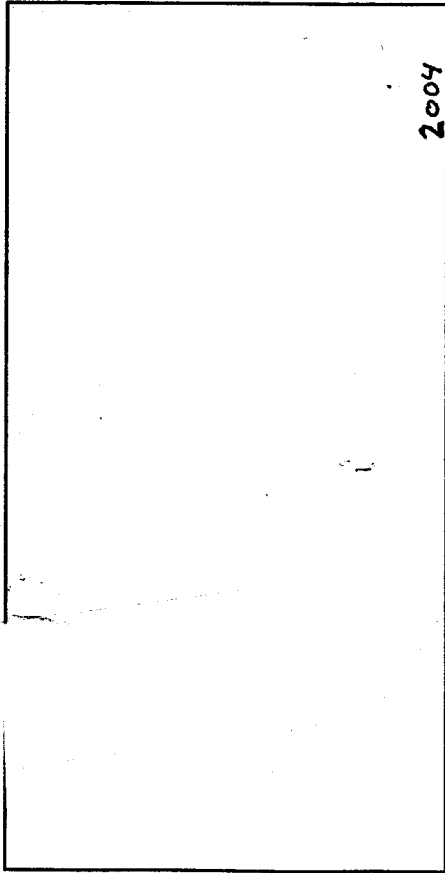


Strikeback
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*BOUND TO
STRUGGLE:
WHERE KINK
AND RADICAL
POLITICS MEET*

VOLUME ONE



2004

This zine began years ago when I looked around and saw that my community, my crew, was made up of people who were, for the most part, radical activists, who were, for the most part, tremendous perverts. For some, perhaps a coincidence. For me, and I suspected many others, it is not. This project is an exploration of what drives radicals and perverts to do what they do - where the personal meets the political hell yes!

A lil' bit about me - at my 26th birthday coming up real soon, I'll have been out as a no-ho (not medically transitioning) transguy for five years. I'm a born n' raised Chicagoan currently living in Radical Fairy community in rural Tennessee. My time is spent these days working on a miniature horse farm (a farm for small horses, not a small farm for horses), playing folk/bluegrass on the ukulele with my housemates, learning to make techno music, and traveling all over the US to see friends, loves and family as often as I can. This is my third zine project, though my first anthology.

I would like to thank all folks who submitted pieces and wrote emails of support this long year of work. To my sister, who donated her computer to me, and to Chain, who let me borrow his when I crashed my sister's.

I'm currently accepting submissions to Volume 2. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, prose, art (sorry no photos as I don't have good copy quality) can be sent to:

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punishment or a construction of that past which is a turn on because Creating a role where you are the girl/boy that Daddy comes home drunk to fuck is just that, *creating*. Creating a story that turns you on is empowering and you trust me with the pen. But really I'm telling your story. I take the power you give up to me, hold it inside of me and dole it out back to you, bit by bit. This gives the illusion of powerful, but it is you that is powerful.

Being a top is receiving a gift. The responsibility grows the heavier the gift. This is trust. The giving and receiving of gifts. My responsibility lies with creating a play world where we are safe to exploit the social taboos that have tried to kill us all our lives - sexism, assault, transphobia, fatphobia, hetero-normativity, racism, abuse, anti-semitism, ageism, the lot of it all. We come together under the crushing weight of a world that teaches us that people with our bodies and/or experiences do not deserve sex, pleasure, love, power, control.

Find those things inside and show them to me. This is powerful. Bring them out - will you trust me with them? To do this, trust yourself with them first. Show me what you've got baby, this is our liberation.

I've never hesitated to look into your eyes and say This Is My Liberation.

His hair wrapped tight around my fist held high, bringing his neck back - I'm waiting to feel his back relax so I can push my fingers into the nook under his jawbone at once manipulating the bloodflow and muscular pressure points. He's told me feeling like he's going to pass out turns him on because when he was a kid he would bury himself in the closet clothes and pretend he was a princess. The clothes smelled like an old feminine relative who ran the family show. Musty linen and rotting lavender - the smells of pure power.

This is a story No One told me once, a character in the long line of people they roleplay in their scenes. I don't miss a beat. A gentle story starts, I lead but them fill in the major points - they don't really say any words, but I'm watching and listening so intently for every intake of breath, gripping of my arm, short moan. It signals me to continue, what words are working, where the plot goes next...

ME: you can hear my footsteps down the hallway, i've almost found you (calling out tone) where are you baby?

/when i say "baby" they twist and bite their lower lip. so they are what, IO? 8? 6?/

/if they are younger i am older, i thrill on opposites/

/am i angry or playing? hiding from a beating hiding for a game?/ /i take a risk -

ME: what are you doing in there?

THEM: nothing (sounding as 6 as i ever heard)

ME: then why are you hiding from me?

/"from me" establishes power/

ME: (firmly) what are you doing in there? tell me now and i won't be mad /more moaning - this turns them on and also leaves an out. they could take the story so i am not mad, or they could.../

THEM: no don't come in here

/i watch their eyes. where is this coming from - a real past of hiding and

Nemo Brinker

It's hard to write about, even now.

a. 13

I've always been into stuff I thought was transgressive, ever since I rolled in the mud and discovered the exquisite pleasures of dirtiness. But SM seems bad-scary, like you really have to know what you're doing and how the hell you find out I don't know. You could put an eye out or something. I hear about anarchists and decide I am one, then get in trouble when I won't salute the flag at school. I am scared, the other kids make fun of me, but I'll never suck it up and mouth those words again. There's a perverse part of me that really digs the spectacle of shame and refusal, like my will and my identity get tested for cracks every day. I find them over and over again.

b. 16

I can't stop asking everybody questions. Do you want to tie somebody else up, or get tied up? Are you the pony or the mean chick with the whip? Why do you think authority is such a good idea? My fellow Catholic school kids are squirming in their seats, fascinated, repulsed; some of them clearly want me to shut up, some can't get enough. I wear tall boots that still smell like the stable so I can remember the rush I get, riding. I carry knives everywhere, under my plaid skirt and everything, make angry designs in my skin with them. The blood comes up and I can feel something again, be in charge of myself. My desires mark me out, make me the weird girl, but somehow make me something I can be proud of. I don't much like arousal when it comes; it's too confusing and it makes me feel like a traitor to some inner nature. Desire is dirty but pain is clean. Desire involves other people, who suck, and sex, which is gross. I bet Joan of Arc never liked boys. I bet she didn't have her first orgasm while riding and fall off her horse, full of shame and lust. Joan of Arc had more important things to do.

Drunk on red wine from paper cups under the trees at night. I'm with m who speaks six languages, who grew up as a Jew and a troublemaker in the USSR. She's reading me poetry in French and talking about why it all happened, the Nazis and the Holocaust and everything. She cuts to the core of it, saying: "It isn't about politics. Fascism is about the beauty of the boot on the neck." I squirm inside. The boot on the neck IS beautiful; I can almost taste the dirt as my mouth is ground into it, feel the yielding flesh about to crunch underneath the heel of my tall black shiny boot. Shit, does this mean I'm a fascist, in my heart of hearts? What the fuck is wrong with me?

d. 29

Suddenly I'm crying, and the cane marks are searing and it touches something long buried, and my trick is saying, "talk to me," and all I can say is "It feels like letting go."

Another curls against my shoulder and falls asleep with the chain around his neck, the knife and the ropes scattered on the floor of the tent. I'm still amazed at the trust I've been given, the word "daddy" echoing in my skull.

On the count of three, we push needles into each other's breasts at the same time. I'm dizzy, laughing, it's all new and amazing, and and s/he says gently, "there you go." Perverse and patient, s/he runs her hands over the needles, lets me fingerprint with her blood.

Now the third layer, more complex, and the most empowering. I love playing the ultimate slut. The slut that all the boys talk about, the one whose lips are made to suck cock. The typical high school slut. I talk non-stop about how badly I want to be fucked, how I need to be fucked, and how much cock I sucked that day. I get spanked for being a slut and always wanting to be fucked, I get praised and called a "good little slut" for giving good blowjobs. I am told that I can't be trusted to control myself that I'll let anyone fuck me that I'll suck any dick. In a scene I can get called a slut right to my face, and I nod in agreement. I can [sic] all my feats and play right into them. Rather than silencing that voice, I make it louder, I control it, I make it mine. Kink is a way I can work within the feminist thought that says we have control over our bodies and voices. I can be submissive in a scene because in reality I have total control; I control how I want to play the slut, the rumors about her and how she gets fucked. I can stop it when it doesn't feel good. Since that voice, which torments me won't go away, I control it, use it, enjoy it, and make it loud. These layers form my slut identity.

Slut is a non-mogamous and sex positive feminist.

Slut is enjoying sucking cock and cunt.

Slut is making out a lot.

Slut is laughing about all your one-night stands.

Slut is being aggressive in bed.

Slut is being in a room full of lovers and ex lovers.

Slut is having control.

Slut is a role.

Slut when I'm having sex.

Slut when I'm being "good."

Slut when I'm being "bad."

Slut when I'm being spanked.

Slut when I'm getting fucked.

Slut or better yet a shameless hussy. .u

-anon.

Slut is something that you think would have gone away when you start fucking women, but it doesn't.

Slut is an identity that was given to me.

Slut is an identity I have chosen.

Slut is an identity that I become, a role I play.

My slut identity has many layers. The first layer makes me feel completely powerless in its traditional meaning and how it affects me. I have no control over it. It surfaces at times of vulnerability (like when I'm having sex). Its intent is to shame me, it can keep me from enjoying sex, being present, and it makes me feel judged by my sexual partner. This layer has taken years to form. It wasn't that there were rumors that I fucked the whole football team, nor was I completely isolated because girls had a fear of guilt by association. I was only called a slut to my face a couple times. If anything the word slut was a threat, I was never sure when I would cross the line and the rumors would spread beyond my control. I would be marked and lose the respect of my friends and sexual partners. It didn't stop me however from having sex, giving head, and having one-night stands, but it was never something I could never completely ignore. I couldn't keep letting this happen.

I am super sexual and pro-sex feminism has taught me that there is no shame in fucking, getting fucked, giving head, or just making out with lots of people. This is where the second layer of my slut identity comes in to play. This layer is part of the movement to reclaim the word slut into that of those who are shameless about their enjoyment of sex. I love slut positive spaces! But at times I feel different then other people who call themselves sluts. For years people who judged me for being sexual used that term to oppress me. Most importantly they judged me because I had been sexual with lots of people. Remember, my ex-boyfriend thought it was great that we fucked a few times a day and that I was good at giving head, but as long as it was his dick. So although, I'm thankful for all the folks who call themselves sluts and fuck a lot while having sex with many people in positive, consensual ways, it doesn't necessarily make that first layer go away.

e. Applied research, 3/20/03.

My friends and I are marching in the street in San Francisco because another goddamn war just started. I'm with the queers, and crowds of pissed-off people take over part of Market street. We have this crazy moment of elation when we jump up on the news racks someone's turned over in the street, waving the peace flag high. Then the riot cops surround us. They jump on a tranny boy who looks like a black bloc kid, first one, then four, beating him until he's curled up in the fetal position on the ground but they won't stop. j, the girl who likes to kneel in front of me wearing a collar and leash, the sweet gentle one, she's charging the riot cops with fury in her eyes. She's teaching us a lesson about the strength that comes from below, about things you didn't know you had in you.

Somewhere in the fray a cop jerks the flag out of t's hand and snaps the pole under his boot. He sees the black hankie flagging in her right ass pocket and snarls, "this is one of those dykes who likes to be hurt," and starts twisting. She's five feet tall, but it takes four of them to get her cuffed and dragged away.

I can't believe they're hitting us for a moment, but the breath is knocked out of me, their clubs connecting over and over. Rage, panic, and a strange thought while I look at them: I can take this. I am more than what you can do to me; you can't change my mind with a stick. Finally they stop and cuff everybody, and we're shaking, crying, but still standing. And I finally get why I'm not a fascist. Playing with power and the abuse of power are worlds apart.

Her wrist is broken and swollen in its cast, my ribs and tits black and blue. After they let us out of jail, I hold her down and fuck her while helicopters throb overhead, and I ejaculate all over her body and her bed.

f.

I'm still not sure what to make of desire, or how to reconcile the compassion and the brutality that sit side by side in me. But lust isn't so murky now, there isn't such a gulf between pain and pleasure, and I'm just not the misanthrope I once was.

What is clear are my lovers: the gift of their bodies and their trust and their vulnerability, and I know how much it means when I take pain or give submission to them, too. We get to love each other and make ourselves up as we go along, turn authority on its head and learn to transform pain and fear into something each of us can be proud of. I'm not naive to think you can get pleasure and strength out of making fun of power. It can be done—balancing consensuality with the desire to hurt and be hurt, with the desire to fuck. I learned how to discern at the business end of a riot baton. Playing dress-up with the trappings of a violent world is a form of transgression, too, a game that reveals the fragility of the existing order by dragging secret, uncomfortable desires into the light. I know what I'm doing when I play with savagery, helplessness, suffering, possession, as if they were toys in the sandbox. SM is a rewrite of the power-infested reality we've been handed, from each body outwards.

And sometimes, I can put it all together: getting hot, being true to myself, feeling an awed respect for the lover who wants me to hurt her, she's demanding more cock and my hands on her throat, gasping, the red marks glowing on her skin, pure ferocity welling up out of her with wrists bound, and she's screaming, waking up the neighbors.

people are watching and looking up, and i feel real good, but when i lookdown there's this guy, standing way too close to another dyke couple, and getting onto their nerves, and when i see he's right under me i get the other dick off its holster, and aim through it, and pee water off my bottle through it, and when it hits him he looks up and is real disgusted, and i wave my hand at him and grin, and slowly, real slowly, so he can see, i remove the hollow dick from my cunt and bang it against the railing to shake it dry, and then i grin some more, too bad only that i run out of liquid, and can't shoot any more.

-joe

slut or better yet a shameless hussy

Slut is not a word I reclaim because I am a non-monogamous, sex positive feminist, which I am.

Slut is word I called myself in my journal when I was 14 when the first boy I kissed tried to fuck me the same night.

Slut is what you think of yourself when boys you only kissed say that they fucked you.

Slut is what your best friend calls you when she thinks that you kissed too many boys.

Slut is what your ex-boyfriend calls you ~~when~~ he finds out you've given other boys blow jobs, although it was fine when you were sucking his dick.

Slut is what you think of your self when your extended family is

Orthodox Jews, who don't have any sexual contact before marriage.

Slut is the voice in your head that's obnoxiously loud when you're giving head that voice makes you feel like shit.

reclaim the streets

i'm back to berlin. that needs to be celebrated. before i know how i find myself in the company of quite a lot of halfnaked people, all of them pretty high on drugs or endorphins or maybe it's just pure joy what keeps up their spirit cos all of them are either fucking or dancing or both. the music is real loud, and blasting, and attracting people who walk alongside us, and watch and cheer and stare. hundreds of them people surrounding the truck that we're on, and thousands more around them hundreds cos there r dozens of trucks, all with loud music, and its gay pride and they are playing reclaim the streets. i join the game for a while, i'm on the highest point of the truck, what a blast. it's real easy to believe that they're all looking at me, i'm all visible in my efforts to keep my balance up there whilst my body is moving with this woman. she's real shy, and telling me that she doesn't go for people of her sex very often, it's somehow sweet, and i feel honoured and all the more turned on when she bends over the railing and gives me her ass. it's a bit hard to dance and belt and balance simultaneously but i manage cos i am high on horniness, and also it's not that hard really, u should try. there are some welts raising on her ass, and her skin turns red, and she hisses and moans, gimme a break, and i slow down and stroke her butt, and that's when a whip lands on my fingers, my fingers and her butt, that is, and i look up and there's this guy, he climbed up to us, and now he's there and demands attention, and already he's reaching for the dick hanging at my side, he's dragging it out of its holster, and when he shoves it into my hand he demands that i fuck her with it, yeah show me how u dykes do it, his eyes are lusting, he wants to watch, and i'm thinking what an asshole who invited you, and all out of a sudden this reclaim the streets thing reads reclaim the truck.

fuck off, i say, and then slap him in the face with the dick he put in my hand so precariously, maybe he's a nice guy after all. he isn't, he looks real pissed but then again that could be cos he doesn't like dick, how am i supposed to know, so i ask, you don't like dicks, he doesn't, but maybe you will learn to like them, and we watch, i say, and that's not a threat, it's an offer but he's straight and doesn't take it, what a fool, but at least he's leaving us alone, and we got all the space up there to ourselves once more. we're back to moving and dancing and belting and balancing, and still

"Yes," it's more a breath than a word, a sigh I let out as she slides the needle into my shoulder. Its pain bites, twists around my trace of voice. I feel the pain wrapping itself tightly around the intake of breath and then releasing, uncoiling as I moan. I feel her fingers trace lines on my neck, the cool metal thread of another needle gracing my cheek before she runs it through the cartilage of my ear. This time it grabs me, lines of sensation running out and across my body. These needles, their pain is staking out a new map, creating a new terrain on this surface of my body, creating in its wake new flesh and new hope. And somehow, in the midst of this transformation, this restructuring of my flesh and its possibilities, I am beginning to find myself.

Next to the bed she has set my sharps container, nearly full of my 21 gauge hormone syringes. In the morning I will bike down to the needle exchange, chat with my friends that work the Saturday site, and get a new pack of points. I know the exchange workers from my volunteering with them, from social service organizing in town, and occasionally from dyke parties. Unfortunately, the exchange doesn't carry needles for play piercing.

I spent the winter of Y2K in Minneapolis. The winter was cold, as they always are. Vicious winds whipped through streets and sidewalks, grabbing our bundled bodies, leaving the tiny ice scars on the surface of our faces and eyes. It was an exciting time. I had spent the spring before traveling in anarchist and communist squats on the continent in Europe. In Rome, an autonomist told me to link arms as we charged a US embassy, hitting a line of the squat Carabinieri vans. In Barcelona, I watched police cars turn and drive away, as we spread out across a blocked highway, chanting "You take our homes, we take your streets!" in Catalan. In London I sat with Greek anarchists for days behind a high barricade of classroom desks; watching the campus security guards outside parole our student protest turned siege. When I returned to the States, things were changing quickly. N30 hit in Seattle, and for the first time I began to seriously imagine the ways street militancy might allow us to seize, hold and defend our dear, beloved cities.

Through that winter I organized street protest trainings, teaching kids the tactics I had learned in Europe and Seattle. We practiced breaking police lines, sucking people back into crowds, staying linked and staying strong. We were preparing ourselves for AI6 in DC, for the upcoming May Day in Minneapolis, for fantasies of mass street insurrection.

We were training our bodies to protest. Our trainings were rooms full of bodies but not just any bodies. These workshops shared the demographics of too many of the protests of that year -- they were mostly white kids, the young middle class that could afford an arrest or two, able-bodies who could run if it came to that, bodies that were not visibly trans or queer. We trained rooms full of bodies to stand against the police and defend each other, to meet power with a certain privileged, almost naive courage.

We enlisted our bodies for high-profile battles of street protests, while less visible wars waged across other kinds of bodies. During 1999 and 2000, construction workers were building a new downtown Hennepin County jail; not to house protesters, but the bodies of young black, native and Latino men. One Minneapolis public school librarian, a trans woman named Debra Davis, faced the wrath of transphobic parents and administrators over her right to use a bathroom. Within the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 17, immigrant activists led a successful campaign to change the national AFL-CIO's official stance on the rights of immigrants; while they fought off a brutal alliance of the INS and hotel owners. And in the streets of Minneapolis, like in cities across the world, many faced daily harassment regardless of any protest. Sex workers, trans people, drug users, homeless people and others fought a constant battle for survival, against poverty, hatred, violence and police harassment. Wars over bodies: their survival, their control, their movement, their visibility, and their worth.

While organizing street protests, jail solidarity and lock downs, I was also in another struggle; one I wasn't talking much about. I was dating, and at 21 I had one of my first remotely functional sexual relationships. At the time, most read me as a fag, a boy, and a bit odd. My girlfriend was a butch queer woman who liked me, in part, because she read me as femme. In our sex, our day to day moments together, I began to unravel years of confused anxiety, a tangled mess of incomprehensibility that wrapped itself around my body. Slowly, I began to heal from years of trauma; from an alienation from my body and self so massive and deep I couldn't begin to grasp it. I found new ways of understanding and reading my body, new possibilities glimpsed in a pleasurable caress, in our flirtatious exchanges. Sometime early in that winter I began to seriously consider the possibility that I was a woman.

Moreover, throughout this suggested open exchange with the "offender", attempt to discover what the drivers were/are for their feelings. An example of this might come in the form of the question: "Might the media's portrayal of (say) bondage and discipline have influence your feelings about these images?" And... If or when being spoken to... Truly listen (being heard often leads to being open to suggestion or compromise).

Please understand, these suggestions should never be undertaken if your accuser appears combative or unreasonably angry. Protection of one's self (both physically and spiritually) is paramount to achieving a compassionate understanding of another mindset and feelings. Still, if your accuser is open to reasonable discourse I urge you to engage (if you can). You choice to do so could lead to new found insights, greater compassion for the experience of the accused or even potentially an ally in our (the Kink Communities) fight to combat misinformation. Remember... Each time a mature and compassionately present person stands before the misinformed, the Kink Community as a whole benefits!

JD ~ of Two Knotty Boys

<http://www.knottyboys.com>

"How bad do you want it? Come on bitch, tell me, how bad do you want it?"

"So bad." Her voice is coarse, desperate, saturated with desire. I tug the scarf tightly, tying her wrist restraints to the metal rings that surround my bed. I run the suede of the flogger across her back and thighs, listening to her breath quicken. She bends her knees, and her ass is in the air. Her hair is wet with sweat, dangling over her face. She is waiting with an intensity that fills the room, an intensity that I can feel across the surface of my own skin. An intensity I never imagined I would experience, through a brief lifetime of hating this body.

She wants me. She really wants me. And it has so little to do with what's between my legs.

As that winter gave way into spring, I moved out of Minneapolis. I soon came out as trans, and began a different trajectory of struggle and resistance. Every day I fought to make sense of my body, to sort through years of accumulated self-hatred and fear. I kept working with anarchists joining protestors through another two May Days in Portland, doing prisoner solidarity organizing with an anarchist collective, finding myself from one punk house to another across cities and years.

Slowly, I tried to understand the ways my self-hatred, my lack of connection to my body and my extreme discomfort with my sex and gender informed and structured the kinds of organizing I chose to do. My work in militant street protest, I found, was linked within me to my desperate, confused desire to connect to something, to somehow be present in this flesh. My fantasies of armed struggle, I realized, were connected to my lack of desire to live and my basic fear of this life and body of mine. As I withdrew myself from some forms of organizing, new ones opened up. The real battle felt like it was on the surface of this flesh. It was a struggle to come to terms with a new way of being in the world with this body that was so very wrong.

Eventually I started hormones and it became clear I didn't want to go to jail again. I started valuing my own life, and visions of violent revolution became more complex and difficult. I stopped being willing to play the game of legitimacy of gender and politics against sexist male activists. I began to realize that if I was going to be a part of a revolution, I'd have to begin by figuring out myself. I'd have to begin with an understanding of

As a fetish model, B&D player and rope bondage instructor in the San Francisco based rope bondage instruction team, Two Knotty Boys, I often come across others who claim offence to the life I live, the images I generate and the content of my lessons. To my dismay most of these encounters, rarely if ever result in acquiescent consensus or, at the least, respectful acceptance of differing opinions and choice. Instead, more often than not, frustration, resentment and anger begets the same, and I am left feeling helpless to bridge yet another social gap. It is this very frustration that lead to the following thoughts:

Unique personal experiences, to a large degree, influence what is perceived as offensive. For example, survivors of sexual abuse are more likely to be sensitive to images of a sexual nature than persons who are not. Moreover, a judgment (of offence or otherwise) is more truly an expression of an individuals personal values and/or un-met needs.

For instance, values such as prudence, modesty and humility have potential to play into judgments of a sexual nature. Un-met needs for conformity and neutral expression mark potential drivers for those judgments to be expressed.

When someone judges something or someone as "offensive", the accuser, in effect, is saying the creator or specific person(s) in question are aggressive, designed for attack, expressing painful or unpleasant sensations, causing displeasure or resentment. These are the literal defined meanings of offensive. Thus, for the "offender" to think otherwise is for them to not understand what the word offensive means.

If the sentiment of accuser is incongruent with the "offenders" feelings, the drivers behind their creation or their expression of self, bewilderment, resentment and anger can set in. Complicating the hope of reaching a resolution between.

My thoughts played out... I tread lightly around an expressed offensive. I am capable of and interested in the exchange, tactfully suggest less judgments and more expressed feelings, based on concrete observations. An example of this might come in the form of the question: "What is it that you feel when you see these images?"

this body that exceeds my words, that eludes their categories, that demands a world beyond my imagination. For this, kink was absolutely crucial.

The languages I had learned to describe my body were hopelessly useless and self-hating. I needed to find myself, connect to myself, reimagine myself -- I desperately needed a different way of marking and mapping this flesh. I saw how deeply unsustainable my organizing had long been. I wanted to find ways of being true to myself, and hence true to revolutionary struggle. In staying strong in struggles against genocide and domination, it became clear, I needed to heal myself. It was through kink I began to let go of this trauma, and find physical languages to understand this body that opened onto new, liberating ways of being and healing. It was in sex, more then anywhere, I learned about myself. My repulsion from most genital-based sex began to make sense, and I started to sort out other forms of desire and possibility. If my body would never be normal, never have quite the right genitals, never fully fit into the regime of properly sexed humans, what could pleasure mean? I needed new languages of sensation and intimacy to understand how I could be attractive, how I could give and receive pleasure, how I could live my body with others.

My sexual practices in BDSM taught me ways of being with my body that wasn't about normative gender. They offered sexual codes that weren't reducible to genitals, that didn't immediately write my body in codes that made no sense. They helped untangle me from the criss-crossed maps of self-hatred and self-destruction that stripped my body from myself. In transforming my flesh and my desire into a complex landscape of unexpected pleasure, BDSM offered a means of loving myself as trans, in loving my body as genderqueer. In the intensity, desires and passions of bondage, pain and domination, I found that I was sexy and beautiful, capable of connection and joy. I found that I could heal, and with that healing return to the world proud and strong.

"Is there a hankie color for gender freaks?" Ze asks, watching me as I carefully fold the black and white checkered handkerchief. I shrug, smile.

Mark tracks another eviction through people who talk to him over the fence as they pass by. Occasionally he stops to tell the kids to get out of the tree. He's lived his whole life here, the adult half openly gay, and he and his partner recently adopted two kids. Serving as a trusted hub for neighborhood gossip he also talks people through troubles with landlords.

This season he can only track evictions. Shakes his head, lights another cigarette. I feel more useful listening to him, breathing secondhand smoke, than I do at the community center trying to present as whoever I'm supposed to be down there.

Neighbors ask me about Arlo years after the relationship has dissolved and she's moved away. The query takes place by the front desk at the community center or while I'm sitting on my front porch. I usually just tell them how she's been and leave a huge gap in the conversation. I assume they make up stories. Who else have I been involved with over the course of the years? There's a whole list. Sleepovers on the back porch, view through the branches down the alley, biting a pillow while getting fucked.

I feel absolutely alone in the city by the time I decide to ride down the street and have my nipples pierced. The metal passes through me and I gasp at probably the most focused pain I've managed to sexualize. Afterward I sit dizzy on the sidewalk imagining myself packing up, moving out of the neighborhood, on the road with a clear conscience as if there's any such thing. Which road? One that lands me in a different sort of trouble, I hope.

- Olive Green

and white photo of the block with half the neighborhood's population pouring off the center's front steps. Adjacent houses in the picture don't exist anymore. Beyond the narrow playground now shears off in a twenty-foot drop to an expressway. I'm installed in an office on the top floor of the center looking down into this pit, trying to help the neighborhood fight off developers. The organizer model has passed from union movement to civil rights movement to this shaky future attached to nonprofits that write grants, receiving a distribution of leftover wealth from the super-rich.

I meet Ed, one of the neighborhood residents who regularly goes downtown to yell at city councilpeople and bureaucrats: bucktooth, soft-spoken, both incredibly patient and righteously angry. He lives at the end of my block, so I know he knows I live in that notorious house; this knowledge stays unspoken as we work through turning people out to a picket, and I'm concluding it's impossible to bring your whole person into community organizing.

The make-out party on the next block is populated by art student punks who are moving into the neighborhood at higher rents than the old residents can afford. We wander through tiny bedrooms, dumped furniture, a shoddy unfinished renovation that installed bench seating and painted with primary colors. Sometimes we ridicule the art students. They won't make out at their own make-out party without our instigation. I bring nipple clamp pairs made from clothespins and twine, distributing them onto anyone's nipples who will let me. I end up on the back porch with my housemates trading advice on technique. Smitty burns me slightly with candle wax.

More art students move in, and also people we can't classify who rented moving vans and have porch furniture that was actually meant to be porch furniture. We lose to the developers sometimes, which means holes through the red clay in what were the vacant lots, stacks of cheap pressure-treated pine next to each. The household is disbanding, slowly but surely. The projects that created the passion, engaged us in struggle together, now feel like routines we would rather shake.

"No, I don't think so. All the codes I learned are for actions, for things you do with someone. I don't think they are usually about identities or what sort of body you have. Anyone could wear any banky. If it's what they are into." I meet hir eyes; we smile for a moment and turn away. Through hours of processing, we agreed to try to keep the sexual tension a bit lower in our friendship.

"That's interesting," ze says after a moment. "So your gender or genitals don't matter." We both knew in the actual leather scenes in town, both mattered a great deal. But we were talking about something deeper. We were talking about what these codes and practices meant for us. How we came to leather across the strange landscape of our bodies, a complex map of a very different world of gender.

"Exactly."

In kink I learned ways of loving and appreciating my new, changing body. I developed the confidence it took to start hormones, to be out as trans, to demand my space as a woman. In leather I understood that I could be an extraordinary, incredibly hot dyke creature that had no need for a body that rigidly conformed to gender expectations. This confidence and the changes it brought led into new kinds of organizing, into different ways of linking my body to politics.

I only occasionally take the streets these days, and only when the risk of arrest feels remote. Instead I've spent the last year organizing around health care access for trans people. Slowly we've been trying to build cross-racial and cross-coalitions among Philadelphia's trans communities, linking this to struggles waged by prisoners, sex workers and active drug users. From reforming the shelter system to supporting the needle exchange, from speaking on anti-trans violence to writing about self-determination in health care choices, I'm finding ways of building movements that allow the complexities of my body and identity to be fully present.

At some point, I am sure my struggle will bring me back out into the streets. Our movements and world are changing quickly, and the day will come when I again place direct action centrally to my work. When it does,

I will return to those tactics with new strength, new grounding, new understanding and new courage. I am coming into a space where my militancy is founded on deeply knowing and loving myself, on the complex terrain of this new flesh and its strange pleasures.

As my sexual practice has taught me ways of loving and reimagining my body in its myriad of contradictions, I've strove to bring the awareness, clarity and pleasure of kink to my organizing.

"What do you want? What turns you on?" The desire in her voice collects under her fingertips as she caresses my neck. I've never realized a collarbone could be so intensely erotic.

That's the question, isn't it? We're fighting a war of liberation on these streets and in our hearts, fighting an old battle over the terrain of our new bodies. What do I want? Who am I? What am I doing in this world? What am I fighting for? What, do tell, turns me on?

- Michelle O'Brien

street, brashly cursing developers and corrupt city. I talk gardening with old ladies and have no idea why they think I'm sweet. Their grandsons could take a length of pipe to my faggot head next weekend. These young sullen men, cars in convenience store parking lots, may never catch up with the transient and charmed segments of society that bring us through a house on their block these particular years.

Then again, sometimes none of us pass at all. A constant steam of guests on couches, outlandish travel stories, and subcultural mannerisms flow through. The household is a narrow channel, almost always overflowing. The old ladies stare at the deliberately fucked-up haircuts, deliberately patchy dye jobs. The family next door starts to fear us when they see two girls making out on our front porch.

We build fires in the backyard and drift through summer evenings listening to travel stories. Human rights observers in Chiapas, community gardens that take up whole blocks of west coast cities, shutdown of Montreal's financial district. Perverts are out there doing all these things, and I choose to stay home, compelled toward a difficult balancing act of staying in social struggles yet making myself coherent to people outside this very limited circle. Others will make changes stick, not necessarily those of us out on the margins looking for the next change - even though out on the margins is where we should be since we have no idea how to be elsewhere, or who we would be if we were elsewhere.

How do our daily practices fit into the daily life of the neighborhood? We're in the garden weeding. Neighbors in the next yard are talking about fishing spots and weekends, putting scrap aluminum roofing on their shed. We're talking about placement of eyebolts in baseboards and furniture for tying each other up.

On trash day we've gathered a collection of broken belts and bicycle inner tubes ready to become harnesses and floggers. We walk through the alleys imagining secret spaces: boarded up buildings to be squatted, all the good spots for public sex. Any closed blind could harbor the most ridiculous thing, and we know because we do ridiculous things behind ours. Does anyone else think these thoughts when they look at run-down row houses?

In the foyer of the community center down the street hangs a faded black

Perverts in the Neighborhood: Political Fictions

We move in. Most of us are being evicted from our old house. Arlo and I move in a few days early because we like the empty house and that's when we can borrow a truck. Furniture from the alleys. First of all a rock box stolen from the thrift store where I work, and Huggy Bear on cassette. Gang vocals: "We all feel like girls, even the boys." Snarling male voice: "My boyfriend, teen angel. My boyfriend violates his parole."

It's a sweaty day. We moved in a mattress, opened all the windows -- second floor open onto an alley and cradled by arcing branches of locust and elm trees --undressed the rest of the way, fucked. Door onto the second story porch open, queerpunk pouring out. Wooden rowhouses, shingle siding, patched roof, lopsided porch. This type of afternoon drags for boys on the corner. We woke up a few hours ago and we're sticky, already napping, settling into mattress on floor.

We're awake again early evening to move furniture in common rooms upstairs. I'm in white silk underwear, trimmed with lace, stolen from thrift store like all the best things in my life at this moment, lifting a desk when Dawn walks in. She glances anywhere but my crotch and excuses herself quickly. Arlo stepped out of character, quit giving me terse orders to check in with me. This worried me more than Dawn seeing underwear.

Sitting on the porch that evening we hear a call and response from the old lady two doors up to the old lady two doors down. About the weather. We'll hear this call and response every day for the years we live in this house. Every day the weather is good we'll see the same kids climb the straggly street trees. I spend days on the roof of an abandoned factory by the river. During the cold months I was in a much larger, faster-paced city fighting a court case. Arrest for protesting.

The household is three couples in open relationships. Most of us identify as genderqueer and we all feel like perverts, but somehow some of us pass with the neighbors sometimes. Smitty chats with a gaunt roofer across the

PALESTINE

You and me, we're like Palestine like two alien states who've been here this whole time and just now is when we start negotiating our relationship

We fight like fuck cause we're so alike and you will never, ever back down your defenses when I'm around and I keep offering you peace, but you want something else along with it and me, I'm like Ariel Sharon I don't want to let you in that far

Last night I awoke to find you and me entangled in a pile of arms and legs your knee at my groin, rubbing and all my dreams had been apocalypse dreams where we're just looking for the shelter instead of summoning a storm

yeah, you and me and Palestine the terms of our settlement as unsettled as the possibility of an earthquake in San Francisco you stayed over to go to a rally and we ended up enmeshed I walked by and a man attacked me,

middle fingers held
at the level of nipples
cause I looked too Jewish

You played with my nose and I awoke
To find your fingers there
tracing out the
terms of my surrender
in my Jewish nasular profile

when we'd spent the whole night
sleeping on opposite ends of the bed
like a full-body veil
that gets suddenly shed,
I'm sorry if I'm being racist--

--I'm not so good at
communication--

Every time we talk I know
you're a human bomb waiting to explode
and suddenly your hands are
where they've never been before
seeking a peace unconditional
of anything I believe,
this is how it should be,

sharing the space of our bodies,
I'd like to put Sharon and Arafat
in bed together
and wake up at midnight
entwined like us,
heads wrapped
in a kaffa
and spooning
like bedouin sheep

Because my legs have been like
the border to Ramallah, never
letting anyone through
and your hands are Palestine
and, without thinking,
I open.

- matthue roth

Snapshot:

My writer-performer genderqueer dyke mom landlady/lord (and friend) is MC-ing "Trick: a Fetish Masquerade," which I will be Go-Go dancing at as well. The Fetish Masquerade is a fashion fetish party. "Fashion fetish" in that we are all going out in our gear, costumes, leather or uniform but there will be no play space, just pickup space. Getting an eye for what each other are up for and into.

She makes the same bad tranny joke twenty times as she wraps the worn leather laces up her leg, ending below the leather kilt. "I'm Bin Herr, get it *Been Her* ..." All macho in my PVC Wonder Woman get up, platforms and star legwarmers, I call her a ballerina. We continue to dress in the small cubicle that is the bar washroom.

Later in the night after the stage show is over, while another girl is up dancing on my ledge she is chasing me around the dance floor with a heavy flogger. "Tenant Protection Act...!!!" I scream as I flee from her, weaving around our drunk dancing friends. "I'm taking you to the housing tribunal on Monday..."

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-tara-michelle