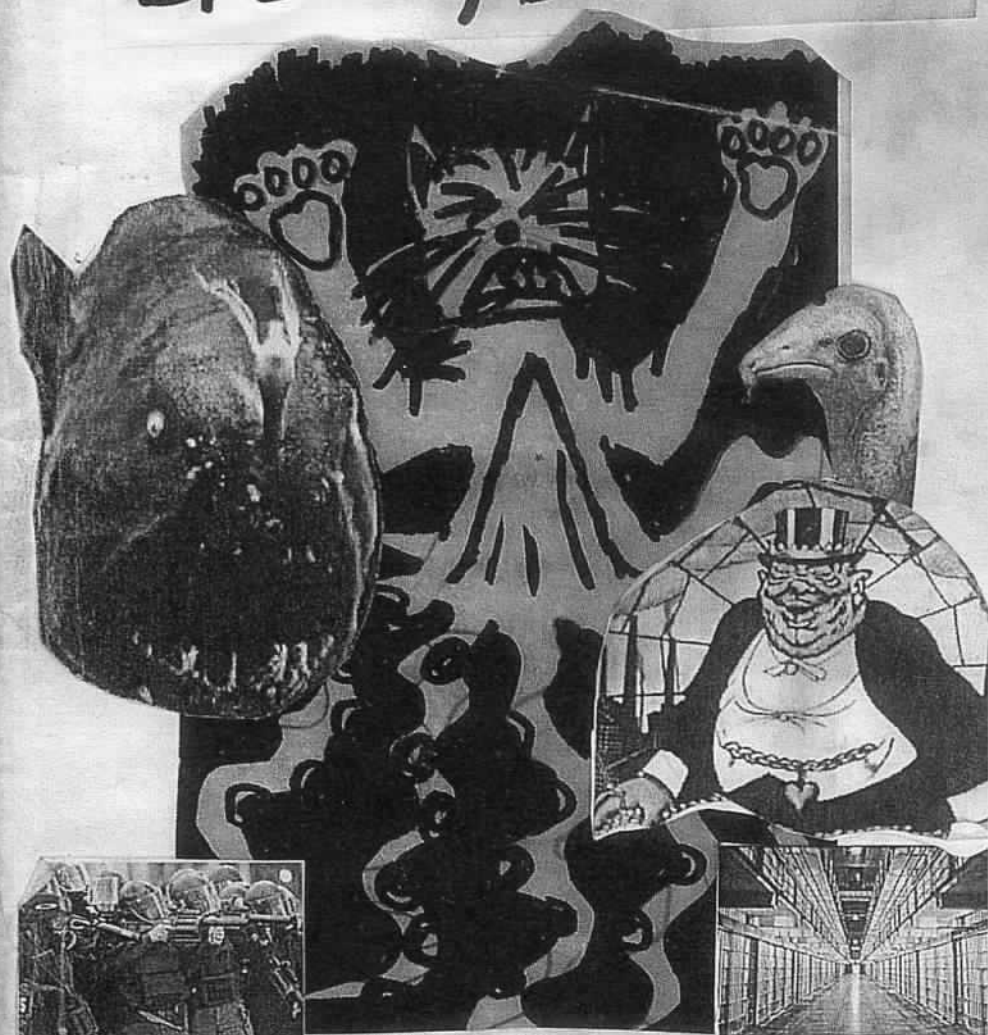


# POR que IGUAL TE VOL. 1

MUERES (cu2 foule yanna)  
die anfu2p.)

By Danny Dos Paltas



June  
2017

CONTENT WARNING: Problematic, contradictory and introspective musings on colonization, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-indigenusness and Latinx identity, told from the perspective of a strange Gen X refugee boi based in Tkaranto.

Special acknowledgements and gratitude:

To my daughter Minerva Antonia Williams-Rojas, for motivating and guiding each and every thing that I do.

To Monika Estrella Negra, for your invaluable counsel, support, guidance, inspiration and motivation as my muse, for pushing me to do all the things I have for far too long been too fearful and filled with doubt to do, which my life literally depends on.

To my parents, Alejandro Rojas and Elena Orrego, for your generosity of spirit, richness in legacy, love, resilience, determination and continued will to do what is necessary and what is right.

To mi abuelita, Manena Orrego, for embodying unconditional support and forever pushing me to recognize my own magick.

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Original cover art by Danny Dos Paltas

To be half cat/half octopus is to be in a perpetual state of purgatory, for one half is unable to survive in the water, while one half cannot survive on the land. In theory, this creature has what it takes to survive anywhere; in reality, there is no place on this realm it can legitimately call a safe home.

I was born on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1975, a full year and a half after the U\$-sanctioned and enabled fascist military coup d' etat which took place on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1973, in a vast long stretch of territory between the Andes mountains and the Pacific Ocean known by the Mapuche people as Wallmapu ("the surrounding land"), but re-named Chile by the Spanish/euro-mestizo colonizers in 1880.

But I was not born there. I was literally born on the battlefield, in transit as it were, as my family was one among the approximately 30,000 who fled the fascist seizure of power, targets painted explicitly on both my parents' backs for their involvements in grassroots revolutionary communist movements and for their roles in supporting the democratically elected socialist Unidad Popular government of Salvador Allende.

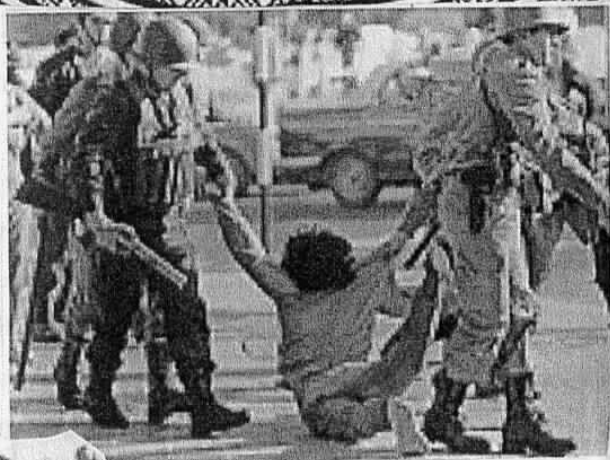
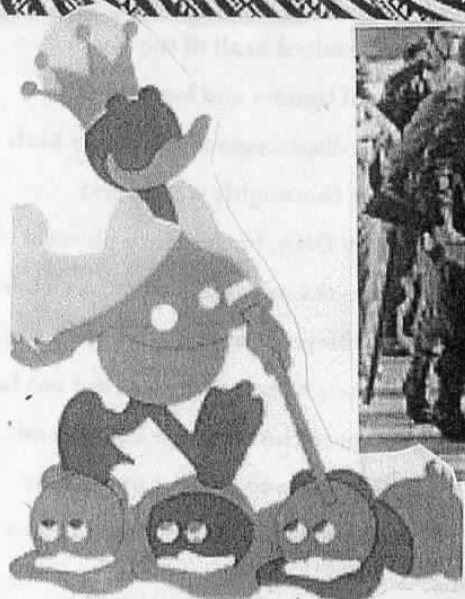
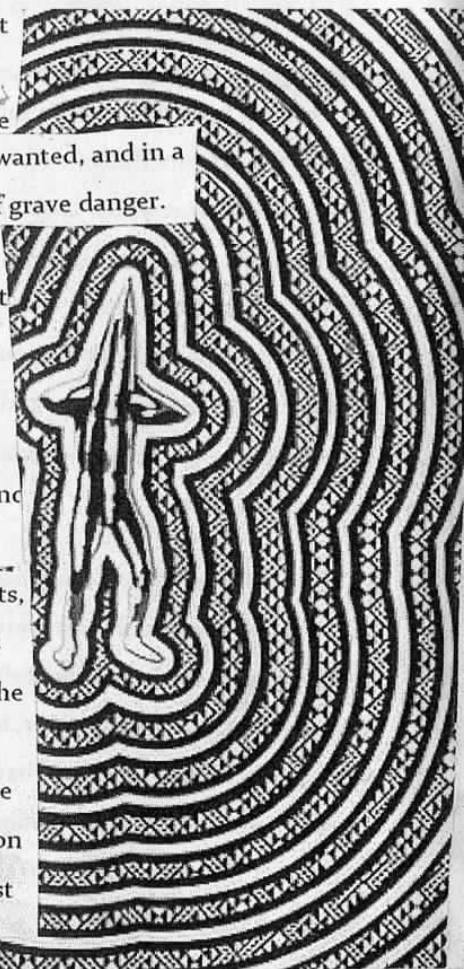
My conception resulted in all of the multigenerational trauma and legacies of colonization and displacement carried by both vessels becoming thoroughly woven and crystallized in my DNA, birthed into physical form as it were in the midst of a situation where we were in ten different countries before I even reached three years of age, where we did not have legal status or speak the language in any, and where I was never able to set foot in the only place I can somewhat legitimately refer to as a homeland until the age of 11.

knew little to nothing about who we were, what we were, or why we were under the circumstances we were in. All I knew was that we

were foreigners, we were unwanted, and in a highly vulnerable position of grave danger.

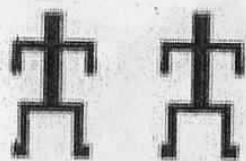
This condition and resulting disposition has chased, followed and defined me all throughout my life. It's been a rather tough one to shake. I would love to think it's given me some great powers of observation and empathy, in some balanced addition of nuance to my confusion and overwhelming sense of precariousness.

My parents were both revolutionary communists, who incidentally originated from opposite class backgrounds; my father, Alejandro Rojas, was the youngest member at the time of the Partido Comunista (PC) as well as being president of the Federacion Estudiantil Chilena, who ended up on dictator Augusto Pinochet's ten most wanted list after the coup.



In his childhood, he was basically an orphan who largely raised himself, with his older brother Andres. Their father, my paternal grandfather, Jorge Eleuterio Rojas Herrera, was pretty much of full blooded indigenous ancestry, but I couldn't even tell you if he was Mapuche, or Aymara, or Pehuenche, or Telhuelche, or Yamana, or Selk'nam, or Qawasqar.

The story goes that he went very far out of his way to be as much of a *huinca* (white man) as possible. He was apparently a staunch Catholic, a devout reactionary conservative who always wore a three piece suit, and he was apparently also a very heavy drinker.



Throughout much of so-called "Latin America", being full blooded if you have indigenous ancestry has not quite historically had the same meaning or significance as has been structured here in the North in and of itself, although probably not quite in the ways some may immediately assume; you can be full blooded, but the second you leave your territory, turn your back on your traditional way of life, work in the white man's factories, start in any way aiding him in the process of extracting resources from your territory, join his military or police, start wearing his clothes and speaking his language and practicing his religion and worshipping his god in his image, you are considered to have become white yourself.

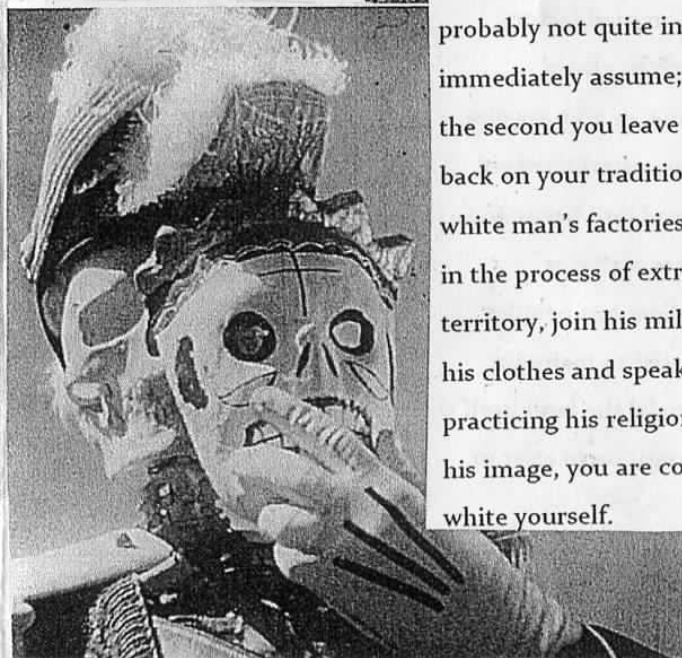






Photo credit: Monika Estrella Negra

This is no matter of mere symbolism tied to identity; the repetition of these choices and continual reaffirmation of their implications over time impacts and completely changes your status and classification in society.

There is no discounting of the myriad factors dictating how and why so much has been fractured or severed in this time, or why anyone would be forced to flee their ancestral territory, displaced into the cities, coerced into becoming agents of colonization (whether active or passive), or how diligently indigenous peoples anywhere have to fight and resist to maintain sovereignty, let alone how crucial the land itself is to the ability of a people to continue to exist in any form.



On the contrary; it is precisely due to this recognition and definitive importance why the

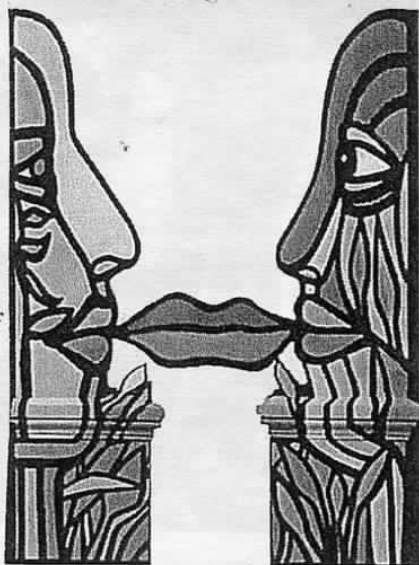
reneging on certain basic agreements and the willful treacherous disdain and neglect required is taken how it is.

For all intents and purposes, the dominant mestizo identity privileged as the societal norm throughout all of the Southern-Central areas of the land mass known by the Kuna people of what is now known as Panama as Abya Yala ("the land of vital blood in full maturity") but more commonly referred to by the Eurocentric handle of "the Americas" is not just a mere matter of miscegenation between indigenous peoples and European invaders.

There are many people of full indigenous ancestry who are considered to be mestizos, based primarily on class location and proximity to mainstream colonizer culture.

It is not an unusual experience at all for many people with undeniably more indigenous ancestry than me to not even begin to acknowledge these indigenous parts of themselves until they are far, far, far away on alien territories such as these ones, usually when connections are made with indigenous peoples over on this side and similarities come to be recognized and acknowledged as a whole, and, of course, after being around actual white people in a society where they consider themselves to be the "hosts" for any significant period of time.

It goes without saying that this is an inherently violent, exclusive and effectively genocidal process, and whether this is openly and honestly





rosily some accounts may attempt to depict it, this historical reality is one of the cornerstones of so-called "Latinx" identity, as it has come to be defined in the 527 years since folks such as myself have come to exist, as a direct result of this colonization.

Abuelito Jorge apparently went very far out of his way in general to keep his origins on the hush hush, which is why I can't really tell you that much about him. I suppose it could be speculated that this was quite possibly a primary factor why he briefly married my Russian Jewish grandmother, Ena Wainer Normann, who would have probably been one of the whitest women in proximity at the time.

It must be considered that this would have been during the immediate aftermath of the end of the Second World War, during that most definitive period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when, with the advent of film and television, all of Europe's savagery became plain, naked and documented on an unprecedented scale for all the world to see, thus playing a pivotal role in the global erosion of its characteristically white supremacist narrative about it being the pinnacle of civilization and reason, and all of its other "master race" fantasies which continue to persist.



While the destruction of this mythology would come to play an instrumental role in the emergence of revolutionary anti-colonial movements all throughout all of the regions of the world once upon a time known geopolitically as the "Third World", it was also seized upon by many ruling governments throughout said regions as an joint opportunity to whiten their populations, in their ongoing mission to further displace indigenous peoples from their territories.

During this time, the governments of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru and Colombia opened their borders to Germans, Russians, Slavs, Italians, Spaniards, Poles and Hungarians fleeing the war as a means to do just that, seizing and handing off portions of land that was never theirs to claim or give away in any way, shape, or form in the first place. My own Russian Jewish side of the family would have arrived in Chile as part of this wave, and they very much benefited directly from this process of dispossession, coming to a land where they were able to acquire the privileges and delusions of whiteness in ways they never would have been able to do back in Europe.

It is quite the epic story, in fact; family stories abound about the brutal poverty and violence they had endured for generations in Russia, and a great many were slaughtered and annihilated, both during pre-revolutionary Tsarist rule and during the Nazi invasion and occupation of the Soviet Union.



# Ancestry is an interesting thing

I have a legendary great-grand uncle by the name of Joseph Normann, who had assumed that his whole entire family had perished, and in turn ended up becoming an anti-fascist partisan guerrilla fighter. For years, he lived in the caves and trees, surviving off roots and berries, carrying out many deadly missions and daring acts of sabotage, as well as ambushing and slitting the throats of SS troops, blowing up Nazi trains, bridges and railways, liberating captives, and eventually becoming heralded as a great war hero in the former USSR.

He literally only found out that a whole side of his family had survived and fled to South America some 40 years later, just one week before his death.

While these Jewish relations of mine would have definitely encountered and endured their share of anti-Semitism in a deeply colonized, heavily Catholic society with a highly nationalistic culture such as Chile's, the reality is that their newly acquired de facto whiteness in exactly such a place would have absolutely privileged them by default, and not in any abstract ways either.

They definitely did close ranks, and part of this meant that neither my papa nor my late uncle were ever fully accepted as being part of that side of the family, and with Abuelito Jorge having deserted and abandoned them while they were both small children, they basically ended up raising themselves on the streets, as so many children across so many generations so often end up doing.

My own relationship to this Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry of mine is much like my relationship to my other respective ancestries; some of the adjectives best applied would include strained, distant, uneasy, incomplete, fragmented and contradictory as fuck.

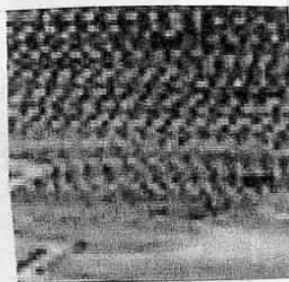
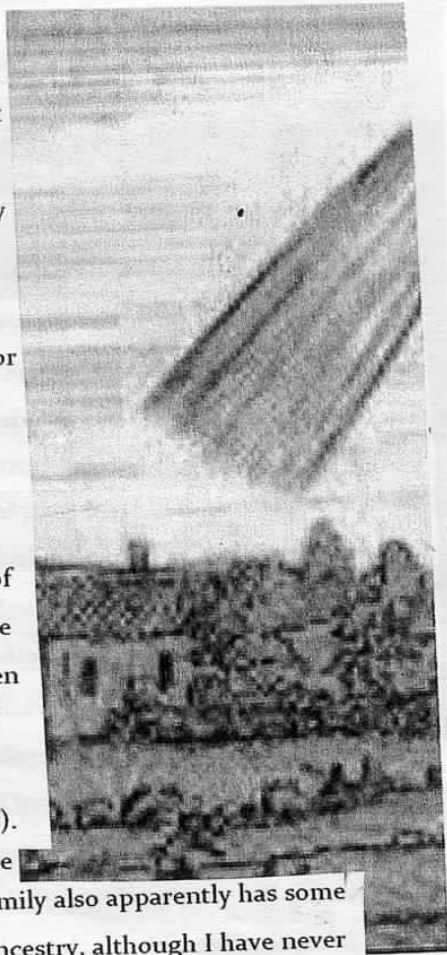
Besides my own assessments about their historical role as willing participants in a colonization process, there is also the reality that this lineage traditionally passed on through matrilineal bloodlines was passed on through my papa, and then there is the additional fact that I was baptized at birth as a Catholic, and was raised with zero connection to Jewish tradition or culture whatsoever.

My mama, Elena Orrego, on the other hand, comes from a large and politically progressive, highly bohemian yet highly aristocratic family of mainly Basque and Andalusian origins who once upon a time quite wealthy, until the 1920's, when the family was permanently fractured, and half the family went communist and the other half went fascist (the fascist half took all the money).

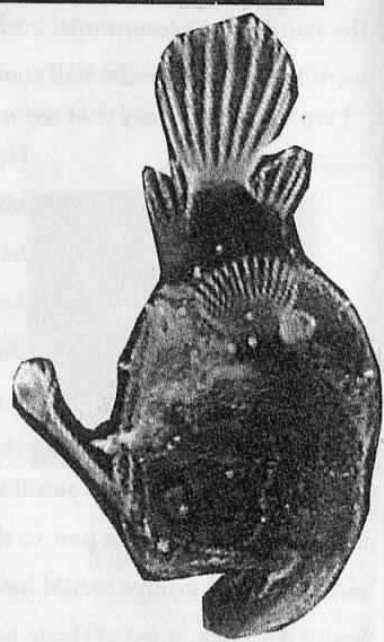
I am thankful to say that my mama is from the communist side.

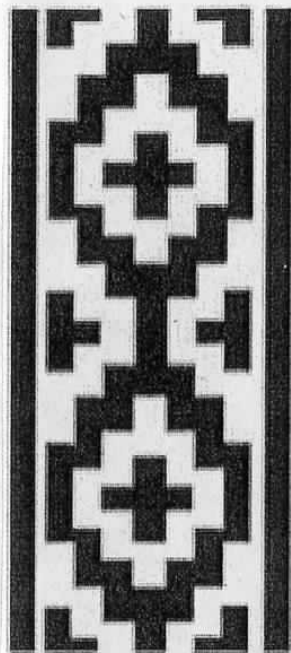
Her side of the family also apparently has some Middle Eastern ancestry, although I have never been able to officially confirm if it's Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian or Jordanian (the four dominant groups of Middle Eastern people who have historically been a presence in Chile), or if they were Muslims, Christians or Jews.

Part of the obscurity surrounding this part of my ancestry may be due in part to the fact that when many of those groups would have migrated to South America, most of those nations would have still been under the rule of the Turkish Ottoman empire from the 1600's until well into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and so many immigrants from those



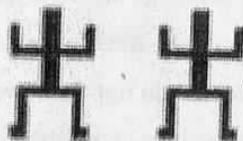
regions would have been travelling with Turkish papers and thus would have been classified as Turks, irrespective of the fact that many would have actually been Armenians, Kurds, or Arabs. Indeed, to this very day, many people of Middle Eastern descent in Chile are generically referred to as "Turcos." And with the eventual collapse of that empire, many diasporic Arabs throughout primarily Latin America and the Caribbean would be referred to collectively and alternately as "Syrians" or "Lebanese" regardless of their actual national or ethnic origins, thus further complicating the process of tracing those roots, except in cases of families which went far out of their way to maintain their culture, language and religion, which it seems mine apparently did not. With all of this having been said, I find that it's very hard to tell my own individual story without sharing this history, let alone without telling the entire history of Chile as a nation state and of the coup and subsequent bloody military repression and forced exile which my family (like so many others) endured for 17 years, and it becomes no less exhausting over time.



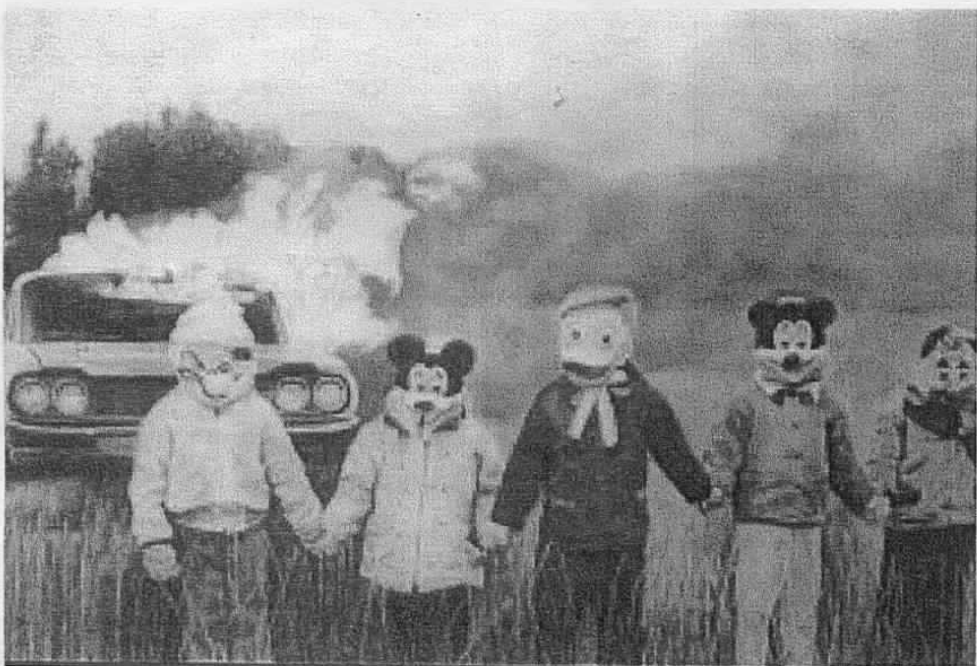


It becomes no less laborious when it comes time to speak on the juxtaposition between this background of mine and of our arrival here to these occupied Haudenosaunee/Mississauga New Credit/Anishnaabe territories in 1978, when I was three years of age, to this colonial outpost founded in the year 1793 as the city of York, later renamed "Toronto", after the Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) word *Tkranto*, which means "the place where the trees stand in the water."

I am not indigenous to these territories, and as a child of refugees, I have been aware of this reality for as long as I have been here. It was a defining part of my narrative for many years to go on about how I am an alien here without roots, until many of my elders and teachers who have been connected to this very land since time immemorial began to challenge me to clarify and speak on the actual nature of my relationship to this land and to the original peoples who are connected to it; for I was told that if I continue to live here without addressing and acknowledging my actual connection to this place which I have come to know more than any other on the planet, then I am no less a part of the problem which plagues and threatens their very existence.

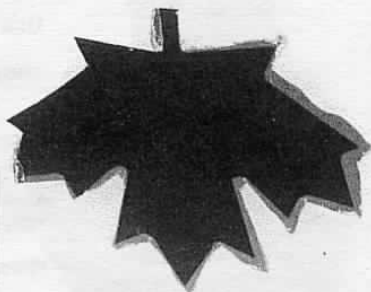
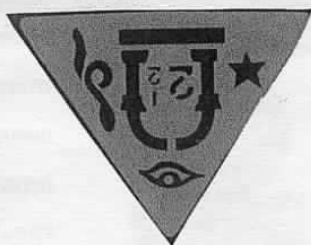




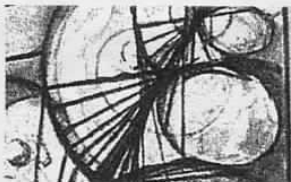


"Toronto the good" was an immensely Anglo-heavy place in those days, when even Italians, Quebecois, Greeks, Macedonians, Maltese, Eastern Europeans and Ashkenazi Jews were still largely considered to be quite "other." Much of the white population that was dominant in the city then would have still been patting itself on the back for being "tolerant" for having a Francophone friend at work. It was like *that*.

To this very moment as I sit here writing this, I feel a great deal of frustration and anger that, as a multigenerationally mixed race man who hails from the Spanish-colonized part of the world, who has white passing privilege but who has been "othered" in some form or the next for most of my life living in this place, I do not feel I was ever raised or encouraged to approach matters of race in a very clear or honest manner, despite the fact



that questions surrounding colonization and race and how they serve to heighten every other possible form of oppression have been among my main passions and obsessions throughout a very large chunk of my life.

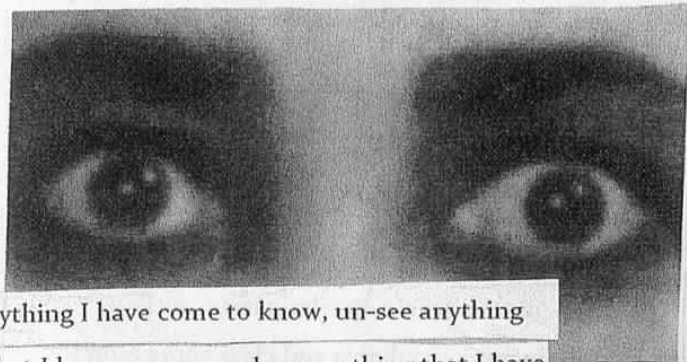


I feel a great deal of embarrassment that it took me so long, for example, to learn to distinguish shit like the ethnic discrimination, anti-immigrant xenophobia and class oppression I experienced growing up here as a first generation refugee child from actual racism, namely the specifically anti-Black and anti-indigenous variety.

I often feel angry at myself for so often assuming as I was growing up that because I *witnessed* so much of that type of racism directed towards others I have been close to and have thus been vicariously traumatized and impacted by, that I was actually experiencing it directly, in a manner which could in any way be framed as comparable to how those to whom it was actually directed towards were being subjected.

The combination of that with the shit I still so often hear white people casually say in my presence, or which they will come right up to my face and say because they assume that they can, has done a lot to distort my view of self, and to be quite frank, I would be lying if I were to try and pretend that it has not left me a little bit insane and more than just a little bit sick with terminal rage and hatred towards the whole entire white world, precisely because I simply cannot un-know





anything I have come to know, un-see anything  
that I have seen, or un-hear anything that I have  
heard.

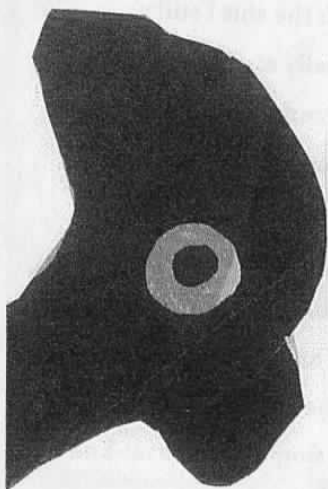
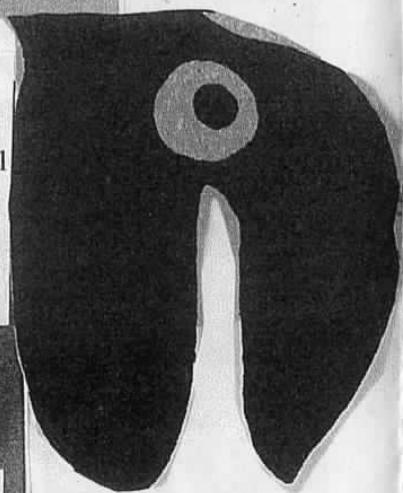
Shit only gets further complicated and skewed  
when you have a very strong cultural and political  
identity as a Latinx man coming from a  
revolutionary left-type background such as mine,  
which you have been taught and encouraged to

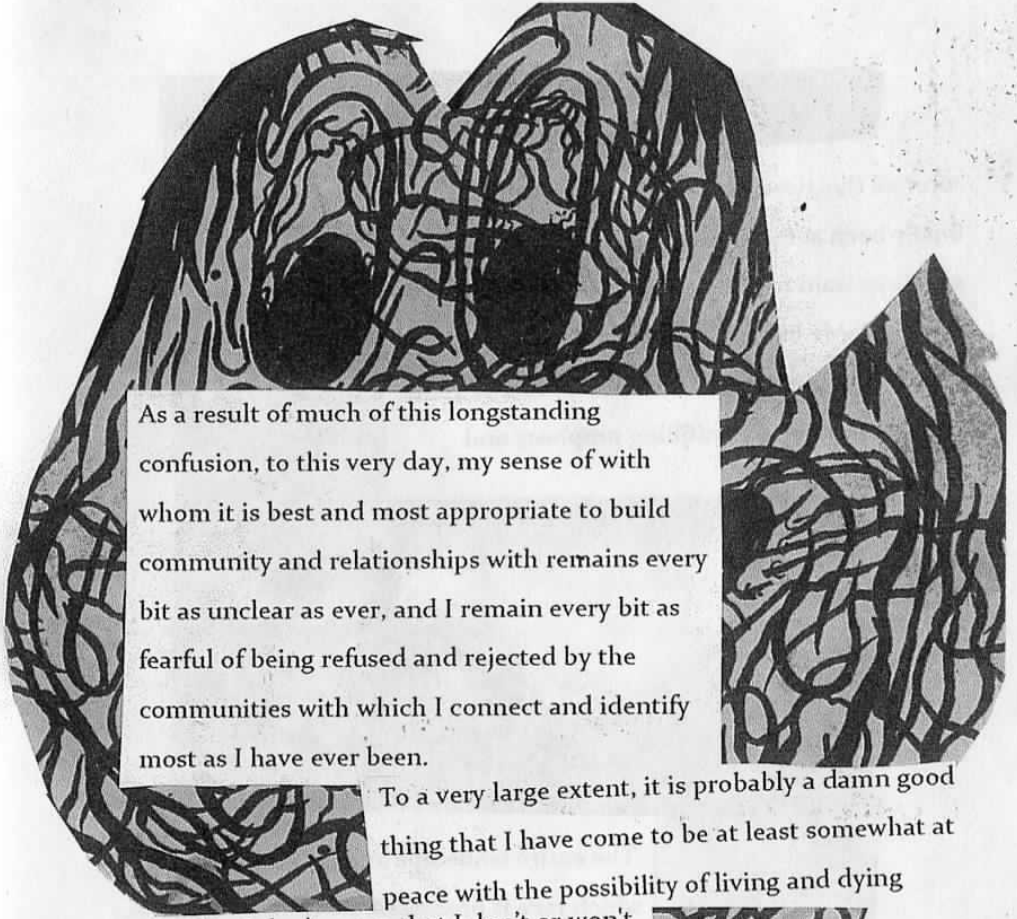


identify with your whole entire life, and which  
has shaped and formed your whole entire

worldview for 42 years. Even after so many years of discussing,

interrogating, researching, unpacking, examining  
and aiming to dismantle all this mess, the fact is  
that I remain as fucking clueless as ever about  
where best to locate myself, and that I am very  
much guilty of living too much of my life  
attached to my own individual personal  
experiences and observations, in contravention to  
examining things systemically and materially  
first, specifically as it relates to everything which  
Blackness and indigenouness and its high  
visibility in the white gaze represents in this  
white supremacist colonizer society.





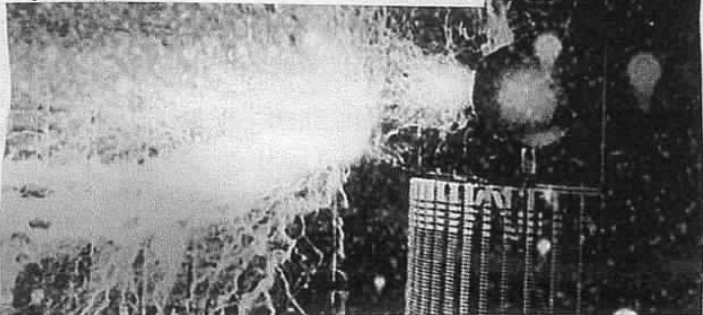
As a result of much of this longstanding confusion, to this very day, my sense of with whom it is best and most appropriate to build community and relationships with remains every bit as unclear as ever, and I remain every bit as fearful of being refused and rejected by the communities with which I connect and identify most as I have ever been.

To a very large extent, it is probably a damn good thing that I have come to be at least somewhat at peace with the possibility of living and dying alone; by this, I don't mean that I don't or won't ever have lovers or friends or relationships with people along the way, because I will and I do.



It just means that I consider the possibilities of anyone ever sticking around in my life for very long, or of ever having the actual opportunity to be a part of any community in a non-contradictory or non-problematic way to be specific outcomes to which it feels most wise I not live my life overly attached to.

After all this time, for better and for worse, I have finally been at least somewhat successful in my efforts to train myself to accept this possibility for what it is. My biggest challenge remains not continually turning this tacit acceptance of mine into a continual self-fulfilling prophecy and inevitability.



The entire landscape and language through which race is processed, filtered, recognized, acknowledged, defined, denied, deflected, categorized, sub-categorized and weaponized in this decaying white world has shifted somewhat significantly within the course of my lifetime.

Not in any truly meaningful way, mind you..... the society itself stays continually defined both by its obsession with utilizing race as the most barbarically crude expression of heightened and accelerated class oppression, as it still persistently denies its pervasiveness as social reality real enough to determine the length, quality, character, substance and actual duration of one's 'life from womb to tomb.

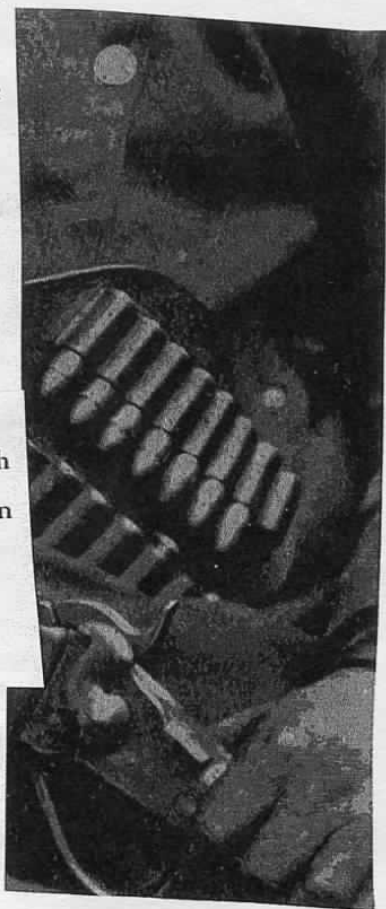


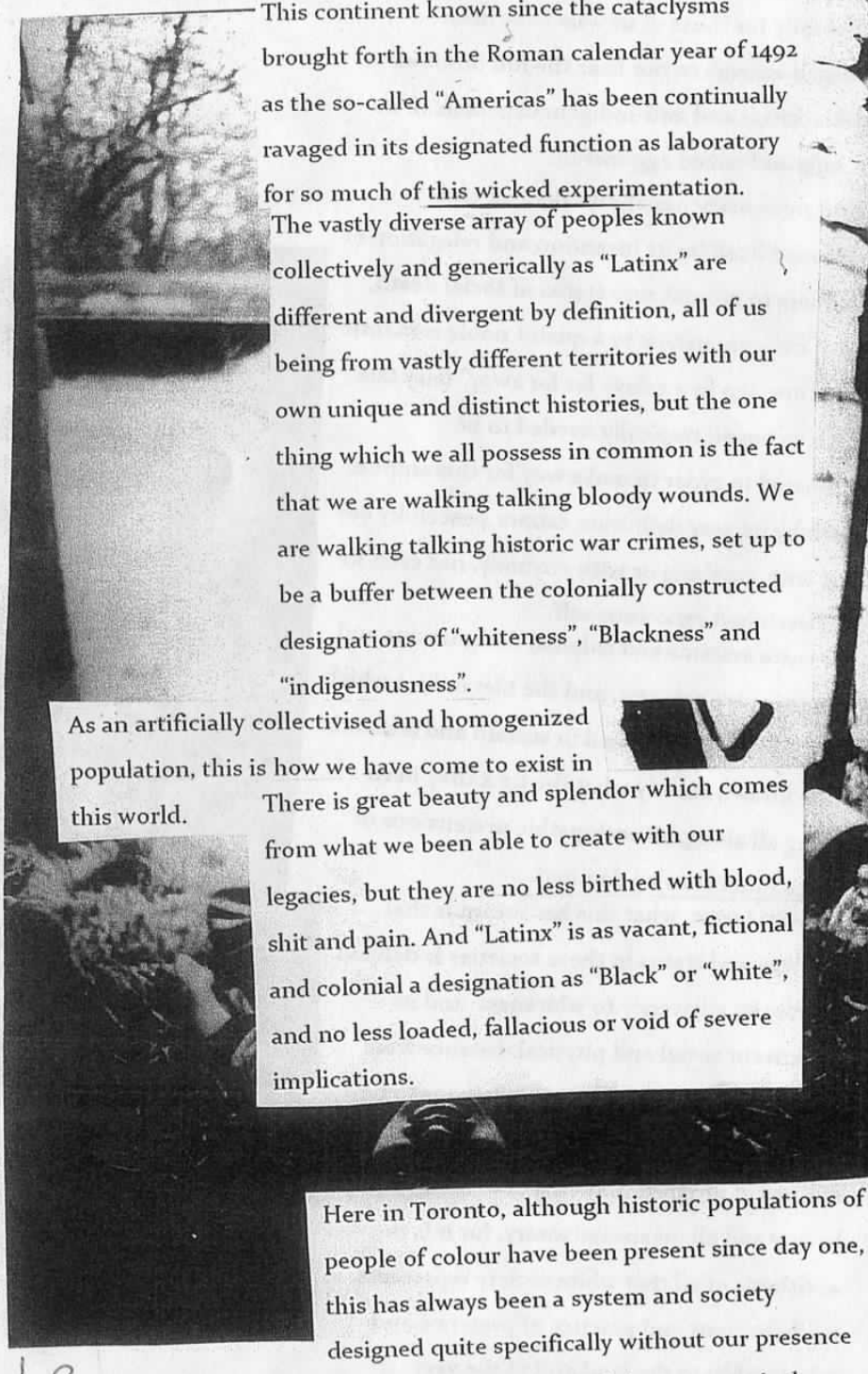
Or maybe, perhaps some of these things have shifted only for those of us who have been privileged enough to not bear the full brunt of anti-Blackness and anti-indigenouness in all its raw, ugly and naked aggression.

White supremacy has always defined and positioned itself by its invention and relegation of Blackness to ground zero status of social death, and of indigenouness to a quaint noble romantic "long time ago in a galaxy far far away" fairy tale which so has so tragically needed to be eliminated in order to make way for this empire, which by its very definition cannot peacefully co-exist with anything or with anybody, not even its own wretched cancerous self.

For caste systems and colonial designations and identities are not new, and the hierarchies which they have been designed to sustain and maintain have known exactly what the fuck they been doing all along, all sociopathic pretensions of white innocence be damned.

In literal terms, what this has meant is that privilege and status in these societies is defined entirely by adjacency to whiteness and its concurrent social and physical distance from Blackness, and to be indigenous means to be relegated to the status of obstacle to colonizer notions of progress and victory to be decimated by any and all means necessary, for it is the antithesis of all that white society represents, in its definitions and practice of presence and relationship to the land and to the very conception of life itself.





This continent known since the cataclysms brought forth in the Roman calendar year of 1492 as the so-called "Americas" has been continually ravaged in its designated function as laboratory for so much of this wicked experimentation. The vastly diverse array of peoples known collectively and generically as "Latinx" are different and divergent by definition, all of us being from vastly different territories with our own unique and distinct histories, but the one thing which we all possess in common is the fact that we are walking talking bloody wounds. We are walking talking historic war crimes, set up to be a buffer between the colonially constructed designations of "whiteness", "Blackness" and "indigenouness".

As an artificially collectivised and homogenized population, this is how we have come to exist in this world.

There is great beauty and splendor which comes from what we been able to create with our legacies, but they are no less birthed with blood, shit and pain. And "Latinx" is as vacant, fictional and colonial a designation as "Black" or "white", and no less loaded, fallacious or void of severe implications.

Here in Toronto, although historic populations of people of colour have been present since day one, this has always been a system and society designed quite specifically without our presence or interests in mind, much less our survival.

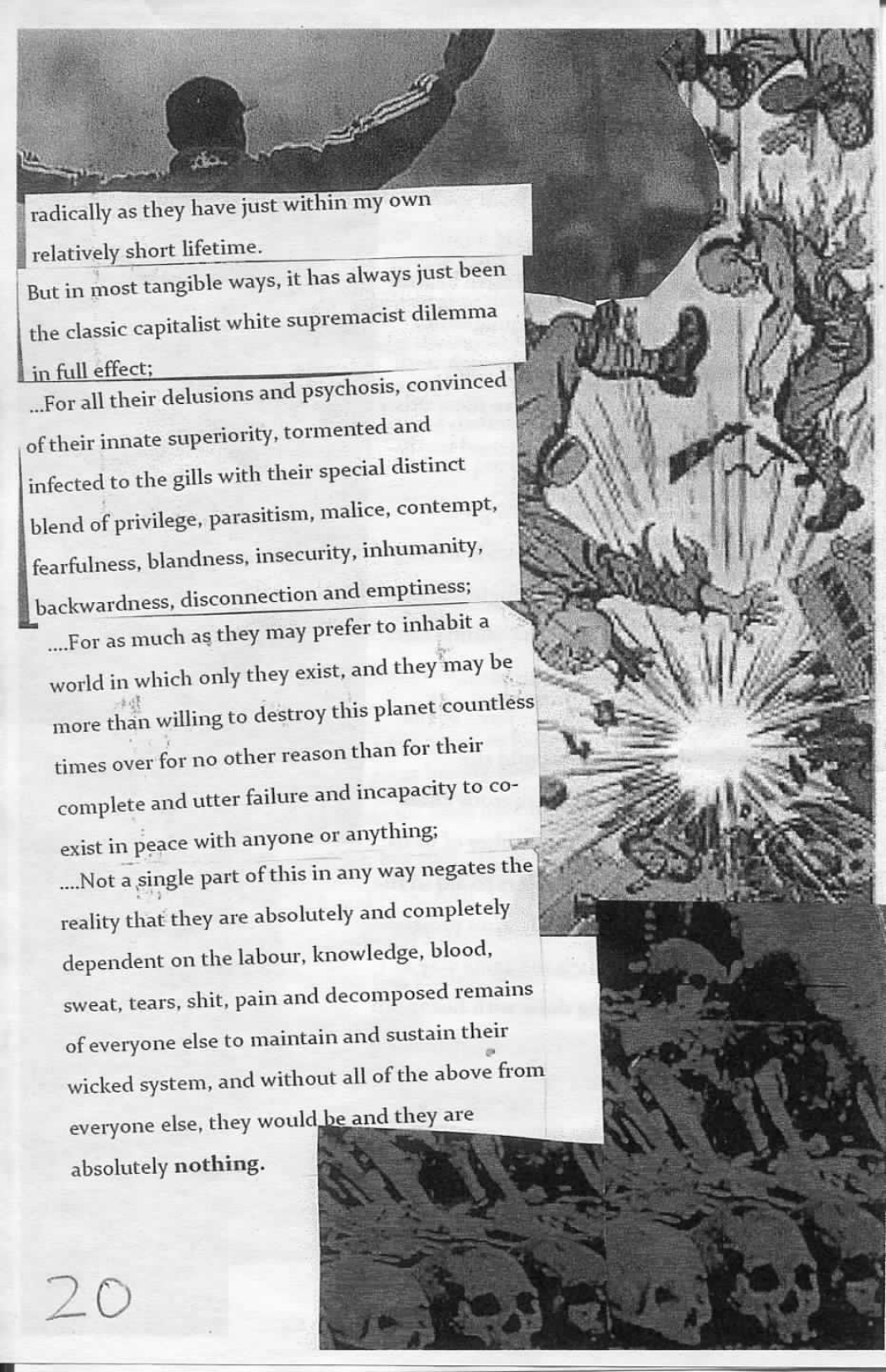
... of contributions, while

taking full credit for what serves it, have always been key primary weapons of choice here.

While this country and the specific Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau (who served two lengthy terms as Prime Minister, from 1968 to 1979, and again from 1980 to 1984) is often heralded as being this great progressive beacon for having had a relatively open immigration policy throughout the late 1960's through until roughly the early 1990's compared to most other capitalist super power nations, in actual truth, the move was entirely opportunistic.

It was simply understood that such a great number of displaced peoples worldwide fleeing bloody counter-revolutions all throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia would make an ideal, enthusiastic and compliant labour force of the sort that was greatly needed to build the infrastructures of the growing cancerous cities during that time, and allowing the likes of us to settle here would also work wonders to aid in the ongoing displacement and colonization project on these lands, in pretty much the same way as I spoke before of Chile having done with European refugees in the years following the first two world wars.

The fact that such a great majority of those of us arriving during this time were of non-European descent may have been far from ideal from their standpoint, and it certainly did and continues to aggravate most sections of the white ruling class to see the demographics of this place shift as



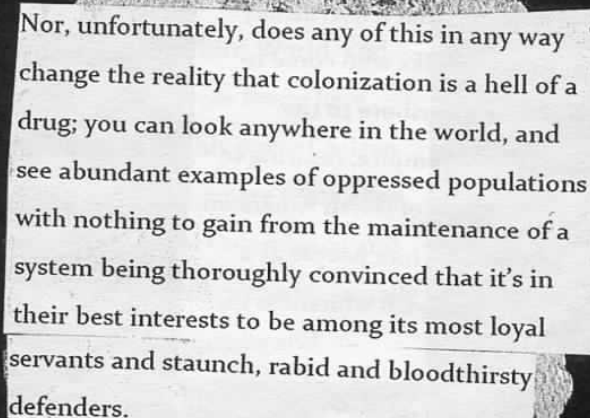
radically as they have just within my own relatively short lifetime.

But in most tangible ways, it has always just been the classic capitalist white supremacist dilemma in full effect;

...For all their delusions and psychosis, convinced of their innate superiority, tormented and infected to the gills with their special distinct blend of privilege, parasitism, malice, contempt, fearfulness, blandness, insecurity, inhumanity, backwardness, disconnection and emptiness;

....For as much as they may prefer to inhabit a world in which only they exist, and they may be more than willing to destroy this planet countless times over for no other reason than for their complete and utter failure and incapacity to co-exist in peace with anyone or anything;

....Not a single part of this in any way negates the reality that they are absolutely and completely dependent on the labour, knowledge, blood, sweat, tears, shit, pain and decomposed remains of everyone else to maintain and sustain their wicked system, and without all of the above from everyone else, they would be and they are absolutely **nothing**.



Nor, unfortunately, does any of this in any way change the reality that colonization is a hell of a drug; you can look anywhere in the world, and see abundant examples of oppressed populations with nothing to gain from the maintenance of a system being thoroughly convinced that it's in their best interests to be among its most loyal servants and staunch, rabid and bloodthirsty defenders.

In addition, I sincerely do not think I am breaking any radical new ground whatsoever when I suggest that the white ruling class worldwide knew very well that its own birth and fertility rates would be on the verge of plummeting drastically well before the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and while their floating remnants would invariably do everything possible to consolidate their wealth in as few of their hands as possible, it was understood that it made the most economic sense for them during that time to let in as many people as possible who could alternately provide a source of cheap labour, or create employment for others by starting their own businesses.



And again, even if the racial compositions of those who would be continuing the displacement and colonization process here on these territories is to be far from their ideal preference, they forever rest assured knowing that a horribly disproportionate amount of folks who come to these parts do so eager to contribute to the building and maintenance of empire, desiring to embrace the capitalistic ideals of North American consumer culture, idealizing white people as a race and all things associated with whiteness in general.




These ideals have been planted in us from the deep colonization of our own countries, and so much of the time, when so many of us reach these territories, these racist ideologies become even more emboldened with the default view in all colonized societies, that of indigenous peoples as disposable "obstacles" to be pushed aside by any means necessary, and distance from Blackness forever peddled like it's a goal, aspiration and/or accomplishment in and of itself.

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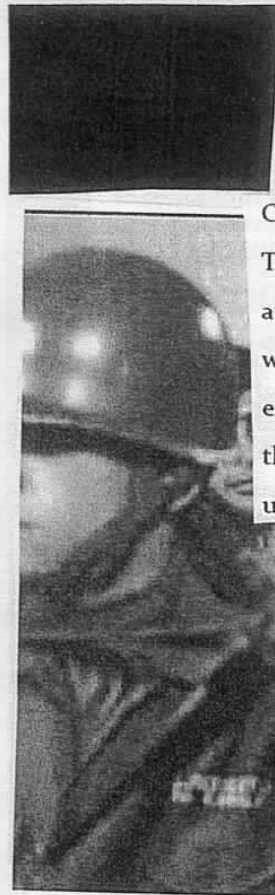
It is inherent to the construction of the Canadian nation state and its corresponding identity to not just ravage and discard all that was here already before Europeans invaded, but to irreparably alter the composition of the land itself, the water, the plants, the soil, the wild life, the air, all in service of that same old British monarchy, of which Canada is still very much a part, with zero signs of ever letting go.

In terms of how this specifically affected us as Chileans, it is best considered that we would have arrived as part of this large wave of mass migration of folks from all over what was then commonly referred to as the Third World, and the only so-called "Latinx" people living here prior to the arrival of the roughly 7,000 Chilean refugees who came in the immediate years after the coup were a few individual Colombians and Ecuadorans, most of them entrepreneurs, usually owners of jewelry stores, night clubs and restaurants, typically from elite upper classes back home, who had migrated quite comfortably with all of their money, and were simply far too few to be all that noticed or considered one way or the other as a group.

So I think a strong case can be made to suggest that the face and character of quite a lot changed quite drastically with the arrival of thousands of beleaguered, traumatized revolutionary communist and socialist peasants, proletarians, student radicals, professionals, organizers, educators, militants, hippies, liberation theologians and street fighters, largely and predominantly brown-skinned Spanish-speaking mestizo and indio fugitives with just the clothes on our backs and whatever we were able to pack into our suitcases.




Many newly bereaved, many freshly released from concentration camps, many nursing broken bodies, many containing recently acquired gunshot wounds and torture induced injuries, many who had survived massacres, many who literally had to hide under piles of corpses, many who had endured numerous military raids, beatings, tear gassings, interrogations and curfews, who only came here because we were fleeing for our lives, and **not at all** because we believed the streets here to be paved with gold.



In addition, it is no small detail whatsoever that we were mainly let in because there had been active and tireless campaigns by church, labour and student organizations to bring attention to the atrocities being committed by Pinochet's dictatorship.

Contrary to popular belief, after the coup, Trudeau's government was initially quite relieved at the overthrow of Allende's government, and was one of the first countries to recognize and effectively legitimize the military regime, which they were quite content to carry on business as usual with.



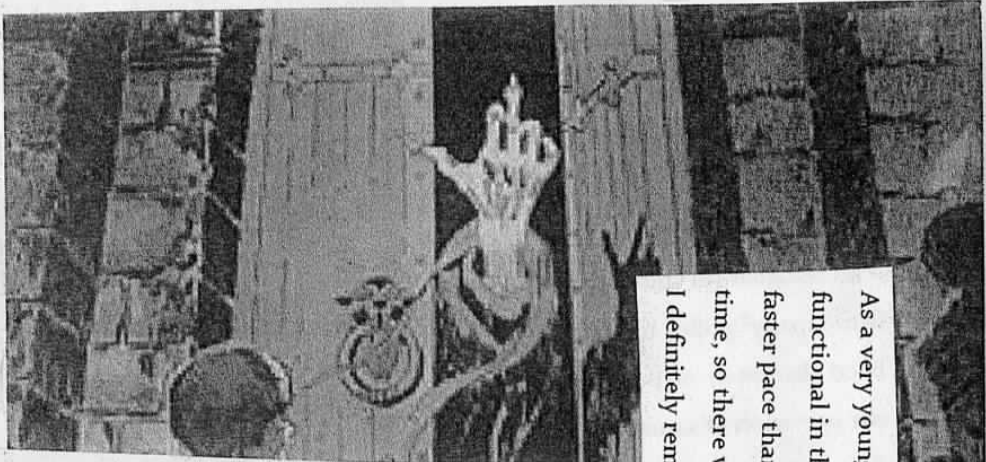
Canadian mining companies were pleased and excited that the copper, gold, silver, iron, coal and molybdenum reserves which Allende had nationalized were now once again all theirs for the taking. So it was quite literally just because of the international solidarity and pressure campaigns why we were granted asylum here.

While the government had at that time maintained an open door policy towards anyone fleeing from Eastern European nations which had been occupied by the Soviet Union (including many Nazi collaborators), and had been a signatory to the 1951 United Nations international convention on refugees (in spite of their WWII-era "none is too many" policy towards Jews), there had been absolutely no policies in place regarding the provision of sanctuary and the granting of status for anyone escaping persecution of an explicitly political nature meted out by "friendly" governments.

It was our arrival and the grassroots political mobilizations which made it possible in the first place, and this did indeed serve as the catalyst and set the precedent for many subsequent waves of political refugees who arrived here in the ensuing years. We came here in an atmosphere of struggle, and struggle would indeed continue to define our reality, even once many of us became established and integrated into the middle class. In the Anglo-heavy climate we came into, we most certainly stood out, and discrimination on the basis of language and race was a common experience for most Chilean families. Our entire community was heavily spied on by the Royal



Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Secret Service, which was at the time immersed deep in what is referred to as its "dirty tricks" campaign of break-in's, illegal surveillance, arson, infiltration, entrapment and harassment directed largely at Quebecois separatists, trade unions, radicalized Black youth organizations and First Nations communities.



As a very young child, I became proficient and functional in the English language at a much faster pace than my parents were able to do at the time, so there was a lot I caught on to quite early. I definitely remember lots of dirty looks,

antagonistic hateful energy, and bigoted snide remarks about us being "fucking immigrants" and "fucking Mexicans" being directed towards us on the regular.

My father was regularly questioned by the RCMP about his activities. He was also once savagely beaten by two white men in a racist attack when he went to the corner store. Another time, he was arrested in a case of mistaken identity, because the police were allegedly looking for an Ecuadoran, who was also named Alejandro Rojas, who also fit the description of being 5'6, with a mustache, curly hair and olive complexion and wearing a leather jacket, like a good 85% of Latino men in Toronto at that time.

I remember in many different places where we lived, our place having been entered while we were gone, with sometimes very clear indicators left that someone else had been in there.

I remember garbage being piled on our car in the building parking lot. I remember anti-immigrant and anti-communist hate graffiti being spray painted and etched on the windshield other times as well.



For as demonized as we may have been as a group upon our arrival, a few short years later, when refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras began to arrive in the 1980s fleeing the holocaustic civil wars which ravaged their lands throughout that time, a great deal changed. These were mostly people from rural indigenous communities, entire villages fleeing high intensity wars, many not possessing the educational credentials and professional titles which these societies fetishize to death.

It was only just a short matter of time before the Canadian government would begin to tighten up on its definitions of who it considered to be a "legitimate refugee claimant", as definitions began to fixate more on targeted individual persecution, rather than on aiding those fleeing conditions of scorched earth war.

While this regime has always by definition been entirely dependent on the exploitation of the labour of racialized "Third World" peoples, white fears and anxieties of being outnumbered have always served as a guiding characteristic in determining immigration policy, as best exemplified by the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1885, when the white power structure and self-identified "white working class" alike both came to fear the possibility of their population becoming outnumbered by the Asian population, whose



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numbers grew with the advent and legacy of the large populations of Chinese indentured workers who built (while perishing in large numbers) the Canadian National Railroad, and whose subsequent waves were forced to pay a head tax in order to gain admission into the country.

**Stop ignoring  
how class & race**

Using the tried and true spectre of racist crime hysteria to very specifically target the African-Caribbean (particularly Jamaican) and East African (particularly Somali) populations, in 1994 the Liberal government re-implemented the head tax, demanding that all immigrants and refugee claimants pay a \$475 application fee and \$975 landing fee, which would amount to five years wages in places like Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

This served to create a situation where obtaining landed status (to say nothing of Canadian citizenship) became largely out of reach for countless numbers of families and individuals, which has in turn played an immense role in shaping the structure of race and class formation in this country.

**determine the way**

**we get around Toronto**

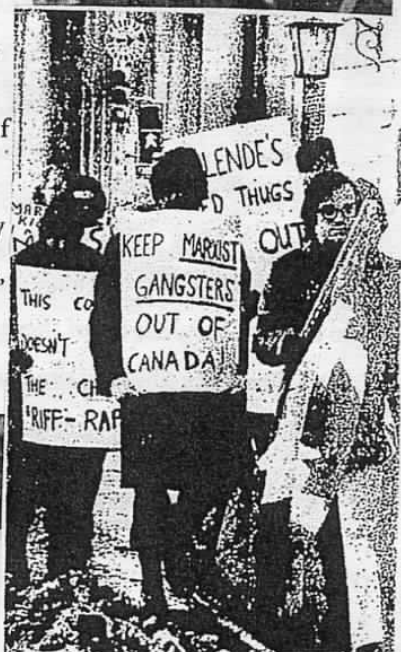
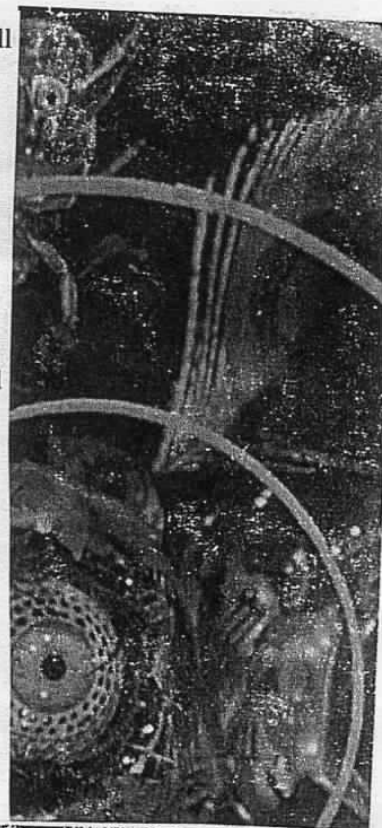
Regarding how this has specifically impacted the Latinx community as it were, by the time more African descendants from nations such as Cuba, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru and the Dominican Republic, as well as Haiti and Brazil began to arrive in larger numbers throughout the 1990s, by and large they would come to occupy a far more precarious position in society than their predominantly European, mestizo and indigenous antecedents, which only further served to heighten and aggravate their already

low class and social status in the broader Latinx population here.

Despite the myriad of ways in which Chileans still by and large constitute a largely working class and racialized population in this country, with our own history of being targeted and criminalized as well as subject to everyday microaggressions, as we remain collectively haunted by the long term multigenerational effects of colonization, displacement, fascism and war which continue to take their toll, the fact that most of us who would have arrived throughout the 1970s and early 80s were able by and large to access Canadian citizenship, as so many Chileans continue to embrace a largely delusional Eurocentric identity, in addition to the reality that there are far more white passing people among us than there are among most other Latinx communities, we are certainly privileged as a community in ways which others with vastly similar experiences are not.

It was just a few decades ago that we were one of the few Spanish-speaking refugee communities here, with our mere presence being protested by neo-nazis who feared the influx of us dangerous, subversive Marxist gangster spics upsetting the order of their pristine white Anglo society.

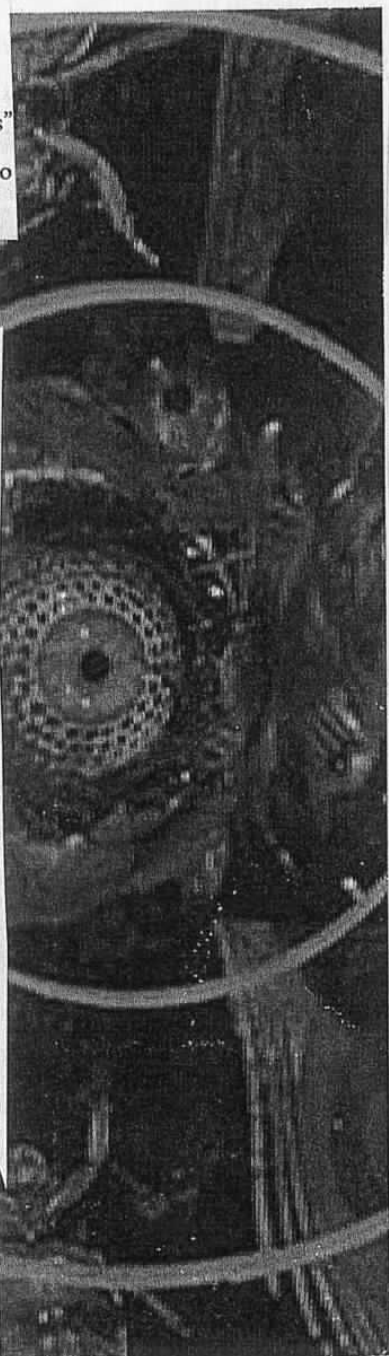
*Right-wing group  
protests presence  
of Chile refugees*



But now, when it serves their narrative, those same white supremacists will distort and weaponize our experience and legacy to perpetuate the pervasive "hardworking, studious" immigrant success story in their continued bid to justify the demonization and exclusion of those who would never be granted the pestilence of assimilation even if they wanted it.

In the moisturized yet corroded face of stifling Canadian whiteness, as is the case in every other society infested with its same innate contradictions, throughout the entire history of this place allegedly being a place, it is and has been African descended and indigenous peoples who have been speaking truth to power and spearheading resistance, waging the relentless struggles which highlight the reality that the issues are indeed issues, as the response of the pretty face of the power structure varies between empty platitude and overbearing non-responsiveness, as the militarized police state simultaneously responds in the only ways it ever does and will, with communicate, arrest, infiltration, surveillance, incarceration and murder on a mass scale.

As the indigenous peoples of these lands warn us all of the dire costs of imbalance and disharmony to our collective safety as they battle for their sovereignty and for their very lives, Black people do the same, while also creating so much of the very language, culture and community models of



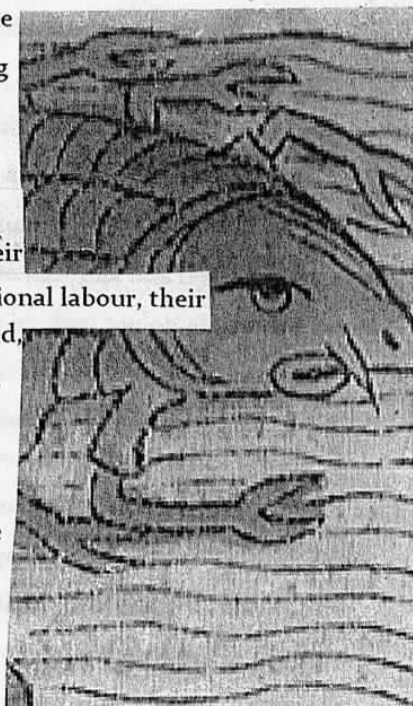
resistance which everyone else has seen completely fit to be entitled to appropriate, take credit for and remodel in their own images, while also flagrantly patronizing, excluding, tokenizing and diminishing the value and importance of Black stories and Black lives.

Their experiences, their work, their narratives, their expressions, their styles, their analysis, their conversations, their intellectual/cultural/emotional labour, their cosmologies and genius are relentlessly exploited,

extracted and arrogantly presumed to belong to "everybody" (except Black folks themselves), at the same time as they are mocked, ridiculed, belittled, and expected and assumed to be more saintly, generous, inclusive, patient, understanding and forgiving than anyone else feels any obligation or responsibility to

themselves be whatsoever.

Anywhere you go in the world, proximity and connection to Black folks is universally pimped by non-Black folks as a barometer by which to acquire pretensions of credibility, authenticity, "edginess" and street level social and political capital, at the exact same time as when the party is over and the money has been made, distance from and revulsion towards Black folks is amplified by the same non-Black folks to acquire and embody privilege, social leverage, respectability, clean social status and adjacency to the grand capital prize of whiteness.





The methods of resistance and survival employed by those who are racialized worldwide as Black are utilized as a lens by non-Black people of colour through which we are able to process, analyze, comprehend and explain our own struggles with colonization, and then we get hurt and upset when Black folk want to build their own political, cultural and spiritual organizations for themselves which do not include us, as if we are owed anything. It could not possibly be a more one-sided, non-

reciprocal, exploitative, hierarchical and abusive relationship. If you are taking in these discomforting words and feeling the need to open your mouth to say any sentence beginning with the words "not all" in an impulsive move to exceptionalize yourself, then you are only confirming every single thing which has been said above.

As someone who is undeniably non-Black my own damn self, I feel immensely conflicted writing what is being said. Not because of my own possible indictment, complicity and culpability, but more because there is not a single solitary point I have made here which countless untold numbers of Black and indigenous human beings have not said, written, expressed, taught and insisted be absorbed and taken in a trillion countless and untold times over before me.

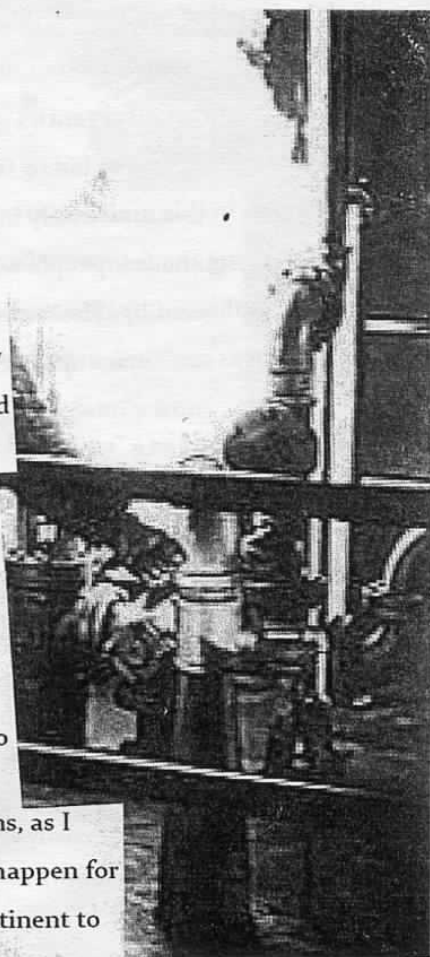


Yes, I have a story and I have an experience. One that is painful, complex, contradictory, subjective, layered, perhaps significant, perhaps relevant, perhaps not. Certainly plenty aspects of it intersect quite closely with those of others. There is perhaps some universality to some of these conditions and their accompanying tribulations, and there are some which I can only attempt to compare to those which I know, based on my own limited perspective.

What I absolutely do *not* want, however, is for the space that is being held for me right now to be denied to others. I do not want to contribute to the wholesale longstanding hijacking of any and all discussions about colonization and race by anyone and everyone else except for those who most urgently need to be centered and taken

direction from, as so constantly happens, as I have been personally been witnessing happen for over 40 years, from one end of this continent to the next.

Growing up here on these occupied territories as a fresh off the boat refugee boy, already traumatized, already enraged, confused, aware and affected by what little I knew about the world, the violent racism, xenophobia and open hostility demonstrated by the white Anglo-Saxons I encountered was not a mystery or an abstraction. Nor was the insularity, devastation, grief, rupture, fragmentation and despair of my own close knit Chilean community, which I eventually reached a point where I felt the need to escape from.



The Black (primarily from the Caribbean, West and East African, and Nova Scotian diasporas) and indigenous children and youth I grew up around (perhaps in their own bid to find allies and potential kin in this immensely hostile racist setting) were among the few people who I felt welcomed and embraced by. Their worlds, their homes, their spaces and their cultures became sanctuaries for me.

I was often introduced as a "cousin." I learned the slang, I learned the swag, I learned to cook certain meals, I grew up listening to hip-hop and reggae and dancehall and soul and funk and jazz and R&B and salsa and cumbia and soukous and makossa and disco and house and Afrobeat and bouk and kompas and countless other genres of music from all throughout the African continent and diaspora. All of this quite easily and uncritically became aspects of my reality and surroundings which I easily and uncritically came to take for granted.

All of this against a backdrop of battling neo-nazis and regular racist bullies on the street, being harassed, brutalized and criminalized by police, moving around from shitty neighbourhood to shitty neighbourhood to shitty school to shitty school, throughout the course of the 17 years of exile during which time my family could not return to Chile, unless we visited clandestinely.

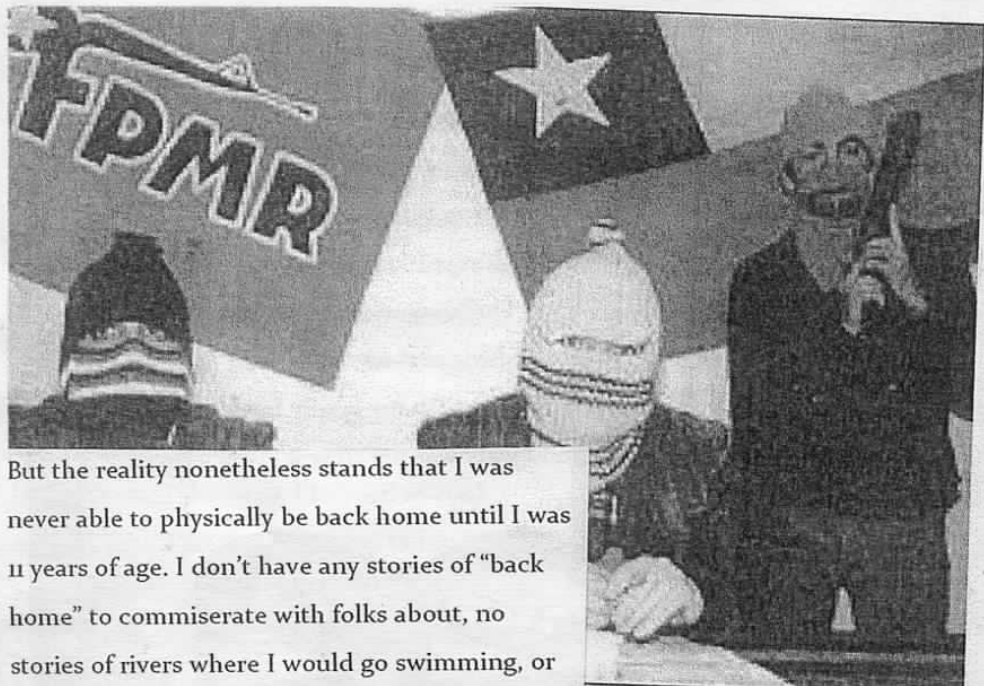


I did know plenty about my own culture. I have never spoken English with my parents or grandparents. I was raised thoroughly schooled on our history, our music, our poetry, and our so-called "folklore".

Attending peñas, solidarity events, protests and attending concerts of visiting exiled revolutionary musical groups such as Quilapayun, Inti-Illimani, Los Jaivas, Illapu, Sol y Lluvia and my uncle Juan Pablo's old group Los Blops with my family from before the time I could walk was my closest equivalent to going to church.



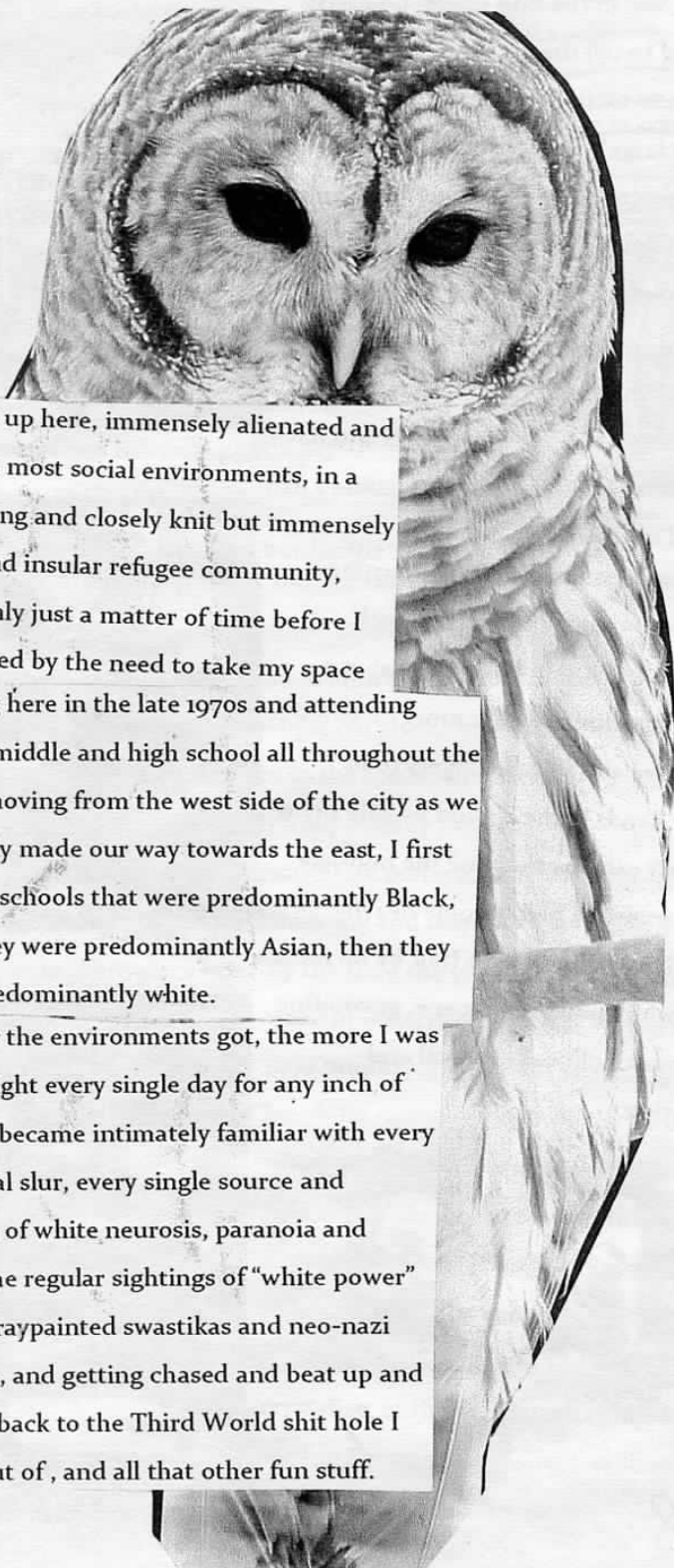
I can bake empanadas and pastel de choclo, I can prepare churrascos and porotos granados, I can dance the cueca, and when I meet most Chileans who have been here far less time than me, they often only believe that I been here as long as I have when they hear me speak in English for the first time.



But the reality nonetheless stands that I was never able to physically be back home until I was 11 years of age. I don't have any stories of "back home" to commiserate with folks about, no stories of rivers where I would go swimming, or hills I would climb, no streets where I played pichanga barefoot with other kids with a makeshift ball made from our socks, no schools or churches I attended for my entire childhood, no lifelong friends I came of age with, no stories of hitchhiking with friends exploring the entire country all the way north to where Arica borders with La Paz to all the way south to where Tierra del Fuego borders with the literal ends of the Earth, no walls where I painted insurrectionary murals with the Brigada Ramona Parra, no painful yet heroic stories of being involved in the popular and underground resistance against Pinochet.....nothing even remotely resembling any of that.





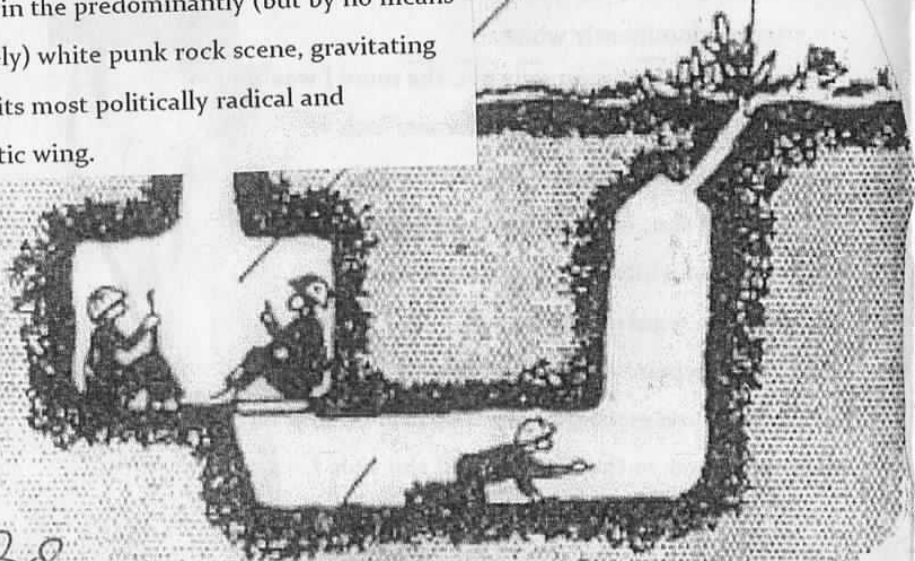


No, I just grew up here, immensely alienated and maladjusted to most social environments, in a highly embracing and closely knit but immensely traumatized and insular refugee community, which it was only just a matter of time before I felt overwhelmed by the need to take my space from. Arriving here in the late 1970s and attending public, middle and high school all throughout the 1980s, moving from the west side of the city as we gradually made our way towards the east, I first went to schools that were predominantly Black, then they were predominantly Asian, then they were predominantly white.

The whiter the environments got, the more I was forced to fight every single day for any inch of space, as I became intimately familiar with every single racial slur, every single source and expression of white neurosis, paranoia and fragility, the regular sightings of "white power" graffiti, spraypainted swastikas and neo-nazi pamphlets, and getting chased and beat up and told to go back to the Third World shit hole I crawled out of, and all that other fun stuff.

by the time I was in the fifth grade, I'd pretty much decided to tell the whole world to go fuck itself. I began to oscillate between violent and righteous yet largely unfocused rebellion, and suicidal self-destructive behaviour, as I would often direct my rage towards myself. I began to self-harm, I began drinking, using and selling drugs, I began to lash out at authority figures (sometimes physically), which resulted in me getting kicked out of multiple schools and having numerous altercations with the law before I had even reached my teens.

As a lifelong underground music and culture aficionado, I was drawn instantly to both hardcore punk and hip-hop. Given that as a preteen my disposition was far more disposed to throwing bottles and middle fingers than throwing my hands in the air and waving them like I just don't care, by the time the mid-late 1980s rolled around, I had become heavily involved in the predominantly (but by no means exclusively) white punk rock scene, gravitating towards its most politically radical and anarchistic wing.



I spent about six years in that scene, enjoying the best parts of what it had to offer me, at the same time as I could never shake my feeling of complete alienation, disappointment and disgust as I realized that despite its hype and its rebellious pretensions, in actual reality it was just another space dominated by whiney, myopic, self-absorbed, temper tantrum-throwing affluent suburban white boys, typically with political views which varied from infantile privileged nihilism to bland middle of the road

functionalism to outright reactionary borderline fascism.

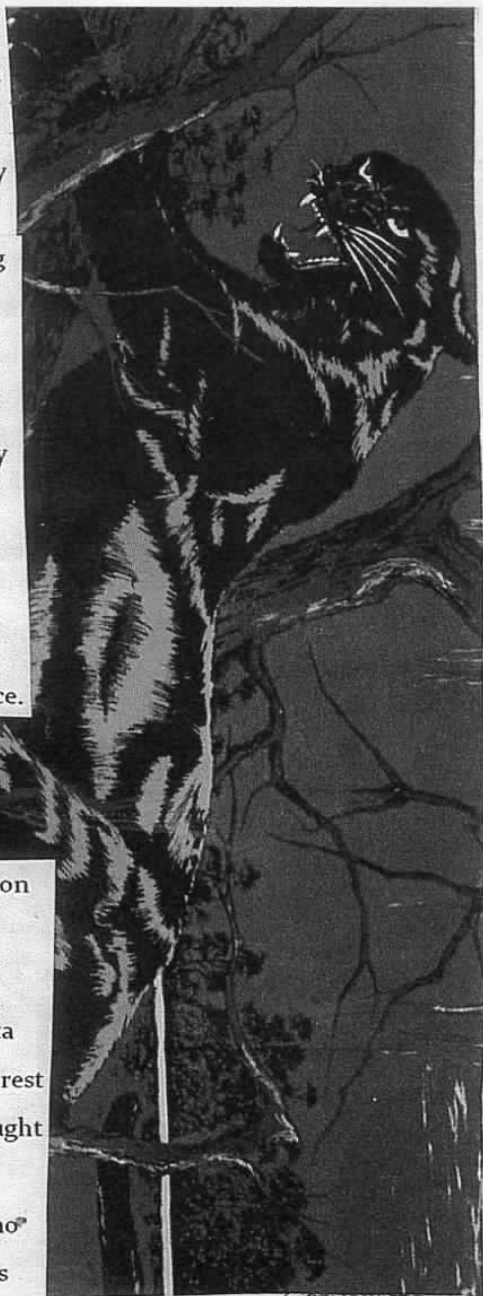
At the same time, it did not take long to see that its rawest, most genuine, authentic and relatable expressions pretty much entirely came from the Black/indigenous/people of colour, women, queer and trans folks in the scene, who have to battle just as hard in a supposedly radical alternative anti-authoritarian scene for visibility, acknowledgment, autonomy and respect as is the case anyplace else.

By the time the year 1992 rolled around, in the wake of watershed political events such as the 1990 military siege at Kanehsatake, the 1991 US bombing campaign in Iraq, the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European invasion of the Americas and the rise of neo-Nazi violence on the streets, a new wave of cross-cultural "people of colour" organizing among radicalized Black and Brown youth began to crystalize, at the same time as hip-hop music and culture became increasingly militant, political and unabashedly Afrocentric.



Many folks of colour (myself included) around his time began to critically interrogate our own experiences with race and with our cultures of origin, in some instances for the first time in any deep and seriously meaningful way. Those of us who had previously been struggling (sometimes for years) to carve out spaces for ourselves in predominantly white cultural and political spaces began an exodus out of those spaces towards others, where we could be solely in the company of our peers with similar experiences, and it was in these settings during his time when many highly liberating, enlightening and often excruciating conversations and reflections began to take place.

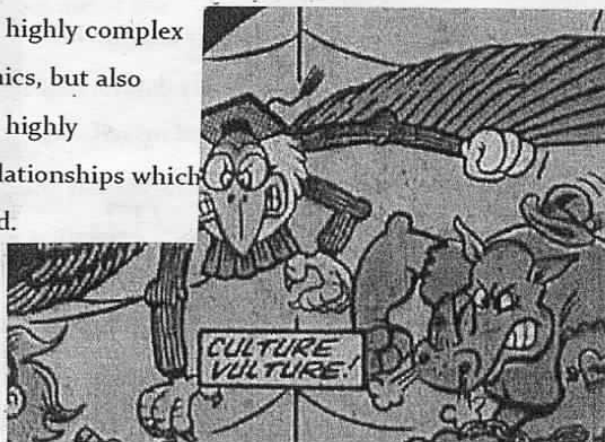
In the wake of an indigenous cultural revolution all throughout the Americas sparked off in no small part by the afore-mentioned events at Kanehsatake and later on by the 1994 Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, as well as a renewed interest by a fresh new generation in the political thought of folks such as Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party and Frantz Fanon, a short-lived but by no means meaningless renaissance period of sorts began to take place, when many folks made a conscious decision to stop engaging whiteness as a dominant default setting, with many individuals having radically different and often conflicting ideas of what this actually means and looks like.



HE FELT NO PAIN...ONLY THE STRONG  
PLEASANT AIRINESS! NOW HE WAS IN  
STAR-STUDDED BLACKNESS, ALONE  
IN THE IMMENSITY OF SPACE AND  
TIME!

Many non-Black POC appropriated so much of the slang and style and aesthetics, eventually obtaining far easier access to money, resources and A&R positions for record labels, based on their "expertise" on what increasingly began to be referred to as "urban" music and culture. It was only just a matter of time before all-white hip-hop and reggae sound crews began to spring up, feeling completely entitled to expropriate every single external aspect of Blackness they felt able to acquire to market and benefit themselves. This largely went tolerated, unexamined and uncriticised for a very long time. Those who did attempt were often gaslit, dismissed and written off as being "negative" or "haters" or "bitter" or "crazy".

It was the norm for many people to feel a knee jerk impulse to universalize experiences which in many instances are in fact quite particular and specific, as the once-revolutionary language of solidarity and internationalism became liberalized, bastardized and used to not only silence, derail and oversimplify highly complex and contradictory social dynamics, but also effectively to further normalize highly exploitative and hierarchical relationships which only continued to go unchecked.



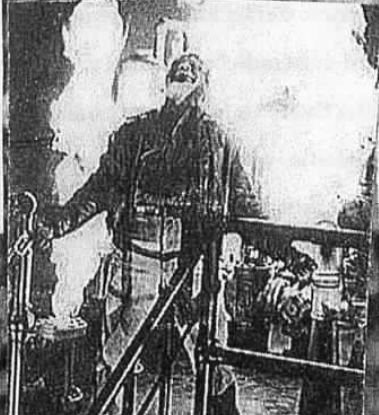
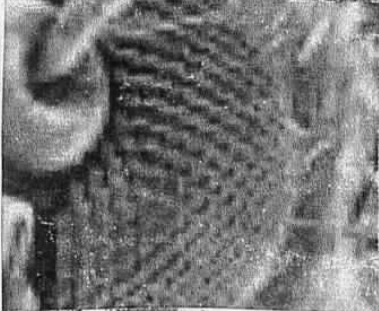
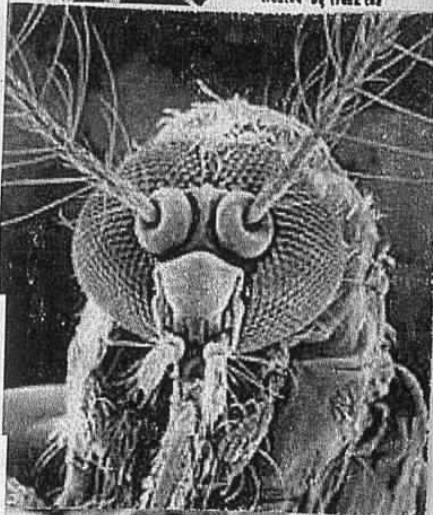
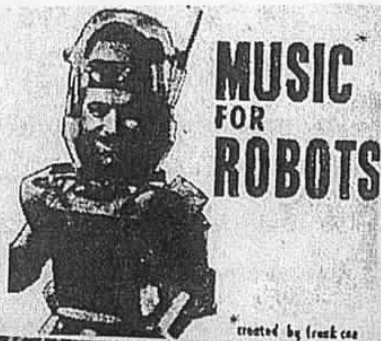


Numerous Black musical and other art forms which had previously been created solely with the Black experience in mind became diluted under pressure to appeal to "broader" audiences looking to live vicariously through whatever their view and assumptions regarding whatever they felt entitled to frame through their gaze as "the Black experience" happened to be, and in the end, as has constantly and continuously happened, Black creators themselves were reduced to the role of entertainers, trend setters and taste makers, which (individual popular icons aside) absolutely everyone else profited from but them.

For my own part, the more I came around to recognizing what was in fact going on, the more I became aware of my own complicity in this mess.

I increasingly found myself disengaging and isolating myself, as I began to struggle on a whole new level as to where best to situate myself. As I battled with my own mental health and addiction issues, adapted to major life transitions (most notably the birth of my daughter Minerva Antonia in 2011), and my own pervasive uncertainty about most things, my creative output continued to venture further and further into left field, becoming increasingly dark, esoteric and experimental, as I found myself returning to my punk rock roots, but this time strictly on my own terms.

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In my own case, after many years spent as a frontline activist organizing against the far right, police brutality, the prison industrial complex, racist immigration policies, and in solidarity with support of indigenous communities battling for sovereignty and survival and different immigrant/refugee standing up against racist attacks, a combination of extreme burnout, disillusionment and cynicism brought me deeper into more cultural expressions of whatever type of "movement" was existing around that time. By the time I was 18, I launched my own personal boycott of TV and mainstream popular culture, which went on for nearly 12 years. I deliberately stopped reading white authors or watching films by or about white people, I stopped listening to most white music, I stopped associating with most white folks whenever I had any choice in the matter, and immersed myself as deep as possible in creating a world for myself as free as possible of any Eurocentric influences.

I was determined to decolonize myself in the most real and thorough ways possible, even if the inevitably required hardcore self-interrogation and emerging contradictions killed me in the process.

I got deep into the hip-hop and spoken word scenes, performing, touring and recording as an MC/poet/DJ/producer, organizing parties and events, collaborating creatively with friends and colleagues in the reggae/dancehall, R&B/neo-soul, salsa, house and electronica musical scenes.



Under the handle of El Machetero, I became fairly well known for a time internationally, and with great reluctance and trepidation, I became something of a bona fide local celebrity of sorts. I worked at the grassroots level in community organizations with youth, becoming absorbed into the non-profit industrial complex and in some arts initiatives, some of which I am proud to have been a part, others I much prefer to forget. I had the opportunity to spend some time back home in Chile, which only made me question and interrogate everything much deeper and further.

I made great connections with many people all over the world. There are quite a few I have now known for close to thirty years, at least some of whom I can somewhat legitimately count and confide in as lifelong friends and chosen family. A great deal of space was made for me back during the periods of which I speak, for which I was always grateful and which I regarded as a great honour and privilege.

However, by definition, there is no such thing as privilege without exclusion; for the ugly truth is that while space was made for me, a cis-gendered white passing Latinx man, in many instances, that same space was denied to many Black women and Black queer and trans folks with much more of an inherent right to that space than me.

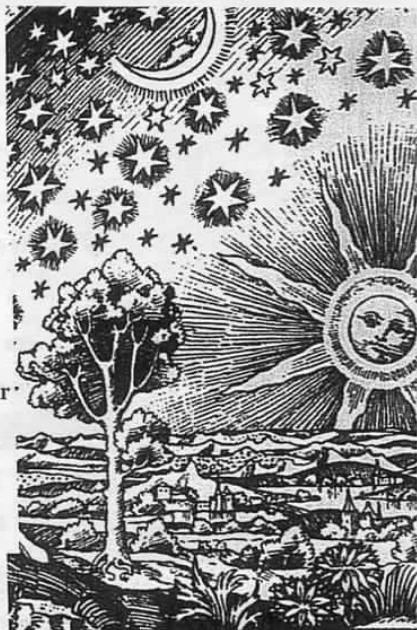


in the wake of documentary films like *March*

Sorrendeguy's "Mas Alla De Los Gritos (Beyond The Screams)" (2000), James Spooner's "Afro-Punk" (2003) and Omar Majeed's "Taqwacore; The Birth of Punk Islam" (2009), a vibrant and urgent movement within the scene spearheaded by Black, indigenous and Latinx punk rockers worldwide was sparked, as multigenerational connections were made between Black and other punks of colour, facilitated in no small part by a new beast which had been inaccessible to previous generations known as the internet. It was only a matter of time before the great space which had become opened was no longer just confined to punk rockers or other folks connected to specific underground subcultures, as soon every type of person from our communities who had been mis/non-represented, excluded and marginalized found a sanctuary, and began to speak up and out.

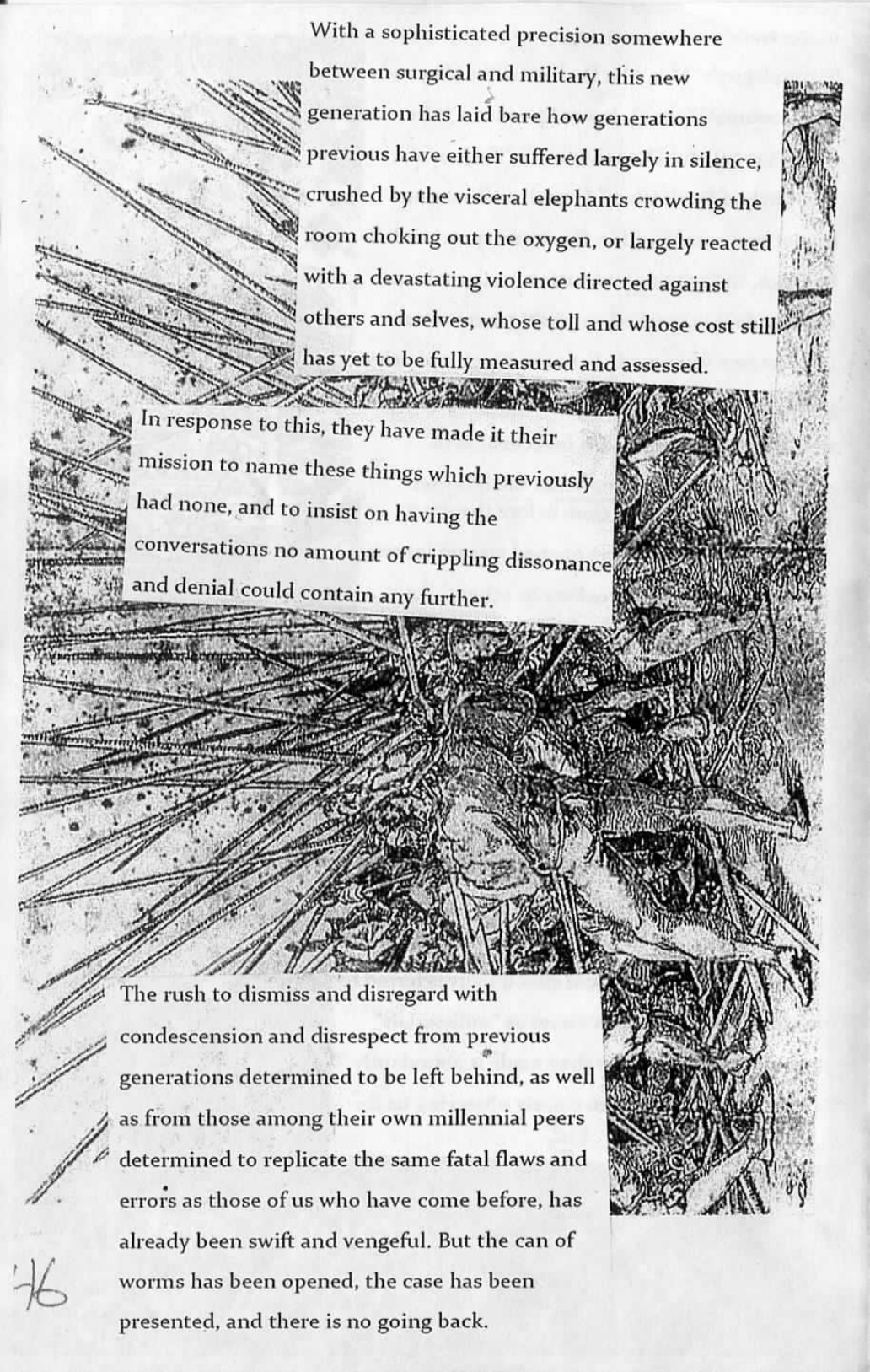
In the ensuing dialogues, a great dramatic evolution in communication asserted itself, as the up and coming generation colloquially referred to in these pre-apocalyptic times as "millennials" put us all to the test, as they made it abundantly clear that they had been closely observing us for quite some time.

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YOUR UTOPIA  
MY DYSTOPIA





With a sophisticated precision somewhere between surgical and military, this new generation has laid bare how generations previous have either suffered largely in silence, crushed by the visceral elephants crowding the room choking out the oxygen, or largely reacted with a devastating violence directed against others and selves, whose toll and whose cost still has yet to be fully measured and assessed.

In response to this, they have made it their mission to name these things which previously had none, and to insist on having the conversations no amount of crippling dissonance and denial could contain any further.

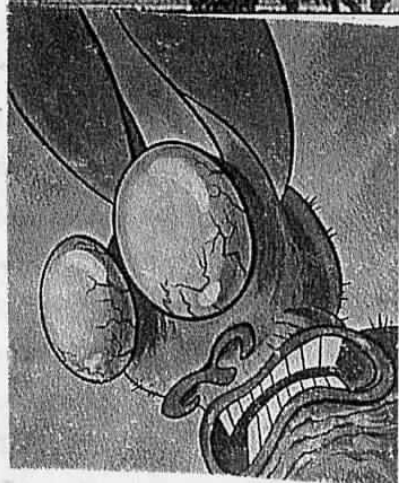
The rush to dismiss and disregard with condescension and disrespect from previous generations determined to be left behind, as well as from those among their own millennial peers determined to replicate the same fatal flaws and errors as those of us who have come before, has already been swift and vengeful. But the can of worms has been opened, the case has been presented, and there is no going back.

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anytime the most oppressed among the people become vocal, set boundaries and become specific about the conditions under which they will and will not align with others, even the most purportedly "militant" and "radical" among the privileged suddenly become quite liberal and conciliatory. The fear of being indicted and exposed for all of the ways we have been complicit may be real, but it is not rational, nor must it be centered, nor is it ever the role of those we have disrespected and excluded to comfort us.

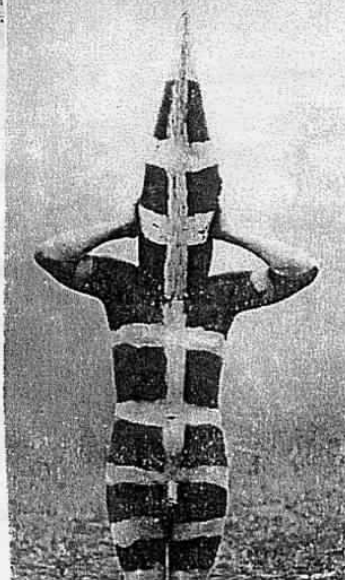
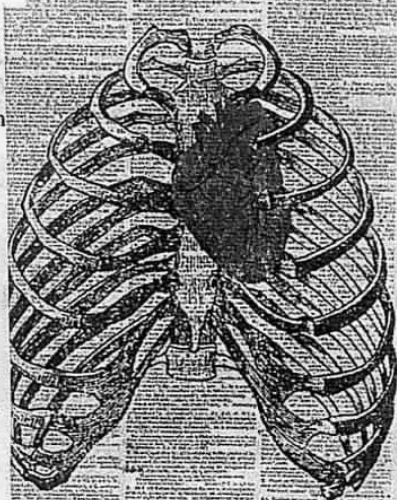
The language of false solidarity and liberal appeals for peace without resolution is inherently tainted and malignant. For we have come up in a context where it is those who have brought the most hatred who talk the most about "love", those who have done nothing but waged never ending war for the sake of itself who talk the most about "peace," those who have created all the divisions who suddenly now talk the most about how we all just need to join hands, sing kumbaya and "unite," those who invented the cancerous concept of race who now talk the most about how we all need to "just forget" about it, those who have invented and created a system where only their lives matter who now most vehemently insist that "all lives matter," and those who take credit for everything everyone else has created who most stubbornly refuse to take any responsibility whatsoever for the dire mess they have made, while arrogantly talking the most smug nonsense about "personal responsibility."



There is plenty room for introspection and self-analysis for anyone wishing to develop a proper understanding of self in relation to others; however, all of it teeters dangerously on the brink of being completely meaningless and potentially distracting if none of it is backed up by actual solidarity and resistance, or in any actual shift and transformation of how our relationships and notions of place and impact play out in this world.

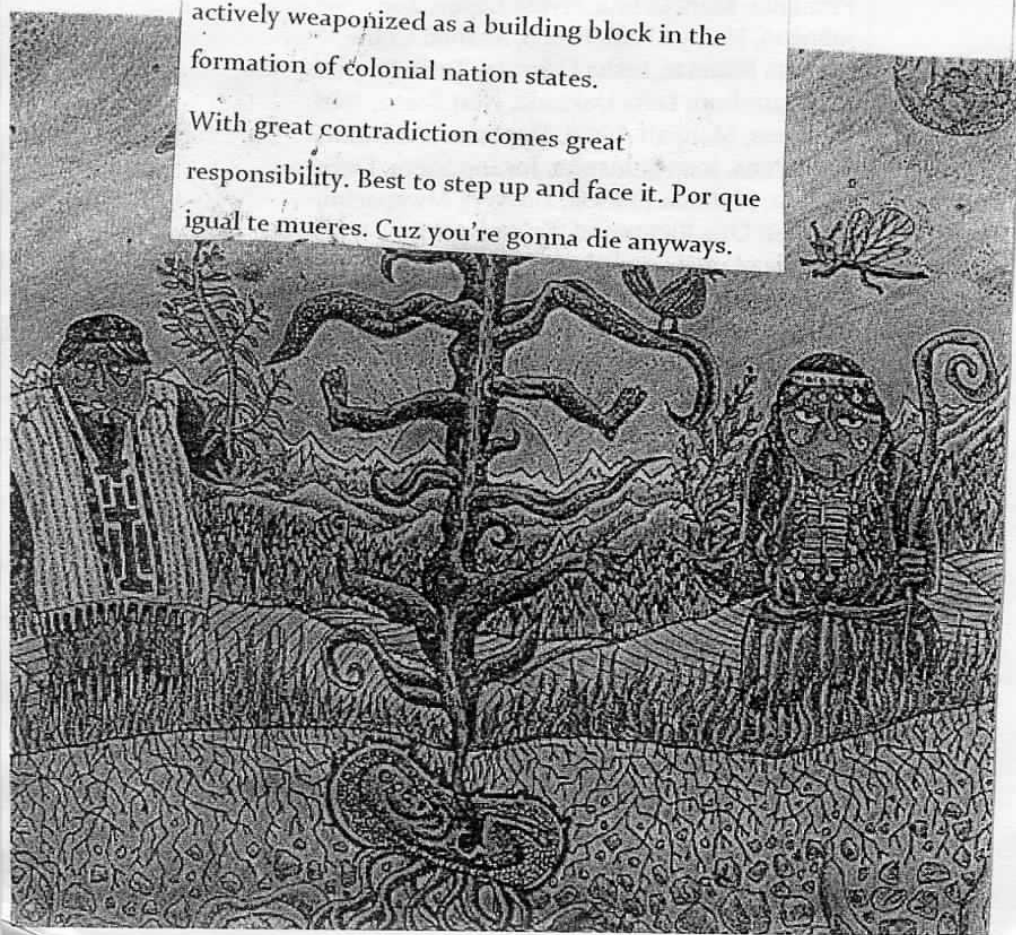
As for myself as an individual....I still know nothing, except that I am the father of an Afro-Latinx daughter, who I have aided and abetted in the process of bringing into a world which already dehumanizes and objectifies her, which by its very definition makes it dangerous for her to even exist. Regardless of my own personal failings and shortcomings as a human being, I have an inherent responsibility to make this the best possible world for her, which invariably means destroying everything which could potentially destroy her.

In order to do this, I must first reconcile with my own self and with where I am standing. The very first place which this zine is being sold is at the 2017 MIXED (Multidisciplinary Intersectional, Xchanging Empowering Dialogues) Conference, committed to "providing a space to centre racialized mixed race identities through art, discussion and community building....sharing our stories of resistance and resilience in the face of intergenerational trauma, anti-Black/anti-indigenous racism and forging community-based



My good friend and comrade, the great writer/filmmaker/intermedia artist Thembani Mdluli, is who convinced me to take part as a panelist. Out of this came the idea for this publication. For decades, I have battled tooth and nail with the concept/idea of identifying as "mixed race" (even though this is what I am), for I do not like its implied neutrality, I do not like how it is an identity privileged under white supremacy by virtue of its suggested distance from identities which have been located at the ground zero of casté hierarchy, and I come from a region of the world where being mixed race is actively weaponized as a building block in the formation of colonial nation states.

With great contradiction comes great responsibility. Best to step up and face it. Por que igual te mueres. Cuz you're gonna die anyways.



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Photo credit: Monika Estrella Negra



Danny Dos Paltas is the pseudonym of a  
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