# Ch 9 - Rainforest

I often dream of a future devoid of redlining; of gentrification and obscene education disparities; of an equitable society with no sexual, racial, or economic hierarchy; where control and fear are not the tools of the successful, but those of cowards; I dream of a future where growing your own food is a standard of every housing; where work is driven by passion and not merely a necessity of survival; and communities flourish under the liberation of meaning and acceptance. But to think that we can topple the systematic oppression of the workforce, of racial segregation, and of gender discrimination from an essay written by a privileged, white art student is not only dishonest, it’s deplorable. *The reality of rebellion under capitalism lends itself to a certain abstract, metaphysical sensibility.* Independent responsibility toward change fosters the hope of disabling the overwhelming grip capitalism has on our lives. If we challenge the reality of the people—of the workers and the consumers—by demonstrating that capitalism works against us and that it *can* be opposed, we have a chance at standing our ground and having a say in what the next system looks and operates like. With compassion at the reins, rebellion gives a newfound meaning to life. There becomes meaning in what we say and do and meaning in work and of passion.

But we have to be careful how we proceed from here. With the redundancies presented by bureaucracy to protect the most important parts holding the whole thing together, *we need to understand what battles are worth fighting for and which are deflections*. Fisher restates that if “the structure remains, the vices will reproduce themselves.”1 The reality of dismantling the broken parts of society remains elusive, for to get it right means exercising precision in regards to cause and effect. We cannot remain distracted by “supposedly pathological individuals, those ‘abusing the system’,”2 when it is the system that created them in the first place. Dealing strictly with individuals ignores how they came to be and allows more to be placed right back in positions poised to deal the most damage. This does not mean that individuals can’t be held accountable for their complacency, but maybe that is for their communities to decide?

The workforce is the strongest body of political power we have. Boycotting has very real implications insofar that the people are aware of the consequences. Until we can pose a threat to their legal right to operate inhumanely, our money is (((unfortunately))) our greatest strength. It is not that veganism is categorically opposed to eating the meat of animals, but the way they are treated now is abhorrently torturous—and the only way to oppose that is to stop contributing to its continuation in the market. The disconnected and halfhearted populace today lacks the foundational compassion asserted by rebellion and wields no useful power against the system of oppression they too find themselves entangled in. In our particular government, protesting and unionizing have become vilified and in some cases, outlawed.3 People are discouraged from participating in the necessary show of solidarity which has the power to enact change. But we have an individual responsibility to wake up from the temptations of social pressure and assert our humanity upon the world so that for the benefit of tomorrow, we can all prosper. Only then can we affect real change.

This will invariably have many forms within contemporary life. Many of which will be small, simple things but absolutely monumental in their own right. When you open up to the world and to the others around you, you invite the tickle of euphoria whisking around you like a pleasant breeze. When you afford yourself the terrifying brilliance of the absurd, the external banalities of a naked milieu are, at a second glance, budding with curiosities about the world and your place in it. You can have an impact in your community and an obsession with the allure and grandeur of celebrity is a distraction from the realities of your ability to matter here, now. It all starts when you embrace the world with compassion and a curiosity to learn and to question.

There will be small things we can do, like not pretending to find something funny just because others are laughing; questioning internal reasoning in regards to profiling or judging others; making strides to understand the driving forces of segregation of all kinds and in making these pervasive systems more visible to others. There are also more practical adoptions that can be made within our lifestyles such as using fewer plastics and opting for glass or recycled woven materials instead; understanding that debt is, in essence, a greedy and ultimately divisive strategy of control; managing our contributions to food waste; going thrifting instead of buying new products; growing our own food when possible; and supporting one another despite outward appearances or judgment of character. Bigger life decisions have the greatest impact on affecting social change. *A specific challenge us white leftists will face is knowing when to shut up and let others speak*. We cannot control the dialogue over problems we don’t face. Likewise, we have to be conscious of the way in which segregation works in regard to housing. If we perpetuate white-dominated housing districts, we serve only to strengthen racial segregation and oppression. Pornography in its current form is plaguing the minds of men and boys the world ‘round, redefining sex and intimacy in the shape of dominance, greed, and cruelty…

Which all comes crashing down at the realization that there simply is no ethical consumption under capitalism. Our everyday lives are entangled within the injustices of the system at large. We rely on services like Amazon, Google, Facebook, and \*shudders\* Spectrum because we have little other choice. We buy from brands like Nestlé, Tesla, Coca-Cola, and Nike. The complications of globalism are realized in the seemingly fruitless pursuit to be ethical consumers. We still need to lead our own lifes; we still deserve to have fun and live meaningfully. How do we do that while also doing our best to oppose capitalism?

All of these things will be hard to keep in mind, especially at first. Bringing compassion into our immediate worldview loosens the constrictions we learned while growing up in these such environments. An assertion of a limit dictates how we act in the world and keeps the dedication of compassion at the forefront of our minds. *The reality of rebellion speaks to the magnitude of the problems at hand; we are going to struggle swimming against the current. But it is in doing so that gives anything meaning.*