# 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.*

ART AND CREATION

A society that values the beauty of creation so little is a clear symptom of a society arranged on principles misaligned with life itself. We need look no further than the proliferation of homelessness in the US to see the true worth of human life under capitalism. Art for art’s sake is of little use to capitalism except maybe to provide an illusory form of individuality to satisfy the efficient operation of bureaucracy in “control societies” such as our own.4 Art certainly has its place in capitalist realism, whether in the form of propaganda in more authoritarian, fascist societies or through corporate identification strategies employed by negligent graphic design in neoliberal societies.

Art is powerful, and the more it is restricted, the more restricted are the freedoms of the people. “The society based on production is only productive, not creative,” Camus argues.5 But are we even that? We are the richest nation in the world, but for what? We outsource most of our production to eastern countries where labor is cheaper, if not free, while funding and supplying weapons to countries we know will only use them in the name of fascism. Fisher demonstrates that our societal obsession with production—because it has no particular aim or goal—effects “stagnation and conservatism,” “fear and cynicism,” but not innovation.6 With the economic need for work, most of us are forced to slave away at jobs either ripe for automation or dull to the mind.

I think what people get wrong most often when trying to understand the perspective of anarchists, or even socialists for that matter, is that almost all of them aren’t advocating for the abolition of work. Society as a whole would not be able to give up that much commercial freedom, especially when a good chunk of it helps people feel like themselves—whether it be in finding a personal clothing style or simply having niche interests. Most of us agree that the vast amount of production work can be automated (and some argue that the state should handle such production entirely) and that the work of a just society looks more like individuals chasing after their own passions than just doing what they can because they need to. “Industrial society will only open the way to a new civilization by restoring to the worker the dignity of a creator,” writes Camus in section IV, *Rebellion & Art*. “In other words, by making him apply his interest and his intelligence as much to the work itself as to what it produces.”7 Work, for the rebel, is as much a passion project as it is productive. If we have the privilege to do so, we ought to think about who it is we are benefiting through our work. Modern graphic design is plagued by the studio zombie, reinforcing positive brand identities for corporations that use slave labor and union busting to make more and more of a profit.

Now more than ever, our work has the potential to uplift the spirits of the working class and revolutionize what it means to do work in the first place. Beside making ends meet, work should serve oneself. Work, insofar that it is fulfilling, is ultimately creative at heart. Everyone has the potential to be an artist in their own right, through the pursuit of passion and the expression of compassion in solidarity.

But capitalism bogs us down. It holds our creativity captive and condemns the individual to derive meaning from the proliferation of others, not of themselves. Art becomes something secondary; either invisible to the public or undervalued by limitation of objective worth. What matters then is the drive of the individual. Perhaps they hear a calling deep within their heart, reaching through the mist of a demotivated society. The artist rebels against time, rejecting its complete subjection of their being in the hopes of a greater world. The rebel, by invoking reality, exposes to the world a weakness in the foundation of their lives. Others, through exposure to this reality, begin to dream of a better world like the artist and provide strength in solidarity against the norm. On the basis of values, the artist “makes destiny to measure,”8 transposing the suffering of their absurd life for the beauty of their world. Art is the great liberator—the liberator of self.

The reality of rebellion under capitalism is grim; there are so many forces at play. No one person can influence the tides of revolution. Yet, the sum of individual persons is more powerful than any force yet known. Compassion guides us to founding a better life for everyone by demonstrating a common respect for all beings. No matter what.