

What Changes Should be Done in Order to Address Feminist Issues Within the Anarchist Movement?

An Excerpt from “Anarchist Feminists in the Philippines”

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“As anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist.”
— Susan Brown

It is difficult to address an issue when the very issue is not considered a problem by those who seek to address it.

After talking to the men and women from different anarchist groups/collectives here, both past and present, it cannot be denied that there is a serious problem. That is, sexism within the anarchist community exist and is not regarded as it should be. It is problematic not only for the women, but also for any individual who claims to be anarchist, have failed to tackle this very ‘fundamental’ issue. And I think this is where we made our first mistake. By letting the small sexist remarks go unnoticed and continuously ignoring sexist behavior towards each other and passing it off as a common joke. This ‘pinoy’ habit of making fun of everything made things worse.

The common mistake is that, feminist issues, together with sexist remarks and attitudes should come from the women. That the problems should be raised by the women in the group/collective. The issues, be it sexist or not, should not only be voiced by the women. In fact, these issues should be presented by the men in the group as it is part of their responsibility too.

The fight against sexism should not only come from the women. It should be spoken out and addressed. We cannot keep ignoring the sexist remarks and the discrimination towards women just because these issues’ were claimed to be not as important as our fight against the state, patriarchy and other forms of injustices.

We cannot call ourselves anarchists and act like the very chauvinists we are trying really hard to overcome.

To get a better understanding on what changes can be done in order to address feminist issues within the anarchist movement, I asked both friends and strangers who are currently in anarchist groups and collectives. Funny, as what they told me reminded me of this article written by Angela Beallor: Sexism in the Anarchist Movement.

While I agree on Beallor’s points, I do think that her formula is interpreted as too advanced and in some cases, even alienating.

After several discussions with anarchists and enthusiasts alike, we have come up with some recommendations that can be done, and should be done.

Here are some:

- **Defining the Sexist in you**

Sexism is everywhere and since we are social creatures we are not exempted from environmental factors that are sexist in many ways.

We have to define the sexist in us in order to change it. We have to admit that the sexist remarks and jokes that we make are not healthy and hence, should be stopped. We have to start looking into ourselves and rethink about how our words and actions impact our lives, our family and our friends. It is a difficult change, but we have to admit our mistakes that we can move forward without backsliding.

- **Active Participation**

Ignoring, excluding and blacklisting yourself as well as others is never a good alternative. We have to actively participate if we ever want to make serious changes. Working together by discussing our issues and problems with the collective works better than shunning those whom we think have made mistakes. Cracking a joke during discussions can be fun, however pointing out that something is wrong does not make you a party pooper or a killjoy. Know your strengths and weaknesses as well as your collective’s.

- **Individualism vs Collectivism**

Many times before the anarchist groups here have been critiqued as very individualistic rather than collective. While there are some key notes that were raised, we cannot continue evaluating and assessing what had happened without addressing what is within our hands to change. Most of the time we tend to dwell on ideas and differences that it hinders our goals and objectives. We need to come together and learn to work our differences and act together in order to spark an action to create a movement.

And this is not an easy task.

It is high time we stop alienating ourselves and start coming together with much dedication and more clear and common goals. Strategic essentialism may work, however it is better if we can come up with a stronger framework and deeper reasons to come together even if it is just a small action or cause. It will push us to better understand our individual's strengths and weaknesses and learn to complement each other to work not just as a team, but as a collective. There is no use in pointing out what could've been done, or what should've happened. A strong base that is agreed and honoured by everyone will be a good start.

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This is an excerpt from Chapter IV of a book by Etniko Bandido Infoshop, who can be contacted for copies. See <https://etnikobandidoinfoshop.wordpress.com/2016/08/08/anarcha-feminists-in-the-philippines-book/>

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