

Page One Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 3

April-May 2019

The Criminalization of Autonomy

The female body as a vessel for injustice*

As of this writing on May 19, 2019, abortion is still legal in all 50 states in Turtle Island. That does not mean that it is easily accessible, however, as we have seen the erosion of said accessibility through the closing of clinics, defunding of programs, enforced “24 hour waiting periods”, and the allowance for doctors to “conscientiously object” to the procedure in the last handful of decades.

This literal life and death battle continues as a ramped up anti-choice movement works its way up to the state level. Since the gavel hit and *Roe v. Wade* was officially passed in 1973, political careerists have been slowly chipping away at any basic rights those with uteruses have to decide what is appropriate for them and what they are capable of.

Georgia, Missouri, Ohio, Mississippi and Kentucky have all passed “heartbeat” abortion bills, making it illegal for a woman to get an abortion after being pregnant for six to eight weeks (depending on the state), only two to four weeks after a missed period. This means that as early as two weeks after a missed period, if a woman were to suspect that her period truly wasn’t coming and takes a pregnancy test, it would be too late to have any option but to carry the baby to term.

Amidst this coordinated stripping of rights, Alabama passed a bill that would outlaw abortion all together, even in the cases of rape or incest.

While these laws are not currently in actual effect and many face a lengthy court battle in the coming months, this is a signal fire. This is infuriating for all people, but especially for individuals who have uteruses. Simply put, if a uterus-having person becomes pregnant, it is simply asinine that the decision of how to proceed with the pregnancy is up to anyone aside from that person. If we’re not being totally misandrist, we can envision that many of said individuals would also want to include the person who contributed to that physiological state in the decision making as well.

Why, then, are politicians and the state so

absolutely obsessed with policing this particular situation and banning these individuals from making a cogent, informed decision as to how to proceed with such a life event?

The answer is rape culture. And misogyny. Which inevitably magnify and validate each other. Female bodies have always been up for consumption. The new law in Alabama carries a 99 year sentence for both the woman who gets an abortion and the doctor who performs it. The maximum sentence for a rapist in the same state is 11 years. That is rape culture at its most obvious.

The female body and form are routinely exploited in every sense of the word and in any way you can imagine. In advertisements. In romantic relationships. In family structures. In radical spaces. On the street. In religious centers. In schools. At home. At work. In music. In movies. In television. On the radio. In war. In peace. At protests. In literature. On the internet. On social media. In sex shops. The fabric of this society is woven with the oppression and exploitation of the female body.

It comes as no surprise to me, an anarcha-feminist cis female individual with absolutely zero trust in the state and its structures, that the government would erode any semblance of bodily autonomy that female bodied people have achieved for only a handful of decades. Power inevitably means domination, and domination when it comes to the physiological ability to become pregnant and carry a child means dictating who can and cannot have ownership over that process. In the case of these states, the government has ruled in favor of itself.

However, although I am not surprised, I am furious. I am hurt and scared and worried for the individuals who, if these laws take effect, will lose the ownership over their body. I see this as a signal fire. We may see a new crop of political prisoners coming out of this. These oppressive, insulting, and absurd laws are to me one of the best arguments against the state. I see no other explanation. I fear, though, that liberals will be soft and argue for getting someone different in office, for donating money to organizations, and for sitting home to wait and see what happens.

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We can't wait to see what happens. We already see what is happening. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is fighting these laws and groups like the National Network of Abortion Funds are raising money for women to have access to safe abortions. That is amazing, we need that. But we also need a movement.

We need a movement of people who are done. Who are not interested in backsliding and affirming rape culture and the dehumanization of women. We need people who are willing to make noise and insist that the most basic right a person has in this "country" is to choose what their body can and cannot do. It is no one else's fucking decision. Stop pretending there is any nuance, get in the streets, make some noise and say NO. ■

**This article is written with the understanding that not all women have uteruses, and that not all uterus-having individuals are women.*

Please indulge us in a brief foray into theory:

Individual autonomy and collective solidarity are mutually reinforcing and irreducible aspects of anarchist ethics. Consent is implied in the concept of autonomy; every person's right to choose what they do with their own body at every moment is fundamental and unceasing. To paraphrase Gustave Landauer, any violation of consent is an act of tyranny. And since an injury to one is an injury to all, solidarity demands that we respect and strengthen one another's autonomy, defending and expanding space for each and all to live fully consensually in all aspects of our lives. ■

Early Anarchism and Birth Control

Anarchists and their allies have been at the forefront of the vital struggle for bodily autonomy through birth control for over a century. In fact, one of—if not *the*—first public lecture that disclosed actual birth control methods was given by our very own Emma Goldman, right here in NYC. As a nurse serving working class and poor patients she had worked for years with women seeking birth control, including abortions, but was circumspect on whether she had performed any. At any rate merely distributing literature on birth control was illegal at the time, ostensibly because it was lewd, but in reality for the same reason the right to abortion is under attack today: to control women's bodies is to control their

communities (see again Federici, esp 'Caliban and the Witch). Red Emma as she was already known did a short stint in prison for her speech, but as with any well-planned 'propaganda of the deed' the repression lit more fires than it put out, and we can directly trace many gains in self-health care for female bodied people to her work. There is clearly much more work to do in this regard, as recent statist clampdowns and threats have shown us, to defend and expand space and autonomy for all women, whether or not they need access to birth control. Ensuring free and safe access for those who do will without question help ensure the rights of all.

Of course, Emma was far from alone in demanding access to birth control. A year earlier, Japanese anarcho-feminist Noe Itō had called for legalizing abortion in Japan, for which the June 1915 edition of her journal *Seitō* was banned. Yet even within the movement the debate continued, as patriarchal and even naturalist notions hindered some from reaching the logical conclusions of the Ideal. It seems that much of the international anarchist movement was slower to adopt the call for women's autonomy, though by the 1930's the CNT in Spain, thanks to the agitation of the *Mujeres Libres* collective, had adopted abortion as an official position. Other early anarchist proponents of birth control included Alexander Berkman (through his paper "The Blast"), Scottish anarchist Guy Aldred, Lucy Parsons and others. It is worth noting that while some early anarchists were distracted by pseudo-scientific "naturalism" which impeded their ability to think rationally about issues of reproduction, many anarchists regardless of gender did understand that a female bodied person's right autonomy is consistent with and fundamental to anarchist ethics and practice.

In the following page is an open letter to the press that Emma Goldman wrote from prison in 1916, following the above-mentioned arrest. ■



My dear Sir:-

In view of the fact that the Birth Control question is now dominant before the American public, I hope that you will not permit your prejudice against anarchism and myself as its exponent to refuse me fair play. I have lived and worked in New York City for twenty-five years. On more than one occasion I have been misrepresented in the press and anarchism has been made to appear hideous and ridiculous. I am not complaining; I am merely stating a fact which you, I am sure, know as well as I.

But now the question involved in my arrest which took place Friday, February 11th and which is to be heard Monday, February 28th is birth control, a world wide movement sponsored and supported by the greatest men and women through Europe and America, such as Prof. August Forel, Havelock Ellis, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Dr. Drysdale in Europe and in America by Prof. Jacobi, Dr. Robinson and many others. A movement which has originated in minds of people who were both scientific and humanitarian, and which at the present time is backed by science, sociology and economic necessity. Certainly you will not refuse me a hearing in behalf of such an issue.

I have lectured on birth control for years; many times in New York and other cities, before representative audiences. At almost every meeting plain clothes men were present taking copious notes. It was therefore no secret that I am sponsoring birth control and the necessity of imparting knowledge on this most vital question.

Friday, February 4th, I again delivered this lecture in Forward Hall, New York, when three thousand people attempted to crowd the place. As a result of this popular clamor for knowledge on birth control, another meeting was arranged for Tuesday, February 8th at the New Star Casino. Again an eager throng attended. The meeting was orderly and everything went off as peacefully and intelligently as on all other occasions when I lecture if not interfered with by the police. Then on Friday, February 11th, just as I was about to enter the Forward Hall to deliver a lecture on Atheism, a subject which has no bearing at all upon birth control, I was arrested, taken to a filthy station house, then hustled into a patrol wagon, rushed to the Clinton Street jail, there searched in the most vulgar manner by a coarse looking matron in the presence of two detectives, a thing which would outrage the most hardened criminal. Then I was locked up in a cell until my bondsman released me on five hundred dollars bail.

Now all this was unnecessary in as much as I am too well known in the country to run away. Besides, one who has stood the brunt for an ideal for twenty-five years is not likely to run away. A summons would have been enough. But because I happen to be Emma Goldman and the exponent of Anarchism, the whole brutality of the

New York police had to be employed in dealing with me, which only goes to prove that everything else in society advances except the Police Department. I confess I was credulous enough to believe that some change had taken place since my last arrest in New York City, which was in 1906, but I discovered my mistake.

However, this is not vital, but what is of importance and that which I hope you will place before your leaders is the fact that the methods of persecution of the part of the reactionary element in New York City in relation to any modern idea pertaining to birth control have evidently not ended with the death of Anthony Comstock. His successor, wanting to ingratiate himself, is leaving nothing undone to make any intelligent discussion of that vital subject possible. Unfortunately, he and the police are evidently not aware that birth control has reached such dimensions that no amount of persecution and petty chicanery can halt its sweep.

It is hardly necessary to point out that whatever may be the law on birth control, those like myself who are disseminating knowledge along that line are not doing so because of personal gain or because we consider it low or obscene. We do it because we know the desperate condition among the masses of workers and even professional people, when they cannot meet the demands of numerous children. It is upon that ground that I mean to make my fight when I go into court. Unless I am very much mistaken, I am sustained in my contention by the fundamental principles in America, namely, that when a law has outgrown time and necessity, it must go and the only way to get rid of the law, is to awaken the public to the fact that it has outlived its purposes and that is precisely what I have been doing and mean to do in the future.

I am planning a campaign of publicity through a large meeting in Carnegie Hall and through every other channel that will reach the intelligent American public to the fact that while I am not particularly anxious to go to jail, I should yet be glad to do so, if thereby I can add my might to the importance of birth control and the wiping off our antiquated law upon the statute.

Hoping that you will not refuse to acquaint your readers with the facts set forth here.

Sincerely yours,

A QUICK NOTE...

We don't want to take up too much space discussing Julian Assange's arrest on April 11, 2019, subsequent hearings and potential extradition to Turtle Island, but we do want to say:

■ ASSANGE IS AN ACCUSED RAPIST. WE ARE DISGUSTED AT THE LEFT'S IGNORANCE TO THIS FACT AND THEIR INSISTENCE THAT IT WAS ALL A SCHEME ORCHESTRATED BY THE SO-CALLED UNITED STATES TO UNDERMINE HIS CREDIBILITY AND THAT OF WIKILEAKS.

BELIEVE SURVIVORS.

■ CHELSEA MANNING HAS BEEN PUT BACK IN FEDERAL CUSTODY AFTER A BRIEF 7 DAYS OF FREEDOM IN BETWEEN GRAND JURY SUBPOENAS. SHE IS AGAIN BEING HELD IN CONTEMPT OF COURT FOR REFUSING TO TESTIFY IN FRONT OF A GRAND JURY. IN THE WAKE OF ASSANGE'S ARREST, HE IS CLEARLY PART OF THE REASON SHE WAS SUBPOENAED IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE DISTRICT COURT ALSO ORDERED THAT SHE BE FINED \$500/DAY FOR EVERY DAY SHE IS IN CUSTODY. AFTER 60 DAYS THIS INCREASES TO \$1,000/DAY.

■ THE INDICTMENT THAT WAS MADE PUBLIC BY THE SO-CALLED UNITED STATES FOR ASSANGE DETAILS HIS WORKING WITH MANNING. THEY ARE GOING AFTER HIM FOR OFFERING TO HELP CRACK A PASSWORD OF AN ARMY COMPUTER SO THAT SHE COULD GAIN ACCESS TO MORE DOCUMENTS AND ALSO CONTINUOUSLY ENCOURAGED HER TO SEND HIM MORE CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS.

■ AS BARRETT BROWN, JOURNALIST, ACTIVIST, AND FORMER POLITICAL PRISONER DETAILED IN A SHORT VIDEO ON APRIL 12TH, THE "U.S" GOVERNMENT IS GOING AFTER ASSANGE BECAUSE IT IS CONVENIENT FOR THEM AND IN THEIR BEST INTEREST. THERE ARE PLENTY OF SHADY JOURNALISTS THAT THEY LEAVE ALONE.

FREE CHELSEA!

Calls for Support

Chelsea Manning: Chelsea is back in federal custody for refusing to testify in front of a grand jury. After spending 63 days at Alexandria Detention Center she was released for a brief seven day stint before being remanded on May 16th. Write her a letter of support and donate <xychelsea.is>

Chelsea Elizabeth Manning A0181426
William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center
2001 Mill Road Alexandria, VA 22314

Jalil Muntaqim: Urge Governor Cuomo to grant Jalil's application to Commute the Sentence to Time Served. You must refer to Jalil as: Anthony Bottom, 77A4283, Sullivan Correctional Facility, Fallsburg NY 12733-0116. Call: (518) 474-8390; Tweet: @NYGovCuomo Write: The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capital Building
Albany, NY 12224
<freejalil.com for more info>

Russell "Maroon" Shoatz: Maroon was seen in the prison infirmary on May 4th with some health problems. He is unable to make calls, get emails, or have visits. His support crew asks that folx send get well letters!

Smart Communications/PA DOC
Russell Maroon Shoatz #AF3855
SCI Dallas
Post Office Box 33028
St Petersburg, Florida 33733

Released!

Dion Ortiz was released! This 22 year old water protector was targeted and charged with a federal felony for his actions protecting the water and fighting for indigenous sovereignty at Standing Rock. He was released on April 4, 2019 to a halfway house in New Mexico to serve the rest of his time.

Donate to his release fund here:
<https://www.pauopal.me/dionortiz>



Page One Collective focuses on spreading the word/s of and about political prisoners past and present. Our name comes from the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) justification for rejecting a letter sent to a U.S. held political prisoner:

"Page one calls for solidarity"

Write to us!

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Twitter: @page1collective