COLLECTIVE JUSTICE

ISSUE #2
LEXINGTON, KY

There may be a great future
Hello! Collective Justice is an activist zine that is out of Lexington, KY. This zine works to keep the Lexington community (and hopefully beyond) up to date on what organizing work is being done around town. I hope for it to work as a monthly newsletter so people have another venue for finding out what is going on in Lexington, how to get involved, what events you can attend and how we can collectively create a just community!

This is the second issue of Collective Justice. While in the first issue I focused on introducing some groups in Lexington, this issue focusing more on the personal narrative of group members, their experience with activism and why they got involved.

This issue is also the start to having an arts page! This page will focus on some kind of creative project in Lexington that has some sort of social justice influence.

On upcoming issues: due to school starting back up, the next issue of Collective Justice probably will not be released either until I catch a break from school or until I graduate in December. Please keep a look out for the 3rd issue in the future though!

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Big thanks to all the organizing groups that are doing work in Lexington. Your work is important.
Thanks to the groups in this zine that have spent time making this zine possible.
Thanks to Sonny Crooks for doing the cover art.
Thanks to YOU for reading!

Lastly, If you have questions, want to get involved with the zine or know of/are a part of a cool group in the Lexington area that you would like to see in a future issue, please let me know!

You can get in contact with my by emailing:

kasm233@uky.edu

Thank you!!

Much love,

Katherine Smith
Showing up for Racial Justice

For this interview, I spoke with Ginger Smithwick, who has been a member of SURJ for the past year.

What was your first experience with activism?

"Last summer when there were a lot of police shootings going on I felt the need to do something more than just feel sad and outraged. I wanted to take action beyond posting crying emoji's on Facebook, but I wasn’t sure where to start. I heard about the 'We Move' March in downtown Lexington which was organized by Roz Alyse and Diamond Roberts, and was so inspired that two high schoolers were making things happen for what they believed. I had been a little hesitant to get involved in activism because I didn’t feel like I fit the "profile" or could do it credibly. On paper, I am pretty much a suburbanite soccer mom -- not what I pictured when I thought of an activist! But their example encouraged me to get out of my comfort zone and take the next step."

How did you feel during the experience?

"I was excited to be there. I was excited to see that there were other people in Lexington that wanted to do something. And it opened my eyes to all the work that was already being done, and how isolated I had been from it. As I walked with my husband and two kids, I felt really called to do whatever I could to bring more people like us into racial justice. That maybe that is the role I could play -- to work to get better educated and equipped myself, so I could bring others who may have felt like I did into the cause."

How did you find out about SURJ?

"Facebook was how I originally found out about SURJ. I definitely remember a lot of things floating around at that time about essential reading about what was going on. Once I went to SURJ’s Facebook page and the national SURJ website and found out more about their mission, I knew it was a great fit for me. I wanted to get better educated, but not alone. I really wanted to be part of a community that was committed to moving forward in the journey together."

Why are you interested/passionate about SURJ?

"I think the work we do is essential and more important than ever because nothing is going to change until a lot more people understand and take action to dismantle racism. It’s not enough to simply “be nice,” and strive to treat everyone the same, and I think that is where we, as white people, often remain. Educating white people on how to identify and unlearn racist attitudes and behaviors – in both themselves and broader systems they are part of -- is central to SURJ’s mission. That is essential work that must occur before meaningful action is possible. And that, of course, is our ultimate goal -- to equip white people to act to eliminate injustices against people of color."

If you are interested in getting involved or hearing more about the work they do, you can reach them at:

ckysurj@gmail.com
Kentucky Worker's League

For this interview, I spoke with Ashley Kelley, a KWL central committee member.

What was your first experience with activism?

"My first experience was when a coworker and friend suggested I reach out to KWL for help with an unjust work situation. I was familiar with activism online but had been too intimidated to ever show up in person before."

How did you feel during the experience?

"My first experience was a meeting with my friend and several KWL members to talk about my work. I was super nervous but also really excited. By the end, I was both relieved and overwhelmed to speak with people that seemed to understand and actually care about my wellbeing as a worker."

How did you find out about KWL?

"Word of mouth from a couple of coworkers."

Why are you interested/passionate about KWL?

"KWL is a socialist organization that fights the power and serves the people. I think capitalism is evil. We have enough resources to meet every person’s basic needs. I believe it’s inexcusable as a society to prioritize money and profit over caring for each other. I believe I deserve a better life than capitalism gives me. I know I deserve a better life. We all deserve a better life so I’m going to keep working to help build a better future. Plus everyone in KWL makes me laugh."

If you are interested in getting involved or hearing more about the work they do, you can reach them at:

kentuckyworkersleague@gmail.com
859-955-0544
NonCompliant

1. How did you form?

"Ryan, who plays bass, would often get approached by dudes saying shit like, she should join their band and be the "hot bass player." So one day she got tired of it, and she messaged three of her friends saying, hey let's write some music, and viola. Rachel joined in early 2016 and Hilarie joined later that year, both to replace original members who had to move on to other things. The name NonCompliant is inspired by the comic book Bitch Planet."

2. In your song "Give it a Rest" which was released earlier this year, you discuss "we all have value, we aren't what you see, let's march together towards equality". What was the inspiration for this song?

"Honestly, just general frustration at our experience with how women and other disenfranchised groups are treated in society."

3. Why do you feel it's important to discuss the issues you talk about in your music?

"It mostly just comes from our experiences as people. A lot of what's considered "issues" are personal problems that we and people we know have faced. Matt Bevin got elected and we were mad about it, so we wrote a song about it. We all have family problems, so we wrote a song about it. Song writing comes from a very personal place for us. If people like it and can relate to it, that's awesome."

4. What kind of a response have you gotten?

"Pretty overwhelmingly positive. We went on tour back in April and had positive feedback pretty much everywhere."

5. Are there any issues you feel are too taboo or too difficult to discuss?

"It mean. It'd be kinda hard to write a song about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, but it doesn't mean we can't talk about it, if that makes sense? We've already touched on assault and abortion. The punk scene is nice because no one really explodes if difficult or political things are mentioned. If it's relevant, then why not talk about it?"

6. What draws you to action?

"Getting tired of the same old shit and wanting to inspire and generate change somehow."

7. When is your next show?

"September 24th at the Green Lantern with our local pals Pussy Pit and our kick-ass homies Dollar Signs from Charlotte."

Rachel Young
Take Back Cheapside

In this issue there will not be an interview from Take Back Cheapside. Currently there is a lot of work going on around the TBCS movement and they need to focus their energy on that work. So instead I will be giving a brief overview of what all is happening.

Similar to the recent events in Charlottesville, Virginia, Take Back Cheapside has been working to relocate two confederate statues that are on display in Lexington, KY. This effort has been on going on for the past two years and is still not over.

After the events that panned out in Charlottesville, Mayor Jim Gray openly stated the importance of moving the confederate statues in Lexington and discussed his decision to ask city council to vote for the relocation of the statues.

With a city council vote on the horizon, more people than ever got together in support of Take Back Cheapside. Through phone banking, calls to city council members and people physically showing up to the two city council meetings, many people in the Lexington community came together for this issue.

The two city council meetings were on August 15th and 17th and by the end of the second meeting, city council had unanimously voted yes to relocating the statues elsewhere.

While this is a huge win, the fight is still not over!

Part of the resolution that was passed was finding a new location within 30 days. The city must petition the Kentucky Military Heritage Commission to get the right to move the statues, which there is doubt that it will happen in the next 30 days. Due to the Commission's task of protecting these statues, the new location must suit both us as well as them.

What Take Back Cheapside needs from the community:

While this past win was very exciting, Take Back Cheapside needs us to remain focused on the outcome that we desire and the steps we need to take to get there.

Here then are some recommendations for what you can do with your time and energy in this interim period:

- Remain committed to counter-protesting at a separate and safe location when/if white supremacist groups hold a rally in our city. (Suggestions can be found on the TBCS website)
- Check in with other local groups organizing for racial and social justice in our town and state and see how you can get involved with some of their efforts.
- Keep wearing your Take Back Cheapside shirts. Don't have one? Stop by Third Street Stuff and get one.
- Educate yourself and continue to grow in empathy. One bit of misinformation to counter is how Cheapside Park got its name. It actually has nothing to do with enslaved people. Cheapside was a common name for markets throughout England and the colonial United States. It comes from the Old English word ceapan, which means "to buy." Also, enslaved people bought and sold at Cheapside's auction block fetched anywhere between $300 and $1,600—they weren't "cheap" by any standards.
Kentucky Health Justice Network

For the KHJN interview, Giselle, one of the KHJN members gave us their thoughts on the matter.

What was your first experience with activism?

"My first experience with activism was at my university, the organization I currently work for was presenting a piece on reproductive oppression. I had never heard of or considered that people, people of color and poor people in particular had their reproductive choices taken from them by various governments and rulers throughout history. When I learned about how indigenous people and Latina people had been sterilized without their consent it made me want to do something. I started volunteering as a clinic escort at the local abortion clinic, the lesson also catalyzed me to be a vocal supporter of reproductive justice and to know what my options were in life and to help folks advocate for their own rights."

Why are you interested/passionate about KHJN?

"I'm passionate about Kentucky Health Justice Network because of their intersectional approach to abortion rights and reproductive justice. I'm a queer person of color and I feel excluded and forgotten by many progressive groups but KHJN is one group which I feel actively tries to do better rather than settling for the standard narratives around abortion and health justice."

If you are interested in getting involved or hearing more about the work they do, you can reach them at:

info@khjn.org

https://m.facebook.com/KentuckyHealthJusticeNetwork/

Trans health related questions: kytranshealthjustice@gmail.com

Trans Health line: 502-694-2227

Abortion find/practical support line: 1-855-576-4576
Activism & Anxiety

I have been thinking about this a lot after going to a meeting where I was extremely anxious the whole time. It felt very debilitating and I did not feel like I could be engaged as much as I wanted to be. I got to thinking about how many other people experience this and avoid activist spaces because of it. I wanted to create a page that discusses tips to deal with anxiety while doing organizing work.

As an attendee/member:

- Bring water! Not only will staying hydrated help a bit with anxiety, but for me, it gives me something to do when I don’t know what to do with my hands ahaha.
- Bring a friend! Not only can it be comforting to have a pal by your side, but you are also opening a door to getting even more people involved with important work.
- Remember to take deep breaths. In my experience, doing a ‘square breathing’ exercise can help me calm down in that moment. To do this I:
  - Breath in for 7 seconds
  - Hold for 7 seconds
  - Exhale for 7 seconds
  - Hold for 7 seconds
  - Repeat -(if 7 seconds is too long for you, try 4)

As a facilitator:

- Setting up a room. Make sure to set up a room that is inviting and creates space for everyone. People feel more welcomed/comfortable if they feel there is space for them! Make sure it’s accessible for everyone, not just those who are able bodied.

- If you can, welcome everyone who enters the door. Directing people where to go/sit may make some people feel more comfortable. If you are a facilitator who struggles with anxiety, you could set up a game plan with someone else in the group that can do this job if you feel it is too overwhelming/drain for you.

- Go arounds. While go arounds are a great way to get to know each other and break the ice, these can be very anxiety inducing for a lot of people. Basic questions that don’t take too much time to think about are always good to go with. Humor, in my own experience, is also a good way to calm nerves, so maybe a funny question would do the trick!

- Another great way to make people feel comfortable is by setting norms. Norms are collectively agreed upon standards for the space to ensure that everyone feels comfortable and welcome. It can be helpful to post these somewhere visible so everyone can read them and be reminded of what they are.

- Lastly, food! If it’s possible, bringing food can be very comforting. This invites people to converse, allows people to contribute and feeds those who may be too hungry to pay attention (me on so many occasions). Please be aware of food restrictions and dietary choices so that everyone feels welcome to partake.

If going to meetings and/or events is too overwhelming, that’s okay. It can be extremely difficult to do effective work if you are overwhelmed the whole time. Instead, one option for you to play a part would be to get in contact with the group. Maybe you can’t attend meetings but I’m sure they need help in other ways. This may look like sending an email, calling a representative, making a poster or creating a doodle poll. Just because you cannot show up physically does not mean you cannot participate.

This list is pretty basic and may not suit everyone. I created this from my own thoughts on the matter as well as conversations with other people. If you have more thoughts on this please get in contact because I would love to develop this more!!
Kentucky Student Environmental Coalition

For the KSEC interview, I spoke with Emma Anderson. Emma is currently a KSEC intern and the Bottom Liner for the pipeline and natural gas working group. She is also a former delegate.

What was your first experience with activism?

"My first experience with activism was through the group I work with now, the Kentucky Student Environmental Coalition. I was to serve as a campus delegate, connecting my college to the resources and expertise that KSEC offers. Most of the work that first year was behind the scenes stuff; conference calls, meetings, recruitment. I never really identified as an activist, because the work I was doing didn’t really fit my conventional conception of activism. It was not until I went to KSEC’s summer training program, Catalyst, that I fully understood how what I was doing fit into the bigger picture. I learned best practices for activism as well as anti-oppression. It was very powerful to learn from my peers and I was inspired by their experiences. I started to truly understand the why behind my work as well as how campus level activism connects with activist work elsewhere."

How did you find out about KSEC?

"Through a position with my campus group Centre Environmental Association."

Why are you interested/ passionate about KSEC?

"This question is difficult to answer because I feel so passionately about KSEC. It is important to me for so many reasons. It is an organization where I feel like I have a voice; we very intentionally use anti-oppressive practices to make sure everyone is being heard. It is a place that prioritizes youth voices, which is rare. Every other organization I have been a part of often neglect to intentionally include youth ideas in their processes. The organization makes me feel like a listened to human being, and the work makes me feel hopeful and powerful. We are creating and educating a force of like-minded young people, empowering them to affect the future they want to live in. We teach our members how to organize and how to do it the right way. We care about each other, we listen to each other, and we fight for a future that we can survive and thrive in. We refuse to be ignored because we know what we have to say is important. We are making a bright future despite how the odds have been stacked against us. KSEEECCCC!!"

If you are interested in getting involved or hearing more about the work they do, you can reach them at:

emma.anderson@centre.edu
502-604-0713

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Introduction to Marx: Wage Labor and Capital Political Education Series September 7th 7pm Lexington Public Library-Central Branch, Conference Room C

KSEC Youth Assembly for Just Economic Transition- September 9, 12pm-5pm. Loyal Jones Appalachian Center (Berea, KY).

September 10: CKYSURJ Book Club Meeting: The Hate You Give & How It Went Down, 2 - 4 PM Wild Fig Coffee & Books

September 12: CKYSURJ Chapter Meeting: Racial Justice 101, 6-7:30 PM, Wild Fig Coffee & Books

2nd Annual Lady Arm Wrestling Benefit! Fundraiser for KWL Women's Group and Kentucky Health Justice Network September 15th 6pm-1am Al's Bar

General Assembly 3rd Monday every month September 18th 7pm Central Library

KWL Film Series 4th Monday every month September 25th 7pm Al's Bar

TBCS and KSEC Panel on Solidarity- September 27 5-7pm. Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning

September 28: CKYSURJ Challenging Perspectives: Talking to Friends & Family about Race, 6 - 9 PM, Lexington Public Library (Main Street)

Look to websites/Facebook pages for events past the month of September.