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Independent Research into Radical Political Theory

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Annotated Bibliography

1. de Cleyre, V. (1912). Direct Action. Retrieved May 19, 2017, from http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-direct-action

In this article, de Cleyre discusses the idea that direct action is utilized by most people in many different situations throughout their lives. Although Direct action has been given a reputation revolving around violence or property destruction, even simple things like creating a plan and executing it without the help of government or authority is direct action. Though sometimes negative things can occur because of direct action, most often productive results come from it.

This source was useful to me because it gave me resources to help describe direct action in ways that are not discussed in modern politics. When people hear the words, “direct action,” they often think of anarchists smashing windows or protesters pouring cement onto train tracks. Now I can describe that strikes are direct action, choosing to disrupt a city council meeting is direct action, or even asserting your own ideologies in places where they are not generally welcomed is direct action. Claiming your identities can be direct action. Compared to other sources I have used for this ILC, de Cleyre was very palatable and straightforward. Other sources, such as Kropotkin, take a lot of time and effort to read and understand if you have little background on the topics.

De Cleyre fits into my research well because she is an anarchist. The beauty of anarchism that has been shown to me throughout this quarter is that anarchist theorists and participants have different ways of describing topics and solutions, or understandings about certain parts of the ideologies. I chose de Cleyre because she was a woman who was active in the late 1800’s and the early 1900’s, and because she mentions radical organizations I have been studying throughout the past seven weeks such as the IWW.

2. De Cleyre, V. (1890). The Economic Tendency of Freethought. Retrieved May 19, 2017, from [http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-the-economic- tendency-of-freethought](http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-the-economic-)

In this article, de Cleyre argues that, as an atheist, she can identify more with arguments surrounding government and economics versus arguing about God. Since she can only understand and analyze what she can see, feel, and experience, she finds no reason to continue to invest in arguments about God. She sees religion, especially western and white religions, as systems of control that do not have to carry the burden of proof. Government can b e easily challenged and debunked because there is so much evidence against it.

I find this source to be helpful in multiple ways. One is that, for the past few quarters, I have learned about how western christianity has been used as justification for colonization, racism, homophobia and sexism. I often see christianity as part of the government, not separate from it as those in power would like us to think. Another reason I find this article to be relevant to my study is because I am attempting to get multiple views from different radical theorists. Some never mention god, some critique all religion, and some only critique religion when it is used as a tool of exploitation and oppression. De Cleyre is the first theorist that I have read who has discussed religion more in depth and completely as a critique.

3. Mahkno, N. (1996). *The Struggle Against the State and Other Essays*. San Francisco: AK Press.

This book is a compilation of writings by Nestor Mahkno during the early 20th century. Mahkno was a Ukranian anarchist who witnessed the rise of Bolshevism in Russia, as well as the slaughter of the anarchist resistance there. In this text, he discusses the importance of diversity of tactics, taking up arms, organizing the proletariat as well as the lumpen-prole, and always being in resistance against a state. He challenges the idea of state communism and encourages radicals and revolutionaries to always attempt to tear down a state wherever it tries to establish itself during or after a revolution. In one piece, he wrote an open letter to Spanish anarchists telling them not to trust state communists or they may face the slaughter that Russian and Ukranian anarchists went through during the Russian revolution. Mahkno supports the ideas of libertarian communism (also known as anarcho-communism) and anarcho-syndicalism. One of the things I really liked about this compilation was that he mentions that revolution and anarchism have no strict guidelines. This is one of the things that separates these ideologies from state communism; state communists have strict plans on how to overthrow the bourgeoisie and create a socialist society run by a state that should eventually turn into communism. Anarchism is more about overthrowing the state, giving the power to run daily lives back to the people who live it, and constantly working towards something better. There is no one tangible end goal aside from destroying hierarchy, capitalism, and the state because the goals in an anarchist society have the room to freely grow and change with circumstances.

This was a great selection for my research. Since I have already read Rosa Luxemburg, a Russian communist, it was enlightening to read an anarchist from the same time period. Luxemburg had critiques of anarchism, and Mahkno had critiques of communism. I think it is important to read from theorists to subscribe to the same ideologies from different time periods as well, so having read Kropotkin, Malatesta, and Goldman already this seemed applicable to what I’m trying to understand throughout this quarter.

Mahkno was very against anti-semitism, the state and state communism. He did not really talk about gender issues; this seems like it should have been mentioned more since anarchism is an ideology that is against the patriarchy. He did talk about how important it is to radicalize not just industrial workers but peasants as well. This is applicable to modern contexts because, as shown throughout this quarter in my writing, I am finding that it is much harder to engage in a revolution where only the workers are participating. Many people are not even considered workers in capitalist economies because they do homecare, they are students, or they do not participate in the economy as industrial workers do. I would say that Mahkno has not changed the way I understand anarchism, but he definitely provided insights and discussions that I have not read yet.

4. Self-Defense, Self-Respect, & Self-Determination by Mabel Williams and Robert F. Williams [Audio blog interview]. (2014, April 23). Retrieved May 19, 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfzH0jT84k4

This was an interview with Mabel Williams, a participant and supporter of armed resistance during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. She says that when growing up, all she knew was segregation and she had not really questioned it much. Once she got married, she felt that there were many barriers for her and her husband in attempting to get their family started and supported. Mabel never thought she should go to the white schools, and had never heard too many arguments about race as a child. Her husband, Robert Williams, was part of a family that had come directly from slavery. Robert listened to the news and talked about current events, and his grandparents were engaged in race discussions often. Mabel was exposed to race politics. Robert would write protest letters in newspapers regarding discrimination and segregation. He ended up joining the marines so that he could get access to education; they did not provide on the promises they had made. The FBI was investigating Robert while he was in the military, making copies of the letters and journals Mabel was sending him. The government knew that Robert was trained well with weapons and feared him spreading that information to other black community members.

In the mid-1950’s, the Civil Rights Movement was expanding rapidly. Once Robert came back from the military, he became the president of the local NAACP branch in Monroe, North Carolina. Mabel and Robert became very active in the legal channels fighting racism and black rights. They began to realize that they were not receiving justice from the state, and began to accept that violence in self-defense could be utilized by black communities. They began to arm themselves to defend themselves against white supremacists and police, and spreading the message of self-defense to others. At the same time, people in Africa and South America were arming themselves as well. Solidarity between Indigenous communities and people of color spread from country to country. Robert was accused of kidnapping that he had not participated in.

Mabel and Robert received many death threats. Robert started the Black Armed Guard in North Carolina to defend black communities against the KKK, and he wrote many editorials as well as a book titled *Negroes with Guns* (1962). He and his wife went into exile in Cuba in 1961, where Robert started writing for a newspaper once again. In 1965 they moved to China. They returned to the U.S. in 1969, and Robert was immediately arrested for the kidnapping charge from years earlier. The charges were dropped in 1975.

I chose this podcast because these are two participants in the Civil Rights Movement who do not get discussed in school. They advocated for armed self-defense and revolt of black communities. This is relevant to my project because I want to bring attention to radical politics, and the fact that their story was never discussed in my education during Civil Rights lectures is a failure of the U.S. school system. These stories of resistance and solidarity between oppressed people across the globe have purposefully been erased. Racial struggles are important to the fight against capitalism and hierarchy.

There were rallies held in support of the Williams’ struggle throughout the world. They inspired many people to strive for self-determination and reparations. I think this story was important for me to discuss not only because it was a huge part of history that has not been discussed enough, but because it also is still applicable to struggles in modern society. Robert and Mabel resented being part of a white supremacist society and a colonial society, which we still live in.