

The Ironies of Liberation

Ashton, who was an unapologetic communist, let it be known that while he was working relentlessly for the liberation of his oppressed group (the queer community), he also wholeheartedly supported the liberation and the basic rights of the working class of the U.K. And this is a mindset we must all follow. It seems like a very simple concept, right? Respect the rights of everybody and fight for equality for all, but do people truly believe that? Many claim to be activists, but they are not truly for the liberation of ALL oppressed groups. And thus, their activism is a sham.

Summertime boredom. It is a constant actuality for myself during those beautiful and warm summer days. In those times I should be going out and enjoying the day or maybe look for a much needed summer job, but that's never any fun. So, what do I do when I encounter summertime boredom? Well, I either binge watch a television show or I watch a movie. This past summer, I looked through the "Gay and Lesbian" genre on Xfinity's movies on demand page. I moved past all of the films I had already seen like Philadelphia (1991), G.B.F. (2013) and The Imitation Game (2014). And then I stumbled upon a film titled Pride (2014).

"I do not remember us ever constituting any value that said that a revolutionary must say offensive things towards homosexuals, or that a revolutionary should make sure that women do not speak out about their own particular kind of oppression. As a matter of fact, it is just the opposite: we say that we recognize the women's right to be free. We have not said much about the homosexual at all, but we must relate to the homosexual movement because it is a real thing. And I know through reading, and through my life experience and observations that homosexuals are not given freedom and liberty by anyone in the society. They might be the most oppressed people in the society."

I'm not going to sit here and pretend like I'm a perfect activist. I've never been to a march or donated money to a activist movement. Hell, I never even bought a

BLM or a LGBT rights shirt, despite the fact that I am both black and gay. I would not blame anyone for reading this and thinking that I'm a bit of a hypocrite. With all that being said, I do think I know a thing or two about liberation movements and the way to go about your activism based on my understanding of history and politics. If you're an activist for the rights and humanity of people of color, but like to throw around homophobic slurs and believe homosexuality is "ruining the black family," your activism is a sham. If you're a gay rights activist, but think the Black Lives Matter movement "goes too far," your activism is a sham. If you're a women's rights activist, but refuse to acknowledge trans women as women, then your activism is a sham.

The extraordinary activists and revolutionaries throughout history knew that their movements were only valid if they sincerely supported the liberation of all oppressed and marginalized groups. You can never simply focus on you and your people, you must shed light on all oppression you see and use any privileges you may have to fight against it.

To clarify, that does not mean, for example, that if you are a black American and you live/see the oppression of black people in America and want to join the Black Lives Matter movement, you must devote equal amount of time with BLM as you do with a LGBT rights group, workers' rights group and so on. Nevertheless, it does mean that you must 100% support the freedom and liberation of those other mistreated groups and express that support whether it be by joining a march, donating money (if you can) or even just wearing a symbol that represents your support.

The truly great revolutionaries of the past 60 years knew what true activism was. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. was not simply fighting rigorously for the end of Jim Crow and discrimination against people of color, he was also a huge supporter of the working class and those of all races living in poverty. In fact, the day he was assassinated in Tennessee, he was there in support for public work employees on strike in Memphis. The history books rarely talk about his planned

Poor People's Campaign. So, what made MLK a truly great revolutionary is that he fought for the end of racial discrimination AND fought for the rights of all workers against capitalism, which he described as flat out evil.

Now, my paragraph above is not to say that workers' rights and rights for racial minorities are two completely separate entities, in fact they're very much intertwined, which makes it all the more unreasonable for a member of one of those groups to not support the other. Imagine if in 1950s Mississippi, the white working class actually supported the liberation of black people and joined together with them to challenge a government that was cheating them both. After all, Mississippi was home to the poorest of poor white people in the U.S. However, that was not the case and black Mississippians essentially had to work on their own.

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe", a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest?â??a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.

So imagine a kiosk, where right there all the vital information is laid out in front of you; right there, and then you can push buttons to organize visits, family visits, job applications and so forth, and get confirmation there and then that the work has been actioned. It is like jumping from the 1860's Pony Express to the 2017's smartphone all in one giant leap. It is the sense of liberation and empowerment that restores a man's pride and gives him hope he can get through his sentence and come out a better person, that there is hope. A kiosk is only a small thing, the

nights are still long and the cells claustrophobic, but at least it means the prison administration works efficiently.

In speaking with the women of Shaheen, there was an unmistakable value placed on Shaheen's efforts to empower women economically. Ms. Nishat shared her view that economic empowerment is the first step towards liberation—towards finding your voice and becoming a key decision-maker within your community. The most powerful component of Shaheen's work is the ripple effect and potent cycle of empowerment set forth. This wasn't simply about changing the lot of one woman but generations of women.

So, to answer your question about the connections between social democracy and social movements against this historical background: Historically, this connection was strong. The workers' movement, which carried social democracy in the beginning of the 20th century, was a cultural movement going beyond questions concerning wages, working conditions, union representation, housing or social services. It addressed all aspects of life, including the arts, sports and entertainment. In the early 20th century, the rise of social democracy was closely tied to mass movements focusing on everything from the emancipation of women to community education to temperance. (Issues that seemed more obscure—such as sexual liberation or animal rights—found stronger support among anarchists.)

The Black Panther was the organization's self-published newspaper that discussed issues faced by the community, in their own words and on their own terms. It documented, through art and words, the struggle for liberation. Many of these images became iconic and still garner instant recognition today.

Unite we must. Without necessarily sacrificing our sovereignties, big or small, we can here and now forge a political union based on defense, foreign affairs and diplomacy, and a common citizenship, an African currency, an African monetary

zone, and an African central bank. We must unite in order to achieve the full liberation of our continent. We need a common defense system with African high command to ensure the stability and security of Africa. We have been charged with this sacred task of our own people, and we cannot betray their trust by failing them. We will be mocking the hopes of our people if we show the slightest hesitation or delay in tackling realistically this question of African unity.