

**So You Want To Be A Culture War
General?**

Please

Reconsider!

Your favorite angry queer femme has takes on:
The Revolution!
Panic!
Polemic!
Community!
And Leftists Who Won't Do The Dishes!



Preface: Culture War Fatigue

I'm writing this on a Monday night in a cold tub. Two days ago, someone took a shot at former president (and person who I have hated since I was literally six years old when I saw him on the TV at my mother's sorority house) Donald Trump. Quelle horreur. I was expecting weird reactions, what I was not expecting were the following in roughly this order.

- My father, who thinks that yelling at people like a Fox News talking head is having a good adult relationship, calling me in the middle of an event to tell me that “Trump was shot by a Democrat, that means we're in a liberal banana republic, how does that make you feel?”
- Several people in my leftist groups giving in to narcissistic apocalypse fantasies where in the next couple of months they will be the brave warriors in the middle of a civil war. I'm talking ten paragraphs of panicked polemic about getting guns, forging passports, and reading up on combat tactics from people who can't pick up the phone.

It was upsetting. But more than that, it was fucking exhausting. I'm writing this on the phone in my tub instead of on my laptop because it feels more emotionally appropriate. My phone would not stop blowing up with panic, followed quickly by people deciding that the panic was all about them and they were going to be the main characters of their own personal Revolution Narrative (™).

Dear reader, I was raised far right. While I was not a member of the Joshua Generation, I definitely worked at pro-life and political homeschooling events. My parents encouraged me to talk to politicians and journalists as I got older, especially at big events. I was always told that I marched to the beat of my own drum, that I was going to change the world, that I was special. I was set up to be a Culture War General.

Reader, it SUCKS. You don't want that. I promise you. I could say “it's not all photo ops and influencers and being right” but that would suggest it was any of those things. For me, anyway, it was constantly moving goalposts while my parents showed me off as The Homeschooled Child Doing Well, Aren't You Ashamed That You Thought Parents Couldn't Teach Their Own Kids? Never mind that my mother had actual teaching experience and we could afford it, it was about the Image of the thing.

Enough about me. If you're also a leftist theory nerd, you're probably now familiar with the concepts of The Child and the Young-Girl. I offer the Culture War General as a variant or extension. The Culture War General is never weak, never wrong, never distracted. The Culture War General has no hobbies and no friends. The Culture War General cannot be known or understood by others simply because they do not have integrity – they substitute whatever sounds coolest at the time. The Culture War General is someone people want to follow simply because they reflect back their most selfish impulses and call it virtue or praxis.

This zine is not a zine of honor, nor does it have any Culture War General stars. While I write about being trained to be the Culture War General on the right, this is primarily a means of expressing my distaste for the same phenomenon on the left. I am borrowing liberally from the styles of Tiqqun's "trash theory", Hakan Geijer's seriously playful medic writings, and the parts I love about Desert and Blessed Is The Flame. I will be ripping into Culture War Generals and, hopefully, providing alternatives to that path. If you get nothing else out of this zine, even if you reread it, let it be this:

"You cannot create a Revolution without getting to know your neighbors first."

-Catharzine Called Birdie

The Catharine Reading List For Recovering Culture War Generals

If you are reading an analog copy rather than a digital one, these are easily searchable!

You don't have to like all or even most of the resources below. I just personally found them useful in my own growth. As some sobriety programs say: "Take what you need and leave the rest."

- [Mutual Aid](#) by Dean Spade
- [Preliminary Materials For The Theory Of The Young-Girl](#)¹ by Tiqqun
- [No Future](#)² by Lee Edelman
- [Desert](#) by Anonymous, see readdesert.org
- [Blessed Is The Flame](#) by Serafinski
- [Riot Medicine](#) by Hakan Geijer
- [Friendship As A Form Of Life](#) by Friends
- [Mutual Aid, Trauma, and Resiliency](#) by the Jane Addams Collective
- [Ur-Fascism](#) by Umberto Eco
- [We Are All Very Anxious](#) by the Institute for Precarious Consciousness
- [Stupidity Deconstructed](#) by Joanna Kadi
- [The Revolution Starts At Home](#) collected/edited by Ching-In Chen, Dulani, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- [Repair](#) by Gwen Benaway, see shorturl.at/j46Pc
- [Why Are Queer People So Mean To Each Other?](#) by Kai Cheng Thom
- [Trashing: The Dark Side of Sisterhood](#) by Jo Freeman
- [Hot Allostatic Load](#) by Porpentine Charity Heartscape
- [Mapping The Margins](#) by Kimberle Crenshaw
- [Why Misogynists Make Great Informants](#) by Courtney Desiree Morris
- [Caliban and the Witch](#) by Silvia Federici
- [Against The Logic Of The Guillotine](#) by crimethinc.
- [Tough Minds, Soft Hearts](#) by Stinging Nettles
- [Capitalist Realism](#) by Mark Fisher
- [Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction](#) by Adam Jones
- [Necropolitics](#) by Achille Mbembe
- [Choose Community](#) by Cassey Lottman
- [Pleasure Activism](#) by adrienne maree brown
- [Let This Radicalize You](#) by Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba
- [A Love Letter To The Future](#) by Mutual Aid Disaster Relief

¹ The origin of the Young-Girl as a (technically genderless) theoretical construct.

² The origin of the Child as a theoretical construct.

Anatomy of The Culture War General

It's not that politics do not matter to the Culture War General. It's that their politics depend on them being a Culture War General.

Politics to the Culture War General are, ultimately, a method of receiving validation.

The Culture War General makes their platform off being so reasonable and logical, until they're mad, and then their platform is spite and revenge.

Politics are attention. All attention is content. All content is transactional.

In fact, the Culture War General's platform can be reduced down to one or two things that are "really" wrong. Other intersecting issues are merely a distraction. This is how the Culture War General controls the conversation.

There is no conversation with the Culture War General. There is only polemic, which it is your sworn duty to listen to.

Everyone is an audience member, or a potential ticket holder. A community is full of people who listen to them like a talking head or prophet.

Other people are audience members first, and autonomous human beings second.

A Culture War General is used to being a prodigy. Burnt-out gifted kids may find themselves in this role almost automatically to prove they're still worth something.

Criticism is anathema to the Culture War General and represents annihilatory, existential danger – unless it comes from them.

The Culture War General buys into whatever makes them feel comfortably threatened while being out of the area of effect. After all, they're under siege! They definitely don't buy into conspiracy theories, though – they just Do Their Own Research (™)

The Culture War General is always seeking the next photo op, the next award, the next opportunity to pontificate.

While not always a grifter, the Culture War General is not-NOT a grifter. They always have bigger plans, bigger goals, and bigger dreams, but those are for other people to fulfill. They're a performer, an "ideas guy".

The Culture War General's favorite phrase is "You need to..."

The Culture War General never does the dishes. The Culture War General is too busy Changing The World (™).

Guns, swords, or the guillotine? Which one will the Culture War General use as their aesthetic indicator of badassery?

Slogans are the Culture War General's chosen weapon. It does not matter if they believe in them – if they can use fourteen words or less as a weapon, they will.

The Culture War General dismisses "imagination" as something for children and artists, who themselves are not front-line in the culture war. Because of this, the Culture War General's imaginaries of a future world(s) are restricted to whole-stomach regurgitations of media others place in front of them.

The Culture War General believes in a millenarian event that will sweep away all their worries, destroy all their enemies, and place them on top of the new world. This could be the Rapture or the Revolution; regardless, it is a sacred, unquestionable concept.

Asking the Culture War General to participate in an action in a support capacity (medic, logistics, marshal, de-escalation, etc.) is an insult that will not be forgotten. The General is there to make speeches and fuck shit up (™).

The Culture War General may have never participated in any kind of in-person or distance action, but they sure have opinions on everything anyone in an action they didn't participate in did wrong. These opinions are now both gospel and the audience's problem.

The Culture War General will read this list and have one of two responses:

1. "This person is clearly a fake [whatever their politics are]! They are trying to fuck with the cause!"
OR
2. "This isn't about me! Thank God!"

The Culture War General is in all of us. It is a political concept, a transactional form of performative activism, a spectrum where some of these may apply and others may not. While you may not be the Culture War General every day, are there some days where you Publicly Winning becomes more important than the health of yourself, your loved ones, and your community?

“Like J6, But For The Right Reasons!”

The spectre that many try not to see is a simple realisation – the world will not be ‘saved’. Global anarchist revolution is not going to happen... The hope of a Big Happy Ending, hurts people; sets the stage for the pain felt when they become disillusioned. Because, truly, who amongst us now really believes? How many have been burnt up by the effort needed to reconcile a fundamentally religious faith in the positive transformation of the world with the reality of life all around us? Yet to be disillusioned – with global revolution/with our capacity to stop climate change – should not alter our anarchist nature, or the love of nature we feel as anarchists. There are many possibilities for liberty and wildness still.

-anonymous, Desert

I am so tired of fellow US leftists talking about THE REVOLUTION. I don't mean I am tired of revolutionary politics or apocalyptic fiction – in fact, I need both for my sanity. I mean that if I hear one more (likely white, cis, male) leftist talk about how a single armed conflict will bring us a better world wholesale, I am going to scream and I won't stop. I mean it, dear reader. You will hear it from wherever you are reading now.

This is not the first time I have gotten frustrated with the deus ex machina bred from a strain of activism. Growing up far right, I was surrounded by premillennial dispensationalists – or, as they are popularly known, believers in the Tribulation. Yes, Evangelicals (especially American Evangelicals during and after the Moral Majority) are a group of political activists – all you have to do is look into the history of Liberty University to see that. While we think of Evangelicals as primarily believing in the Rapture (a sweeping away of the Good People on earth in the blink of an eye, usually portrayed violently and with mass casualties), perhaps the best analogy to The Revolution is The Tribulation, a (usually) seven-year period where the Antichrist gets to fuck around in the open before he finds out. The bad stuff happens, but good inevitably wins out, forever.

I'm so tired. What war, what revolution, what armed conflict has ever ended with evil defeated forever?

*We're told that after the war the Nazis vanished without a trace
But battalions of fascists still dream of a master race
The history books they tell of their defeat in '45
But they all came out of the woodwork on the day the Nazi died*

-Chumbawumba, The Day The Nazi Died

Talking about The Revolution seems to be a major exception to the rule of Quiet Quiet Chicken³ on God's own internet. The title of this section is taken from a planning chat where one person was posting ten paragraphs at a time of "get a gun or flee the country" rhetoric – without having any certifications or firearms of their own, to the best of my knowledge – and the other was expressing excitement (poorly concealed by concern) about how a potential uptick of violence after the electoral/political events of July 2024 would kickstart the Revolution.

I asked them: you still believe in a single Revolution? What does that look like?

They answered: like J6 but for the right reasons!

[Also something about MLK being raised from the dead? In a surprisingly direct correlation to the Rapture and the Tribulation!]

Even now, that answer makes my teeth itch. Your vision of a worldwide Revolution begins with a bunch of people larping as mercenaries breaking into a state building and ... what, standing around inside the velvet ropes? Smoking in the no-smoking zones? Putting your feet on someone's desk? Leaving after a day? Is that your vision?

It shouldn't be a surprise. When I was surrounded by Evangelicals as a matter of course, I heard all about how the Rapture would take all the True Christians, but leave behind their clothes (neatly folded, of course) and personal effects. Planes would crash, cars would pile up on freeways, fire and brimstone, the Antichrist would rise, guillotines would come back into vogue, *people would die* – but it's ok! The good people are all safe, and God will win in the end.

All you have to do is sit back, wait, and watch.

But when why are they talking about guns and conflict if all they want to do is watch?

Simple, and the reason this zine is about the Culture War General: they don't expect it to impact them. They'll either be in heaven or watching The Revolution from a screen. If we're exploring this painful lack of imagination, as we must, one must ask: who becomes your Ashli Babbitt in your Rightminded J6? Who are you willing to sacrifice to that role? You have to pick, who is it?

³ Or Real Gs Move In Silence Like Lasagna or whatever mnemonic for your "shut the fuck up" opsec that you like.

[For the next little bit, I talk about Babbitt as her death relates to me growing up far right. Please skip if this is not comfortable or healthy for you.]

I tell you this not to make you feel sorry for Ashli Babbitt. I tell you this to tell you that the road of the Culture War General is lined with conspiracy theories and easy answers. The easiest answer – the one that puts you at the center of a narrative driven by shadowy evil men while simultaneously not requiring you to do anything at all – is often the wrong one.⁴

I think about Ashli Babbitt a lot more than perhaps is healthy. Ashli Babbitt was Catholic, a USAF vet, and polyamorous – in other words, a path I could have taken if not for my hard left turn. She was deployed mostly in Afghanistan and Iraq, and then when she came home, she was part of the “Capitol Guardians” unit of the DC Air National Guard. She mentored other airmen and voted for Obama. She probably thought of herself as a model patriot. By the time she moved to California and began servicing pools, she turned to the far right out of frustration. QAnon made sense to her; it was a neat, pat story for All That Was Wrong With The World.

We know so much about Ashli Babbitt because of her death. She was extremely active in her local culture wars. Much like us, she was prone to “Posting Through It”. CBS8 San Diego ran a story on January 8th about how one of her customers fired her after she ranted at him about QAnon on the phone. Bellingcat published social media documentation of her movements on January 6th. Her mother was repeatedly feted by the Trump campaign, and her husband hosted a rally in September of that year to remember her. It’s not difficult to find records of her posts, people revering her as a martyr, and even conspiracy theories that her death was actually a false flag for ... Reasons I Guess.

Ashli Babbitt was not a “major promoter” of QAnon in life. She was a useful idiot, a do-it-yourself propagandist, the sort of person who posts 50 times a day. She genuinely believed that it was her role to go to the Capitol to make sure that her strongman could take his rightful place on the throne. She was more interested in punishing blood-drinking Satanic pedophiles than anything else politically. To her, that was the major issue. Everything else could wait.

⁴ Hanlon’s Razor, my personal favorite, is not an easy answer for most people. “Capitalism as death machine that doesn’t view you as a person” is far more difficult to stomach than “capitalism as death machine that hates you personally”. Guess which one allows you to retain your personhood and sense of self-focused narrative.

Ashli Babbitt is a useful example of the Culture War General not because people followed her, but because she behaved as though people did. It was her fight, and if you didn't agree completely with her, you became her ontological enemy. Check her against the Anatomy above. She matches most points.

Ashli Babbitt is dead. The Capitol was taken back by state forces less than twelve hours after it was attacked. The first person to be prosecuted was the racist religious grifter who wore a shaman outfit in the Senate chamber. While the state was certainly rattled, it was in no danger of being taken down.

I could have been Ashli Babbitt had I gone deep enough into the pro-life movement – look up the Army of God and anti-abortion violence and tell me there's no parallels to J6 there. I could have even been at J6 if I wasn't radicalized in the other direction. Tell me I'm wrong, I dare you. What if I had been radicalized not by kindness and the people who were there to catch me when I was waffling in my own beliefs, but by those who said "Your life is being ruined by people who not only make you uncomfortable, but are also harming The Child, and you can do something about it! This is your movie, baybee!"

Are we really limiting our view of what is possible to what *Ashli Fucking Babbitt* thought?

[Ashli Babbitt discussion ends here.]

I give the example of Ashli Babbitt here specifically because of the quote that titles this section. I do not expect that anyone reading this zine – save perhaps recovering right-wing weirdos like myself – will see themselves in her. Yet we all know someone who posts 50 times a day, who seeks the anger dopamine out of confronting others merely to Win, whose lifeblood is the Discourse. We all know *someone* who pictures the Revolution as an XCOM mission in which they take the most kills, with only a vague understanding of what that means.

Ferdinand Kronawetter once said that antisemitism is the socialism of fools. I posit here that J6 is the Revolution of the terminally boring.

Is this it? Is this how limited our Revolutionary imagination is? Pounding on the windows of the Capitol of a single nation and using a woman as a martyr (or a false flag) for the cause?

Fuck that. *Fuck that.*

I hope it is clear that this zine is not anti-risk or anti-direct action. I am not your dad and am not interested in telling you not to punch fascists. I am merely asking that when you punch fascists, it is because *you* are punching fascists, not because the fascists imagined themselves punching you and that is the only reference you have for political violence!

If we must be the ghosts of a ruined future haunting Capitalism, let us be ghosts of ourselves, not of a fascist action “for the right reasons”. We are not heroes. We are the spirits of the damned calling out for justice.

Heroism is easy. Typing out paragraphs doesn't require anything more than enthusiasm and a keyboard. Martyrdom means you don't have to do anything else. Actually living and practicing networks of empathy, protection, and support is the hard part.

Monsters and Friends

If there is a way out...wherein all people can, as he put it, "walk upright for the first time" then it will be found first by those who have been monstered.

-Jon Greenaway, **Capitalism: A Horror Story**

It's hard to write this part of the zine. It's been a week, and I find myself still stuck. I am writing it in bits and pieces – it's easy to tell someone everything they're doing wrong, and so much more difficult to be vulnerable about those I love. I will try my best.

I consider myself extremely lucky in my choice of comrades. I was raised a far-right Catholic weirdo and had a deep lib phase in and after college. By all rights I should have been radioactive, a target for those who I call friends. We treat the right as a weather condition and libs as our true enemies, which has always been weird to me, but maybe it has something to do with locus of control. I'm sure those reading this will have their own perspectives on that.

I was not converted by people yelling on Twitter or a dirtbag left podcast. People did not pull me left by being The Most Right About Everything (™). I only started moving from liberal to leftist in late 2014, and it took me until the George Floyd protests in 2020 to actually begin engaging in direct action. I did not feel I could go to protests without a role or a job, so to speak. I needed to be needed. I learned how to be a medic from Zoom calls with street health collectives – I am forever indebted to Baltimore Street Medic Collective and Freedom Street Health for the calls and the classes – and from books like Riot Medicine.

It was protest medic work that really radicalized me. Growing up, I was always told that I would be at the forefront of any movement and my voice was So Different From The Masses (™). Being present but almost invisible, serving those enacting change, really humbled me and began sharpening my fucking listening skills. I began to realize I did not constantly have to be the standard bearer, the shit-kicker, the face, and the voice of one crying out in the wilderness all at once. I could be part of a community and do my thing – and my thing was important!

I would not have gotten here without the loves of my life. The house-husband with the guns and the love of shitposting, the burlesque dancer *cum* biologist who struggles with householding politics and has deep feelings about futurity, the many, many, *many* queer autistic

Jewish socialists I have loved, brilliantly cutting transfemme media critics, kink educators with radical politics, anti-capitalist nuclear scholars, mutual aid cooks and pitmasters, theoretician twinkies, disabled writers with fire in their eyes, liberation theology Christian pastors, beloveds of those executed by the state, decadent beautiful weirdos, helpers, mixes and matches of all the above – they've all shaped me. Whether they are still in my life or not, they've turned me into who I am today.

I could not be a good leftist without an imagination. I could not be a good leftist if I didn't write and force myself to work through my thoughts and feelings on paper, on a battlefield outside of my head exposed to the cruel light of day. I could not be a good leftist without my community, who I wish nothing but the best for at all times.

I'm sure one, some, or all of the categories above throw a great big question mark up over your head. That's fine. You do not have to understand my community, much in the same way I do not have to understand yours. What you need to understand is that love is what made me what I am today. Not Being Right (™) but that love that we share for each other while exploring possibilities for wildness and freedom.

Doing this is hard. Doing this takes time. Doing this is so, so fucking worth it, and I wish nothing but warmth and care for you. You deserve it, and your community deserves it, because you are *human*.

Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone, it has to be made, like bread; remade all the time, made new.

-Ursula K. LeGuin, *The Lathe of Heaven*

Killing The Culture War General In Your Head

Learn a useful support skill – de-escalation, first aid, marshaling, aftercare, repair, etc. – and do not post about it to be congratulated. Teach someone that skill when you feel comfortable doing so. Understand that they are not usurping you.

Become friends with your insecurity.

Talk to your neighbors. Maybe brave being a stereotype and ask to borrow a cup of sugar.

Disseminate information, don't try to Win the conversation.

Allow yourself to become friends with your comrades instead of seeing them as just useful people to have around. Comrade does not mean "useful idiot".

Log off and touch grass. I'm serious. Part of saving the world is being in it.

Pick up a hobby. Posting Through It (™) is not a hobby.

Refrain from posting incriminating suggestions, information, or calls to action where anyone can see them. Consider writing a zine; that's why I do it.

Real Gs Move In Silence Like Lasagna, or whatever your favorite slogan for "shut the fuck up about the direct action you're taking" is. You don't have to tell everyone every time you do a good thing.

The Culture War General only talks strategy. Talk logistics instead. Where, when, what, how, how much?

If you get a gun, get plenty of training and get a gun safe. I cannot stress this enough.

Fight the urge to give into conspiratorial thinking. Capitalism doesn't need to be personal to be dangerous – in fact, its danger is in how impersonal it is.

We all have bad days. It's fine.

The antidote to anomie – alienation and emotional/social instability resulting from disconnection to your community due to rapid economic, social, and/or political change – is integrity. Find out what you really care about and let yourself care about it, even if it's "cringe".

Disgust and revenge cannot be the sole foundations of your integrity or morality, even if they shape parts of it.

You do not always need to have a take. You Do Not. Always. Need. To Have. A Take. YOU DO NOT ALWAYS NEED TO HAVE A TAKE!

Deprivation of food and/or sleep (even if you replace both with coffee) leads to poor decision-making.

Be kind to your body, even if it's not always kind to you.

Talk to people, or better yet talk with people, do not talk *at* people.

If you find that your primary mode of thinking about your current praxis is "I'm just buying time until the Revolution", consider getting a new praxis or a new view on THE REVOLUTION.

Anger is physically addictive. Try to have at least one (1) other emotion a day.

Trauma reactions are normal, understandable, and even expected in our current socio-political climate. I know, I wrote this zine as a deeply traumatized queer woman in politics. What a trauma reaction is *not* is clear-eyed political analysis or a gotcha moment.

You don't have to turn your struggles into content if you don't want to. You can also turn your struggles into content if it helps you, but be aware that not everyone makes that choice.

You do not have to match, beat, or improve on what the fascists tell you. You can do better, weirder, more camp.

Violence, laughter, community, stealth, pleasure, madness, and imagination are all valid and proven tactics.

Just talking to people is good, actually.

Know what you're fighting for in any given space and how that changes based on the space.

Flexibility is not just for Olympic gymnasts or weird tech bros.

If it looks like militarism, copaganda, or carceral thinking, it probably is. Be careful.

The Revolution is not coming to save us. We come to save us, however that looks.

Support. Care. Community. Resilience. Forgiveness. Change. Defeat. Rebuilding. Monster. Horror. Humor. Solidarity. Friendship. Wildness. Madness. Imaginaries. Pleasure. Love. What do these words look like to you and how will you use them?

Find allies where they are. You cannot use shaping attacks to force someone into becoming an ally or accomplice.

Meet people where they're at; scoring points on people's lived experience only makes you look like an ass.

Theory and praxis complement each other. You can only do so much of one without the other.

Take what works and leave the rest.

You cannot create a Revolution without getting to know your neighbors first.

*To anyone who ever saw the Romantic anticapitalist inside me before I
did: thank you.
(how did they get in there?)*