hate the police but if somebody hurts you, who's the first people you're gonna go to?"*...

...It didn't make much sense to me but he continued in that vein for at least a minute and a half. I said we were probably never going to agree and he said that's the best thing about Britain, you're allowed to disagree. Then we said goodbye and they left, I didn't see where to.

ON MEETINGS & AFFINITY — 2017

Three of us initially met to plot in a cafe. There we decided to organise a meeting of people we know would want to get involved. Unfortunately, the meeting ended up on a semi-public forum and 50 people turned up. I hate the dynamics of big meetings; they remind me of the privileged place of the assembly in politics. Yet the place where nothing emerges - pure inertia. Restraining desire to act.

Luckily, most people had come as consumers so within a few weeks only those whose desire was still burning remained engaged. Since then, a set of meaningful relationships has been growing through organising informally. These connections grew not out of identity but from the common ends and differences we shared. There was never any privileged entry point or leadership in question. Just a small group of people with no name focusing outward, talking tactics, writing collectively, taking action. Friendships grew from nothing by fighting against the state and its border dogs.

WASI DANIJU KINDLY SHARED A SELECTION OF IMAGES FROM HER FIRST PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION HELD EARLIER THIS YEAR. RE:PRESENT IS A JOYFUL CELEBRATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF BLACK MUSLIM WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND DRIVES TOWARDS HONEST VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS.



re:present

**“You are amazed that they exist
and they burn so bright
whilst you can only wonder why”**

Pulp

Black Muslim Women. We exist. Yet to witness the dearth of representation in media, and the narratives relating to each of these three groups, you would be forgiven for believing these three words belong together only in theory.

Ironically, this erasure in representation does not hold the same for the prejudice and bigotry visited upon black Muslim women. Falling within all three of these groups, we find ourselves on the receiving end of racism, islamophobia and misogyny, and the many vicious ways these three bigotries intersect. This is not to mention the additional elements of prejudices likely to be directed with a greater degree towards certain people who fall within this group: anti-immigrant sentiment, shadeism, fatphobia, homophobia, transphobia and much more.

As a photographer, I believe in both the power and necessity of visual representation. I believe in the necessity of seeing portrayals of ourselves both as aspiration and celebration. I believe also in telling our own story - because, if we don't, who will? Ultimately, I believe we need to create as vast a record of our existence as possible, so that future generations will not be able to so easily erase us from history as seems to have happened in the past, and is being attempted to this day.

As a black Muslim woman, I also believe in our excellence, beauty and vitality. We may face erasure, we must survive hatred, but our very existence is glorious - there are so many ways in which we burn so bright.









base #2 / London, June 2017
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