

# Amplify the Margins

## Documenting the New Generation of Black and Brown Activists



Race is not a topic you just cover with an article in a magazine. Decolonisation can't be reduced to a single issue of STRIKE! magazine. These are matters that have a bearing on every institution and take a role in all of our interactions. The failure to recognise this is something that extends to the white left, which often sees itself as entirely absolved from oppression.

The British Empire is responsible for perpetuating violence against people of colour that lasts to this day. Yet here in the UK race is kept at an arm's length, tiptoed around awkwardly and only discussed in hushed tones. In progressive circles we find our local issues being diffused by talk of the US, our malformed gun-toting cousin. The cries for solidarity with Black Americans subjected to police violence, for example, seem to drown out concerns for the issues affecting black and brown communities in this country. British people have embraced a post-racial multicultural fantasy where, through sheer force of will, we have apparently surmounted racism and discrimination.

*Generation Revolution* is a feature-length documentary about the new generation of black and brown activists - people who don't recognise this post-racial fantasy - striving to change the political and social landscape in this country. The film has been over a year in the making and follows not just a number of exciting new organisations but also gives an insight into the lives of the people that are part of them.

We started shooting at Notting Hill Carnival - an annual celebration of Afro-Caribbean culture in the heart of London. There we witnessed the mass criminalisation of a Black event; treated as a public order exercise involving 7,000 police officers. We saw numerous young black men being profiled and arrested, including the harassment of a 13 year old boy. This is reflected in wider society, with much evidence depicting the violent and racialised nature of policing in the UK.

Research into the effects of government policy, and the attitudes still prevalent within society, tell stories of other kinds of racialised violence. Figures from the last 3 years show that homelessness rose by 21% and 33% among black and Asian households respectively, compared with just 7% in the general population. Another study shows that Muslim men are up to 76% less likely to have a job of any kind compared to white, male British Christians of the same age and with the same qualifications. For black and brown women the situation is equally dire. As specialist domestic violence services have seen massive cuts since 2010, vulnerable black and brown women are being denied vital support and safety. In 2014 almost 80% of the 733 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women in London seeking refuge spaces were refused them.

The groups we followed don't organise solely around race, but being black-led and ascribing to the concept of intersectionality gave them a critical view towards which issues should be prioritised and who should be leading on them. And there haven't been a shortage of issues. After the deaths of Eric Garner & Mike Brown we saw a surge of mobilisations in solidarity with the US-based #BlackLivesMatter movement. There were die-ins for the thousands of migrants dead at the shores of Europe. Young people rallied together to help the growing number of homeless people resulting from our government's harsh cuts to welfare provisions.

We didn't want to make just another edgy film about what young, politically active black and brown people are doing. We are them. So many of the issues that the groups care about, we care about too. Our motivation for this project was to amplify the voices of our peers. It was so important for us to be making a film about black and brown people because our narratives are left at the mercy of white media agents (filmmakers, writers, broadcasters) who look for the exotic and sensational over reality and substance. As black and brown filmmakers, our personal experiences were crucial in shaping the film and the stories that it contains. We want to offer a nuanced view of the people who are helping to bring social change in our communities. We want *Generation Revolution* to be part of a long tradition of decolonial film making.

As people whose experiences are so often minimised or erased one of the most powerful things you can do is just to listen. Listen intently and hold your tongue when your inner-Marxist urges you to blurt out something about class and its totalising grip on material conditions. Yes class is a significant factor in the oppression of many but so are race and gender, so are the ways in which we relate to trans\* people and queer people. You should listen intently because the voices of those on the margins, those that live at the intersections of various systems of oppression have been forced to think about these systems and how we can dismantle them all. Totally.

# London Latinxs

## Building Affinity Groups, Fighting Oppression



The London Latinxs was born from the result of a call-out for 'politically active Latinamericans'. That this call out happened to attract feminists, anti-capitalists, anarchists, and anti-fascists is a happy coincidence that will hopefully result in an existential threat to the military-industrial complex. Snowballing through friends of friends, we have expanded to include Colombianos, Peruanas, Bolivianxs, Uruguayas and Brazilianxs.

Our work thus far has consisted principally of co-organizing resistance events and actions, alongside various groups whose fuel is the needs and narratives of black and brown women and people. We fight to DECENTRE WHITENESS from the collective political narratives on environmentalism/anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, anarchism queer+LGBT liberation, and feminism.

Decolonial theory and practice has been a consistent challenge for a group as varied as ours, especially given our previous ties to institutions and hierarchical organizations, as well as our cultural differences and our base in a city as imperial as London. We see the structures and code embedded in all the languages we speak and spaces we inhabit. We're a mix of several generations of immigrants, and colonisation inhabits our bodies/minds in more ways than we know.

Latinxs use the X for two purposes: (a) to signify inclusion of all genders or none and (b) to have a word to describe ourselves that is not directly rooted in European colonialism.

We reject the Real Academia Española's standard grammatical gender - which denotes masculine and feminine terminations and articles to most nouns and adjectives. While grammatical gender differs from gender or gender expression, the binary system remains a reflection of Judeo-Christian colonial assumptions. By using the x, we're not only queering language to our needs but also consciously using language most Spanish speakers would refuse as weird or unnecessary.

Additionally, by marking the word as ours to use, we recognise our afro, indigenous and mestizo roots. We make it inclusive for those who can not recall the traditional roots of their ancestors due to the cultural and linguistic annihilation we have suffered. Latin America's heritage comes from deeply mixed cultural roots, now blossoming with immense variation and beauty. We are mixed and so proud!

Some of us in the group are second-generation migrants. The value of organising with first and second generation Latin American migrants ensures our Latinx culture is not only shared and spread but also challenged and taken apart in a decolonial way. Humans are not only subject to culture but we make it as it makes us. We work to overthrow the patriarchal, racist, homophobic notions of what it is to be 'a latino/a'. As a group we aim to change society, ourselves, our collective being, and prepare for decolonisation!

As mentioned, decoloniality isn't easy when using colonial languages. The two colonial languages we use the most, English and Spanish, are necessary for our community work. Pronunciation is a source of anxiety for first generation immigrant Latinxs because we are read as foreigners, which create obstacles for employment and self-determination in this country. The experience and privilege that comes with fluency both inspires us and creates conflict in our work with different genders, cultures, and classes.

These languages also mediate our education. We are proud of our workshops, discussions and our use of social media to share our standpoint and create community. We love playing with Spanglish and Portuguese to make friends across borders. We use all available methods to share knowledge of Latinx culture, spreading news about issues that affect us or the inspiring ways our sisters and brothers across the pond fight against oppressive systems. We have held workshops on subjects such as gender, race, sexuality and privilege. Furthermore we have used the platform of creative protest to confront the racism and capitalism embedded in borders, the misogyny and horror of detention centres, as well the destruction of our planet.

We hope to inspire others to find their own affinity groups to organise with and rise up to fight the racist, heteronormative, capitalist and patriarchal system.

If you're Latinx and political, find us on [thelondonlatinxs@gmail.com](mailto:thelondonlatinxs@gmail.com) to get involved.