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HERSTORY PART
3.

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without reading about the life of Sakine Cansiz, a co-founder of the Kurdistan Worker's Party who led a prison uprising in Turkey and spat at the face of her torturer. She was assassinated, along with her comrades Fidan Dogan and Leyla Saylemez, by Turkish MIT on January 9th 2013 in Paris while sitting at a cafe. Turkish government assassins committed a drive by mass shooting from a motorcycle in broad daylight. Women like her paved the way to fight against the so called Islamic state. Turkish propaganda has labeled them as evil witches, prostitutes, terrorists and confused, irrational women because they had to fight back to survive Turkish rape culture. Today women in Rojava and people around the world decorate their rooms with photos of their comrades Sakine, Fidan and Leyla.

The censorship of the ideology of the Rojava Revolution robs them of their voice and takes the movement out of context for the profits of modern capitalist nation states. These states ignored Rojava's struggle against the so called Islamic state for years because these state armed these toxic fundamentalists to destroy Rojava by causing the Syrian Civil War.

Solidarity with Kurdish women in Rojava and Iran means to actually care about their politics. It means to challenge NATO, the UN, unjust wars, patriarchy, capitalism, political religion, global arms trade, nationalism, sectarianism, nation states and the destruction of the environment, which all form the foundation of the global system that caused this situation in the first place. Don't let those who armed, created and enabled the monsters of the so called Islamic state, the Iranian regime and the Turkish state to pretend to be the good guys. Supporting women means getting up and spreading the revolution.

U\$ military and police also weaponize rape, sex trafficking and abuse of minors to wage a war against women on the street and in prison. Who fights back?

Herstory, part 3 - by Dan Baker

Near the end of the 19th century writers like John Addington Symonds and Edward Carpenter began a long, drawn out campaign against laws which punished the natural expression of love. They worked with radicals like Havelock Ellis to advocate for the gay community. This community has always existed and will always exist because this is a natural part of human nature, for men and women and everyone in between. Carpenter was socially ostracized as a gay man and in that experience he saw the connection between his own struggle for survival and the women's revolutionary struggle for human rights, along with the worker's. He framed this intersectional class struggle in the perspective of the democratic socialist and anarchist ideology. He worked to oppose the powerful wherever he saw them being condescending towards the weak. He was one of the first thinkers to criticize capitalism and promoted autonomy and simple living.

Carpenter founded a utopian commune based on mutual aid and free love in Millthorpe outside Sheffield. For over 40 years Carpenter lectured on sexual openness and alternatives to capitalism. He wrote many passionate books, like "Toward Democracy", "Love's coming of Age" and "The Intermediate Sex- A Study of Some Types of Transitional Types of Men and Women". He was openly out, living with his partner George Merrill, a working class man. He is quoted saying "Eros is a great leveler. Perhaps the true democracy rests, more firmly than anywhere else, on a sentiment which easily passes the bounds of class and caste, and unites in the closest affection the most estranged ranks of society."

Millthorpe became a safe house for activists and alternative lovers, documented in Sheila Rowbotham's biography on Carpenter. Feminists, politicians, labor activists and writers paid a visit to Millthorpe. Rowbotham says that Carpenter

"possessed a knack which helped to prod the modern world into being," though the progress in this direction is now in danger once again. "Carpenter's personal life became ineradicably connected to his politics... being a homosexual man and a left wing sexual rebel in a period of moral panic, he had limited space in which to maneuver. Yet maneuver he did."

In 1885 the Criminal Law Amendment Bill outlawed all forms of male homosexual behavior. This resulted in the trial and confinement of Oscar Wilde in 1895. But once again that which is made taboo often become more interesting. Psychoanalyst Adam Philips said new laws create more crime when "a desire for what it forbids" when "the act of forbidding intrigues us and distracts us."

Rowbotham studied dissident Marxists in the 1960's and was influenced by her friend E.P. Thompson, who researched the forgotten feminists of the late 1800's and early 1900's. They gave voice to Wollstonecraft and Owenite feminists in "Dreamers of a New Day". Rowbotham disproved all of the conditioned gender roles and defined first wave feminism. In the U.K. the Pankhurst family led the way for women's suffrage. Lady Emmeline Pethic-Lawrence wrote "Votes For Women" in which she promoted pacifist ideals and women's rights for her entire life.

This was not only a European movements, but inspired women worldwide to demand a political voice. The industrial revolution created dangerous workplaces and widespread poverty which landed most harshly on women's backs. Many women became Fabians, which later was part of the Labor Party, seeking peaceful reformation. One such activist was Charlotte Wilson, a former anarchist, and another was Beatrice Webb. Other less 'respectable' women were militant trade unionists, like Ada Neilchew and Selina Cooper in Lancashire. Workers were demanding an 8 hour work day in 1894. Chew insisted that women needed more

They are often only boosting their own egotistical career and individualistic consumerism by promoting themselves and their products as freedom. The women struggling in Rojava define radical feminism by refusing to sell out to the global patriarchal capitalist nation state system. They define their own self defense and divorce themselves from the monopoly of power of the state, fighting a brutal enemy, not to sell products for capitalists, but to free themselves.

A YPJ fighter in Kobani sent out his message: "Once again, the Kurds appeared on history's stage, But this time with a system of self defense and self governance, especially for women. who may now, after millennia, write their own history for the first time. It is our philosophical views that made us women conscious of the fact that we can only live by resisting. If we cannot defend and liberate ourselves we cannot defend or liberate others. Our revolution goes far beyond this war. In order to succeed it is vital to know what you fight for."

Kobani has been able to defend itself successfully because they have raised society's consciousness by giving people a political voice. We have to view their victory in ideological and political frameworks, not only in the context of the war against the so called Islamic state. True revolutions first challenge society's ideas. The women's war against the so called Islamic state is a philosophical and a military war. They fight against femicide, patriarchy and rape culture found in their own community. The so called Islamic state highjacks the idea of honor, which sexualizes women and their bodies. In Qamishlo there is a large banner which says "WE WILL DEFEAT THE SO CALLED ISLAMIC STATE BY GUARANTEEING THE FREEDOM OF WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST."

Even if you don't agree with the tactics of the Kurdistan Worker's Party you can't culturally appropriate Rojava's Revolution and deny the ideas that lead it, and still claim to be in solidarity with the women who fight. You can't praise the YPJ

women's academies criticize the idea that women in the west are more free than they are, or that the west has a monopoly on gender equality. They don't even lead the way in gender equality, as regressive conservatives chip away at that progress. Ocalan says "There is no individual freedom if the whole of society is enslaved." Women hold public seminars to criticize social sciences and propose and enact ways of rescuing knowledge from power. But western media continues to ignore the ideological foundation of the feminist social revolution.

"Our struggle is not just to defend our land," says YPJ commander Jiyar Afrin says. "We as women take part in all walks of life, whether fighting against the so called Islamic state or combating discrimination and violence against women. We are trying to mobilize and be the authors of our own liberation."

The lived experience of Kurdish women shows us that a successful revolution must free ideas from the status quo. For example nationalism is a sexist, patriarchal idea. It limits struggles for social justice. The nation state also spreads an oppressive monopoly. Instead of selling out to these ideas freedom should be seen as a never ending struggle to eternally refine an ethical society, build solidarity between communities and pursue social justice. Feminism is not a side quest for women to work out on their own, we all have a moral obligation to society to work towards equality for all genders. This is the measure of freedom and the quality of any group's ethics. Women must be central, present and active in all aspects of the struggle. Participation in society is more than voting and waiting for equal rights, it must be radically claimed by the people.

But we live in a world where careerist women betray their sisters by causing unjust wars, profit from prisoner's captivity by taking jobs as wardens and prison guards and aligning themselves with racist, chauvinistic groups, imperialistic militaries and political parties. Conservatives and many liberals believe this is progress.

time in nature, more time for self development and more time for reading. She said "We cannot be said to "live"- we merely exist... A 'living' wage! Ours is a lingering dying wage."

Working class women were nearly erased by history, despite their progress for poor women working in mills, like Olive Schreiner, Edith Ellis (partner with previously mentioned Havelock Ellis), Hannah Mitchell and Elanore Marx. In 1889 Edith Eliss became ecstatic after watching Ibsen's play "A Doll's House" with her friends. She described their inspiration from the honest revolutionary ideas leaving them "Breathless with excitement", giving them optimism for the future. "We were restive and impetuous and almost savage in our arguments. This was either the end of the world or the beginning of a new world for women."

The world did not end in the 20th century, and women were not totally freed either. According to Rowbotham women were able to expand their rights temporarily, lengthening the chains a little bit further each time. Even their ideas of what it means to be free were growing with each struggle, and how their fight for meaning in life related to other oppressed people's struggles. This means political activism, economic liberation, freedom at home and in their private sex lives. In 1924 Leon Trotsky said "In order to change the conditions of life we must learn to see through the eyes of women." But in application of Leninist ideology women were still marginalized.

Another prominent activist writer that Rowbotham unearthed for future generations to admire is Jane Hume Clapperton from Scotland. She proposed communal architecture in order to socialize families and distribute domestic labor more evenly between men and women. She designed shared kitchens, nurseries and schools with spaces for music and recreation, allowing for private rooms. She believed that previously private, isolated domestic fights would be diffused by

exposure to community. She said "Spontaneous impulses are towards an essential social life."

Some disagreed, such as militant anarcha-feminist Dora Marsden. Dora said that women would need to live independently from men in order for true liberation to come about. This is due to the deeply ingrained, unnatural conditioning of patriarchy. Agreeing with her was Mary Gawthorpe, who published "The Freewoman", a feminist journal. "The Freewoman" criticized the vocabulary of patriarchy for being unable to even describe women's orgasm and the techniques to achieve that. Even other feminists at the time considered "The Freewoman" to be scandalous. but they gave a platform to notions like free love, lesbianism and male homosexuality and marriage and alternative ways to have a family.

"The Freewoman" spread ideas about women's sex lives side by side with less radical activists, like Margaret McMillan and Elenore Rathbone, who advocated for women's education and rights in general. Rathbone argues for universal basic income to be paid directly to women from 1918 on. In recent times this concept has found success and application, though this progress is threatened by regressive fundamentalists. We should honor Elenore's contribution to this progress by defending that progress.

At the same time women were networking across the Atlantic Ocean. Despite being limited in range of travel militant working class feminists in Britain became aware of American women's progress. This included the early civil rights struggles, like black activists Maggie Lena Walker and Anna Julia Cooper, who wrote "A View From the South" in 1982. She described the poor "pinched and downtrodden" lives of black women. Ida B. Wells was known for her influential style of speaking and she traveled to Britain to raise awareness about modern lynching in 1893. I only found out about Ida during the George Floyd Uprising

The Kurdistan Worker's Party requires co-chair leadership of men and women from the presidency of the party down to neighborhood councils. This gives women equal decision making power, decentralizes power, prevents monopolies and promotes consensus. Women are also autonomously organized, socially, politically and militarily. This structure guarantees representation for women. Widespread social and political movements raise consciousness and internalize these ideas. Influenced by the Kurdistan Worker's Party the majority of women in the Turkish Parliament Municipal Administrations are Kurdish. The YPJ, YPG and the Kurdistan Worker's Party created a safety corridor to rescue Yezidis in the Sinjar mountains from a genocidal siege waged by the so called Islamic state. Many women died defending Makhmour in Iraqi Kurdistan, side by side with male Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers.

Rojava was inspired by these ideas, and practices coed co-chair leadership and 40-50% female member quotas for all decision making groups, created the women's defense forces, women's communes, academies, tribunals and cooperatives. The women's movement Yekitiya Star is autonomously organized in all aspects of society, such as healthcare, education and defense. Autonomous women's councils operate independently of general people's assemblies and can veto the coed group decisions. New laws abolish gender discrimination. Men who hurt women are not allowed to have any kind of leadership role. In the middle of a war zone one of the first new laws passed was to abolish forced marriage, domestic violence, honor killings, polygamy, child marriages and dowry. Many Arabic and Syrian women were inspired to join the Kurdish structures and form their own autonomous structures of defense and administration to challenge the patriarchal men. Gender equality is foundational to education, training and all parts of life in Rojava, not only the armed structures of the Asayish-J, YPJ and YPG.

Western reporters assume that women in Rojava fight for western values, but the

fundamentally oppressive and hierarchical. They practice an alternative liberationist project by including everyone, practicing feminism, direct democracy and regional autonomy, called Democratic Confederalism. This is based on gender equality, environmentalism and true democracy for all ethnicities, cultures, languages and religious groups.

Abdullah Ocalan clearly criticizes patriarchy, nation states and capitalism as the root of all slavery, oppression and domination: "Man is a system. The male has become a state and turned this into the dominant culture. Class and sexual oppression develop together; masculinity has generated ruling gender, ruling class and ruling state." He reminds us of the need for conscious feminism and autonomy: "Women's freedom cannot be assumed once a society has obtained general freedom and equality." Cadres, lifelong militants in the Kurdistan Worker's Party, attend seminars to challenge patriarchy and advocate gender equality to transform men's sense of privilege and entitlement. Ocalan shows us how different power structures are related: "All the power and state ideologies stem from sexist attitudes and behaviors... without women's slavery none of the other types of slavery can exist let alone develop. Capitalism and nation state denote the most institutionalized dominant male. More boldly and openly spoken: Capitalism and nation state are the monopolism of the despotic and exploitative male."

When I looked into joining the YPJ International I was very surprised to find these ideas coming from a Middle Eastern man. Women developed the foundation for his thoughts on their own. The measure of freedom is the extent to which women are free. It is only in this context that we are able to understand the success of the women in Kobani. That victory was based on ideals of feminism, environmentalism and freedom.

while living in Tennessee.

On both shores of the Atlantic there was a battle in the streets for workers rights. This struggle inspires Lizzie Holmes and women like her who had been uprooted from rural homes. They joined and led poor garment workers in Chicago in 1886. These women shut down the streets in order to demand an 8 hour work day. The Chicago Tribune reported that in spite of their "worn faces and threadbare clothing" they "shouted and sang and laughed in a whirlwind of exuberance." But the police attacked these women, leaving hundreds of workers dead and injured. Lizzie was radicalized by this and became an Anarchist for the rest of her life.

Many other powerful women became militant after this experience, most famously the Jewish Russian immigrant Emma Goldman. Emma is still one of the most important voices of anarchist ideology and direct action and feminism. Emma demanded birth control for women in her speeches for worker's and immigrant's rights. Women remained defiant despite lethal attacks by police. After 3 months of striking for living wages and safe working conditions the Lawrence Textile Factory in Massachusetts made herstory in 1922. This strike will forever be remembered for the banners they carried into battle which read "We want bread but we want roses too!" This message resonates with feminists today. Where I live in Tallahassee there has been a center called Bread and Roses for as long as I can remember.

Another herstorical one liner which defines this time period is Emma's statement that "If there is no dancing at the revolution, I'm not coming." In her autobiography "Living my Life" Emma forcefully rejects the criticism she received from a comrade who considered her passionate dancing to be a dangerous waste of time. She said, "I did not believe that a cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from convention and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy... I want freedom, the right to self expression,

everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things... I would live it in spite of the whole world- prisons, persecution, everything... I would live my beautiful ideal."

Most of these early utopian activists are not as well known as Emma Goldman, mean and especially women, and many have died frustrated and erased by history, with their passionate desires for a better world destroyed by the Great Depression in the 1930's, but the consequences of their direct actions still bear fruit today. We now have maternity and birth control centers, nurseries, garden cities, town council meetings and help for the homeless. Women have also brought us quality of life through simple improvements like indoor lighting, clean and hygienic bathrooms with modern toilets and heating and air conditioning. We have grown to take these things for granted and much of the progress made is not under attack by regressive forces with a fundamentalist patriarchal agenda.

As I am writing this I heard on the radio, on NPR, that Iran has executed a second protestor, by hanging. Again, this protestor was standing up to the Iranian religious regime in response to their murder of Masa Amini, a Kurdish Iranian woman. This situation is very urgent. I want to skip ahead to the 1980's, 90s and up to the present in order to show the reader how this essay relates to the current Women's Revolution in Iran, and how this development relates to the Women's Revolution, the Rojava Revolution and the erosion of women's rights in the United States.

When I went to Rojava to fight against radical Islamist extremists I went because I was inspired by the Women's Revolution there. To the people there the Syrian Civil War is the most significant event of their lives, and they are constantly bewildered by the fact that most Amerikkkans are ignorant of their suffering, especially considering that the U.S. contributed to the creation of the so called Islamic state, along with Turkey, with help from the C.I.A. who armed the wrong

The so called Islamic state wages a war against women by kidnapping them, forcing them into marriages, raping them and selling them as sex slaves. This is femicide. Women who resist are punished because their actions destroy the foundations of patriarchy. So the so called Islamic state legalized this sexual violence, making it 'halal' for those who are promised 72 virgins in paradise. Militant women are their worst nightmare. They believe that death at the hands of such a woman will prevent them from going to heaven.

Around the world women lead the way in freedom movements. But once progress is made regressive conservatives erode that progress. Once "victory" is declared the women are betrayed and traditional gender roles are reinforced to stabilize the capitalist profit driven economy. What can we learn from this?

We are now aware that different forms of oppression are interrelated in the same way that intersectional class struggles are related. The example of Kurdish women in the 3 cantons of Rojava are an example for all women everywhere. What are the ideas behind the successful Kurdish Women's Revolution?

"We don't want the world to know us because of our guns, but because of our ideas," says Sozda, a YPJ commander in Amude. She points to pictures on the rooms walls: Kurdistan Worker's Party guerilla fighters and Abdullah Ocalan, a political prisoner and ideological leader of the movement. "We are not just women fighting the so called Islamic state. We struggle to change the society's mentality and show the world what women are capable of." The Kurdistan Worker's Party is not present in Rojava, they only share political ideology.

The Kurdistan Worker's Party, founded in 1978, started a guerilla war against the Turkish state in 1984. Their original goal was an independent Kurdistan, but have since abandoned nationalism and nation states, which they criticize as

must first acknowledge that a war against women exists, and then resolve to support women's rage. In patriarchal wars women are perceived to be passive spoils of victory, like land that men protect and sex is used as a weapon, like drugs, to dominate and humiliate the enemy. It is seen as manly to be militant, not something women should do, from this toxic perspective. So when women take up arms it destroys the foundations of patriarchy and the status quo. Patriarchal men are uncomfortable with the idea of women soldiers. It scares them because it challenges their pattern of bullying at home. Traditional gender roles idealize women but punish them when they don't live up to unrealistic standards of "pure" perfection. Women all over the world are subjected to sexual violence as combatants in war and political prisoners. Feminists remind us that the patriarchy uses rape to punish women for fighting back.

Militant Kurdish women are currently fighting against many enemies of the Women's Revolution. They fight against Turkey despite the fact that its military is the 2nd largest in NATO, its ultra masculine military rape culture, and a prime minister who encourages all Turkish women to give birth to at least 3 children. They fight against the Iranian Regime, which dehumanizes women supposedly in the name of Islam. They fight against the Syrian regime whose military industrial complex weaponizes rape as standard operating procedure. They fight against jihadis like the so called Islamic state. They even fight against patriarchy within Kurdish society, abolishing child marriage, forced marriage, honor killings, domestic violence and rape culture. The U\$ is no different from Turkey. Just google the Mahmoodia Gang Rape Massacre, which was carried out by the unit I was assigned to, the 82nd Airborne Infantry. I refused to deploy to Iraq with them and they deployed without me and committed these crimes against humanity. My protest and warnings about the rape culture in the U\$ military were ignored and that was the result of that negligence.

Syrian rebels. When I came back and people asked where I had been I found that most of my neighbors were ignorant of the Women's Revolution in Rojava, not even knowing who the Kurds are. I was no different before I went. So I am writing this essay in order to show the Iranian people, especially Persian women, that the world is aware of their struggle, we admire and support their bravery and we want to help alleviate their suffering. I want men in the U\$. to become aware of the situation and to help them however physically possible. I want to show the readers that this situation is related to the erosion of women's rights here in the U\$. and that there is a successful path towards liberation, and it starts with women's liberation, worldwide, as a never ending process of progress through communication and direct action.

So I will pause this section I have been writing and return to it when I have caught the reader up to the most recent and amazing developments of feminist ideology and action, in the Middle East and worldwide.

Murray Bookchin's quote "Be practical, do the impossible!" is his take on the French working class activists in the 1968 uprising, who in turn recycled a phrase invented by Libertarian French Situationists: "Be Realistic- demand the impossible!" Murray Bookchin inspired the leader of Kurdish revolutionary movements worldwide, Abdullah Ocalan (pronounced Ochalan). Feminists in the women's liberation movement were not amused by the idea of doing the impossible, but did come up with yet another slogan: "Form dream committees". They began to work on creating a new way of life, rejecting the domesticated lives of housewives providing free labor, gender assumptions, traditional sex and how we relate to intimate relationships and express desire. They began to build alternative economies and a new culture based on feminism and environmentalism.

Radical women were again leading an international renaissance, this time from the front lines. For a long time people like myself who identify as feminists were still ignorant about the early herstory of this movement. It took years for us to dig up this information. And still we see the same problems happening again and again in cycles because the fundamental problem of women's liberation has not received the attention required to bring about an acceptable quality of life for everyone, everywhere. Until everyone is free, none of us are free. Women still get paid less than men and reproductive rights and sexuality are still legally contested. Men's violence against women is a prevalent as ever. We are still struggling for true direct democracy, social intelligence, and a solution to women's unpaid domestic labor.

Now that this amateur work has caught up to the 1970's the focus will shift to Iran and how all this relates to the Women's Revolution today. Sources for this work have expanded to include "Persepolis" by Marjane Satrapi, a Persian woman born and raised in Iran, "Radical Happiness" by Lynne Segal, Abdullah Ocalan, "Abolition. Feminism. Now." by Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners and Beth E. Richie, Rojava News, The Kurdish Question, New Compass, The Mesopotamian Academy in Rojava, Rojava Solidarity NYC, all the people in Rojava, Narin, Dilar Dirk and Janet Biehl. After catching up to the roots of the Women's Revolution in Persia (Iran) the focus will expand to Rojava and then international women's struggles.

First, a very brief background on Iran. Around 2000 B.C.E. the Elam nation was rowing alongside Babylon when Indo-European invaders colonized the Iranian plateau and forced their name upon them- Aryans. The word Iran comes from Ayryana Vaejo which means "the origins of the Aryans". The people here were semi nomadic descendants of the Medes and the Persians. In the 7th century B.C.E. the Medes established the first Iranian country. This was later destroyed by

police of the Iranian Islamic regime. Anyone who believes in the actual application of the literal translation of any religious text should not hold public office or be in any militant or police structure.

The resistance against the so called Islamic state in Kobani forced the world to pay attention to the suffering of Kurdish women. Typically the capitalist profit driven media ignores the radical politics of the women fighting a war against patriarchal society, governments that systematically imprison, rape and sell women as sex slaves. Reporters on the front lines pick the most "attractive" YPJ soldiers to interview and Orientalize them. But in reality Kurdish people grew up recognizing militant women as an organic part of their identity. It is very telling that a Women's Revolution is fascinating to the international community.

The YPG, the People's Protection Unit, and the YPJ, the Women's Protection Unit, from Rojava have been fighting the so called Islamic state(s) for years and they lead the world in an epic resistance against patriarchy. The YPJ is independent and conducts training for their own soldiers and for civilian women all across Rojava. There are several hundred women's battalions now.

Kobani did not fall because of the political motivation of these women. A radical social revolution goes into battle with the ideas carried by these freedom fighters. When the bullets start flying, friends die, and you are wounded in battle, what keeps you going is the ideas you are fighting for. One must do all the thinking beforehand and resolve oneself. Every physical battle is a manifestation of a metaphysical ideological struggle.

The implications of women taking up arms against the so called Islamic state(s) must be viewed in contrast to the patriarchal military power structures and this system's contribution to the so called Islamic state(s) war against women. We

zone by forcing residents to evacuate and become refugees, which is causing a crisis in Europe. Israel did this in Palestine, slowly expanding the border and colonizing their neighbors after driving out the locals who have been there since the beginning of time.

Women always get the worst of the suffering during times of wars which are waged in the name of some politician's career and bank accounts. Women around the world refuse to let history repeat itself. Men, we all have to defend the Kurdish Revolution in Rojava and Iran, otherwise the herstory of women's struggle will not forgive us. We already know that the nation states and economies of the world do not care about the lives and individual suffering of the women who have created another way of life in Rojava. But these women matter to those of us who are fighting for a better life for women and for everyone. No one is free until everyone is free.

It is a herstorical responsibility for women's rights activists, for feminists, for LGBTQ people, for socialists, anarchists, women and Muslim women around the world. We cannot go on as if nothing is happening. We have a moral obligation to humanity to act. We cannot wait for others to do what we are too lazy and too afraid to do. We must raise our voices against the massacres committed by the Islamic regime in Iran and so called Islamic state worldwide, which is being waged against Kurdish women and women everywhere. We must raise our voices, defend these women and rise up.

The Iranian regime is what happens when a group like the so called Islamic state takes power over a long period of time. It is the same for any nation that calls itself a Christian nation and practices arbitrary conservative religious laws. There is a reason for the separation of church and state. Police who are religious fundamentalists and regressive conservatives are exactly the same as the morality

Cyrus. He founded one of the largest empires of ancient times in the 6th century B.C.E. Persia, the Greek name for Iran, remained common until 1935 when Reza Shah, father of the last Shah of Iran, told everyone to call the country Iran.

Iran was wealthy and located between large nations, making it vulnerable to invasions, Alexander and Arab neighbors from the west, Turkish and Mongolian raiders to the north. But Persian culture and language resisted these colonizers and influenced their invaders to such an extent that they often stayed and their descendants became Persian.

In the 20th century Reza Shah modernized and westernized Iran with the currency of newly discovered oil. As a result Britain sought to exert influence over Iran's economy. During WW2 the Allied forces asked Reza Shah to join them but he sympathized with the Nazis and decided to remain "diplomatically neutral". The Allies responded to this so called diplomacy by invading Iran. Reza Shah was exiled and his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi became the Shah. Mohammad Mossadeq, the prime minister of Iran in 1951, nationalized the oil industry. Britain responded by a retaliatory embargo on all oil products from Iran. The C.I.A. and British intelligence organized a coup in 1953 to overthrow Mossadeq and return the exiled Shah to power. The Shah stayed in power until 1979, when he again went into exile to flee the Islamic Revolution.

Since those events this admirable and ancient civilization has been associated with terrorism, fundamentalists and fanatics. As an international traveller I know that this is far from accurate. A whole country should not be judged for the crimes of a few extremists. I would like to honor the Iranians who died in prison for fighting for freedom, those who died fighting against Saddam Hussein, and those who had to escape political persecution and murder by leaving their home forever.

Like Kurds worldwide the Persians celebrate Newroz on March 21st, their New Year, with bonfires, feasts, music and dancing. They often jump over fires. I have done this with Kurdish and international friends in Rojava. Newroz is a part of the religion laid out by Zarathustra, who taught 3 simple rules- do good things, say good things and think good things. But Iranian leaders do not follow this simple advice, choosing instead to rule with tyranny and oppression for 2,500 years. After their own emperors used and abused the working population they were ruled by Arab invaders from the west, Mongolians from the east and then Western colonizers. The current Iranian rulers are still tyrants and oppressors who do not reflect the will of the mass of people in Iran.

The father of the Shah was just a soldier who organized a coup to overthrow the emperor with the goal of establishing a republic. The idea of a republic meant different things to different people. Gandhi preached that Muslims and Hindus should unite to cast out the British colonizers. Ataturk in Turkey focused on westernizing Turks, invoking his green eyes as proof of his western blood. The Shah's father wanted a modern republic but he was not a clever lawyer like Gandhi or a general like Ataturk. He was an uneducated, low ranking soldier who was easily misled by wealthy British rulers. They promised him everything in exchange for oil.

The following is the story of Marjane Satrapi, born in 1969. Her grandfather was a prince of the last emperor. The new Shah confiscated all of this prince's property and gave him the title of prime minister in order to control him. But he was well educated, read Marx and discussed ideas with intellectuals. He realized that the King of England was ruling Iran through his proxy, the Shah. He rejected his title as a prince and became a communist. As a result of his political beliefs he was often sent to prison. Marjane's grandmother lived in poverty and Marjane's young mother would visit her father, Marjane's grandfather, in prison. At home

Many of these countries remained silent while the nazis carried out genocide against the Jewish people in death camps, though many claimed to be unaware of what was going on, while in reality they sympathized with the fascists. Today the US carries out a genocidal campaign against South Americans at its southern border, while sharing notes with Turkey to do the same at their southern border, and the world turns a blind eye due to selfish careerist politicians. Israel slaughters Palestinians over and over with horrors like the Gaza massacre. International nation states approves of these slaughters because they profit from the long term farming of violent conflict. When the Serbian army was raping, killing and torturing women the international community only pretended to take interest. Now the Middle East is subjected to the creation of groups like the so called Islamic state, which is commonly called "Turkey's weapon of mass destruction" by the local translators. This is a direct quote from the local translator of the VICE news crew we rescued from the so called Islamic state on the front lines. The so called Islamic state institutionalize the raping of women and practiced unthinkable crimes against women and others, burning prisoners in cages, beheading people on videos, and more unspeakable acts. The international community only pretended to care but were waiting for their creation to destroy the Rojava dream of a life based on feminism, environmentalism and true democracy, led by Kurdish women. These international nation states, like Turkey, tried to sacrifice Kobani for their personal careers. Turkey goes further by directly providing material support, aiding and abetting their terrorist fighters, who have been photographed wearing Turkish military shoulder patches along with the so called Islamic state shoulder patch, into combat. When I was on the front line I personally saw that every dead jihadi had Turkish military equipment and weapons, Turkish visa stamps in their passports crossing the border every 2 weeks, and even Turkish chlorine gas tanks with metal stamps and receipt tags from the Turkish military for making chemical weapons in a bomb factory we found in Deir Ez Zor in January of 2019. Turkey wants to turn Rojava into a buffer

success have now become famous. Together the YPG and YPJ are defending society against the jihadist forces of the so called Islamic state and Al-Nusra with kalashnikovs, and even more effectively, with fierce emotional intelligence, a commitment to the survival of the community, its political ideals and the hopes and dreams of the people.

If you were to visit a meeting of the YPJ you would find that the militant woman's education includes tactical military training and also political education in Democratic Autonomy, languages, herstory, first aid and more. Every day they will tell you "We are fighting for our ideals." You will see women who have been injured in battles. Some will be using a crutch, another will be on an IV bag to replace lost blood, many will be missing limbs and eyes, with shrapnel in their bodies. They will be visibly in pain but they have the determination to participate in meetings to have a say in the shape and quality of their lives.

Women in Rojava, and from all around the world, have made a revolution for another way of life possible by digging in their heels and fighting. It is an alternative not only for women but also for all minorities and all ethnicities to live together peacefully. It is an alternative to capitalism and patriarchy.

The so called Islamic state was slaughtering all minorities, like Yezidis, Turkmen, Christians and many other in the Middle East. In 2014 the Yezidis of Sinjar were massacred. The US, Turkey, and other nation states like Russia, created groups like the so called Islamic state by intentionally arming the most toxic and radical extremists to destabilize the Syrian regime. These countries do this because they want to destroy this alternative to their patriarchal hierarchy supported by modern capitalist wage slavery. Women have made this alternative way possible, so a war against women exists.

they only had bread to eat and would boil water to try to convince the neighbors they were cooking food they did not have. The Shah's son was an even worse ruler. Usually even ancient kings kept their promises but the new Shah did not. He wasted all of Iran's wealth on elaborate celebrations to impress heads of state, but the working population couldn't have cared less. At one point the Shah had a movie theater full of people locked from the outside by police, and then burned to the ground with 400 people inside. The police prevented anyone from helping those trapped inside and stopped the fire department from putting out the fire.

Marjane's grandmother didn't want to speak about grandpa, but she was happy that a revolution was brewing to overthrow the Shah. She bought books for Marjane so she could understand why people were revolting. Marjane's parents went to demonstrations every day. The soldiers shot at them. They chanted "DOWN WITH THE KING!" and threw stones at the soldiers. Every day they came home too tired and sore to play with Marjane. Her father took pictures at the demonstrations every day, once being arrested and escaping, sometimes not coming home until late. These activities were strictly forbidden. Marjane became interested in the revolution and continued to read.

Her favorite author was Ali Ashraf Darvishian, a kind of Kurdish-Iranian Charles Dickens. Marjane's mom took her to an underground book signing. Ali told stories that were tragic because they were true. For example, a boy named Reza became a porter at 10 years old, Leila wove carpets at 5 years old, Hassan cleaned car windows at 3. Marjane suddenly felt ashamed of her father's Cadillac. She felt that her shame was based on the causes for the revolution: the differences between social classes. Marjane remembered that her family had a maid at home, Mehri.

When Mehri was 8 she had to leave her parents to go to work for Marjane's family because her parents had 15 kids. This is very common among uneducated people

in the Middle East, among those who are forbidden from using birth control and wives who submit to husbands. Mehri was 10 when Marjane was born and helped raise her. They got along like sisters, and most people believed that they were. In 1978, at the beginning of the revolution Mehri was 16 and fell in love with the neighbor's son. She couldn't read or write so Marjane helped her write and exchange love letters. Eventually they were discovered and the boy found out Mehri was a live-in servant from a lower social class, so he broke up with her. Mehri and Marjane were suddenly conscious of class and sexist patriarchy. They joined the protests to raise their fists and voices against the cruelty of class division and gendered oppression.

But that turned out to be Black Friday, and many protestors were killed. After Black Friday there were many massacres. The Shah was forced to acknowledge the revolt on live TV. He tried a dozen different new prime ministers over the course of a few months, but this was not true democracy. It was too little, too late. His statues were torn down and his likeness was burned in the streets. He finally fled to Egypt and Iran had the biggest party of its history. The same teacher who once told Marjane that the Shah was chosen by god told her class to tear the picture of the Shah out of the textbook.

A few days later 3000 political prisoners were released from prison. Marjane knew 3 of them. Siamak Jari was a communist journalist who wrote subversive articles. He was in prison from 1973 to 1979. Mohsen Shakiba was a full time revolutionary who was locked up from 1971 to 1979. They visited Marjane's family and told them how Iranian torturers, trained by the C.I.A., pulled out their fingernails, whipped their feet with electric cables, put cigarettes out on their backs and thighs and killed their friend Ahmadi.

Ahmadi had been a guerilla so he was given lashes, burned with an iron, his

their own problems in a specific way without interference from men.

Women's liberation is very important to the Rojava social experiment of anarchist autonomy applied with direct democracy. The Rojava Revolution is fundamentally a women's revolution. The Middle East is an epicenter of patriarchal violence. Being a woman is to be at risk of violence, childhood marriage, polygamy and honor killings if a woman has been a victim of abuse or rape or been sexually active outside of marriage. PBS warns women about Turkey.

The women of Rojava have rejected that patriarchy and demand fully participation in public life and decision making- at every level of politics and society, not the just the militias. Official leadership is required to have a female and male representative for the sake of real gender equality, and to prevent too much power from accumulating with one person, a measure not seen even in the U.S. One could say that Rojava is the most free place on earth, even more free than the U.S.

Yekiteya Star is an umbrella organization for women's groups. Representative from YS explain that women are essential to true democracy and that the true enemy of women's freedom is the patriarchy using the nation state hierarchy and modern capitalism as weapons. The women's revolution will free everyone. All slavery is based on housewivisation, and housewivisation is based on animal husbandry. The proletariat praised by the Marxist-Leninist revolutions of the past are now led by the Women's Revolution of the present. The communist revolution is now replaced by the anarchist and Democratic Confederalist Revolution. This has vastly improved women's status and every aspect of society.

Even militant structures have evolved. The People's Protection Units, the YPG have been joined by the YPJ, the Women's Protection Units, whose efforts and

visit you once this dirty war that was forced on us is over. I will be there with my friend Dersim who will go to Diyarbakir to meet his kids. We all miss home and want to go back to it. But this war does not know what missing means. Maybe I won't come back mother. Then be sure that I dreamed of seeing you for so long but I was not lucky. I know that you will visit Kobani one day and look for the house that witnessed my last days... it is on the east side of Kobani. Part of it is damaged, it has a green door which has many holes from sniper shots and you will see 3 windows, one on the east side, you will see my name written there in red ink... Behind that window mother I waited, counting my last moments watching the twilight as it penetrated my room from the bullet holes in that window.

Behind that window Azad sang his last song about his mother, he had a beautiful voice when he was saying "Mum I miss you."

MUM I MISS YOU!

Your daughter,

Narin"

3 cantons in Rojava have declared Democratic Autonomy and officially established it as a "social contract", which is how anarchists refer to a non-state constitution. With this program they created a system of grass roots self government, based on neighborhood commune assemblies which are each composed of several hundred homes, that anyone may join. The power structure here is horizontal, from the bottom up through representatives elected to power structures no larger than the city and canton level.

Visitors to the largest city in the Cizire canton, Qamishlo, will find neighborhoods where they can attend council meetings of the local population where matters such as public utilities and women's liberation efforts are discussed, along with conflict resolution and care for the families of martyrs. Men and women participate together. Women also hold their own meetings in Qamishlo to address

wounds were pissed on and then his body was cut into pieces. These men who faces horrors in prison were considered heroes by Marjane and her friends and family. Marjane's uncle Anoosh had been in prison for 9 years.

When her uncle Anoosh was 8 his uncle Feryedoon and his friends proclaimed the independence of the Iranian province of Azerbaijan. Uncle Anoosh went to support him. One day he went to visit Feryedoon but found he had been arrested by the Shah's men. Anoosh ran, crossing the snow covered Alborz mountains to find refuge at his parent' house. But he was wanted so he couldn't stay there, and he swam across the Aras River and went to the U.S.S.R.

Fereydoon went to prison and his girlfriend came to visit him. She bribed the guard to leave them alone because she wanted to conceive a child to remember him by, which they did. The next day he was executed. She fled to Switzerland and gave birth to the child, who is said to resemble the father, Fereydoon.

In the U.S.S.R. uncle Anoosh became a student and got a degree in Marxism-Leninism. He got married and his wife gave birth to two girls. But uncle Anoosh said that they got divorced because Russian women were heartless. After the divorce he was very lonely so he went home with a false passport and a disguise, but they were poorly done and he was immediately arrested. He said that what his wife made him suffer was worse than the 9 years of torture in Iranian prison. He told all this to Marjane so that the family memory would not be lost. And he gave Marjane a small duck he had made out of bread while in prison.

Marjane's family had lots of political discussion and she joined in too. Marjane's dad complained that the revolution was leftist but that it was being hijacked by the Islamists who wanted a Muslim republic, a theocracy. Uncle Anoosh said half the population was illiterate, so they'd turn to nationalism and religion, but

religious leaders don't know how to lead, so the people would inevitably rule themselves.

Marjane had a crush on a young boy, but he moved to the United States to escape the Islamic regime. Marjane was devastated.

Around this time Marjane's family friend Mohsen was murdered by the regime. He was found drowned in his bathtub with only his head submerged and all his clothes still on. Siamak and his family fled across the border by hiding in a flock of sheep and crawling. Siamak's sister was murdered when the Islamists couldn't find him.

Then uncle Anoosh was taken back to prison. Marjane went to visit him and he gave her another duck he made from bread. He said it was the uncle of the first duck. Shortly after this he was executed.

Marjane lost her faith in God but things only got worse. Fundamentalist Islamists attacked the U.S. embassy and took Amerikkans hostage. Now Marjane's family couldn't go to the U.S. to see her friend and escape the regime, because no one could get visas at the embassy.

The Islamists took over the government, closed universities and decreed that wearing the veil was now mandatory for all women. All schools were segregated by gender. Two bearded men attacked Marjane's mother and threatened to rape her for not wearing a veil. She was terrified and stayed at home, sick in bed, for days afterward. It was 1980.

The girls at Marjane's secular French school didn't like the veil. They said it was too hot, they used it as a jump rope and pretended to be ghosts. Everywhere in the

This is a letter written by YPJ soldier Narin, when she was stationed in Kobani to defend that region from the so called Islamic state.

"I am fine mum. Yesterday we celebrated my 19th birthday. My friend Azad sang a beautiful song about mothers. I remembered you and cried. Azad has a beautiful voice, he cried too when he was singing. He also missed his mother whom he has not seen for a year. Yesterday we helped a wounded friend. He got wounded by 2 bullets. He didn't know much about the second wound when he was pointing to the first bullet in his chest. He was bleeding from his flank too, we bandaged his wound and I gave him my blood. We are in the east side of Kobani, mother... a few miles only stand between us and them. We see their black flags, we listen to their radios, sometimes we don't understand what they say when they speak foreign languages but we can tell they are scared. We are in a group of 9 fighters. They youngest, Resho, from Afrin. He fought in Tal Abyad then joined us. Alan is from Qamishlo, from their best neighborhood, he fought in Sere Kani then joined us. He has a few scars on his body. He tells us it is for Avin. The oldest is Dersi, he is from Qandil Mountain, and his wife was martyred in Diyarbakir and left him with 2 kids. We are in a house on the outskirts of Kobani. We don't know much about its owners, There are photos of an old man and one of a young man with a black ribbon, seems like he is a martyr... there is a photo of Qazi Mohamad, Mulla Mustafa, Barzani, Apo (Abdullah Ocalan) and an old Ottoman map mentioning the name of Kurdistan. We have not got coffee for a while, we found out that life is beautiful even without coffee."

"Honestly I've never had coffee as good as yours mom. We are here to defend a peaceful city. We never took part in killing anyone, instead we hosted many wounded refugees from our Syrian brothers, we are defending a Muslim city that has tens of Mosques. We are defending it from the barbaric forces. Mother, I will

which defended a political ideal of gender equality, but also because they too were idealized and their basic humanity was forgotten in the admiration that was heaped on them. I have listened to women tell me that no woman really wants to be viewed as an angelic being, or viewed as a perfect, innocent or pure being. If we are making women into an unrealistic ideal we are not practicing gender equality, we are only creating an impossible standard to hold them to. We should not make the same mistake and Orientalize the Arab, Syrian, Kurdish and Persian women, or any women. There are regular people fighting a dying for revolutionary political ideas, which are really only the demand for a basic decency and equality. These are not mythological creatures, but western media sells products by calling them "badass sexy Amazons" because they are willing to fight and die rather face humiliation at the hands of brutal men.

The Asayish-J has also created women's homes and shelters to fight for women's liberation. At these villages women over the age of 15 can stay there as long as they want. They receive a free education, can go home if they want, and no men are allowed to go near these villages. This protects the integrity of the project and the security and mental health of the women, who are often escaping abusive situations, and forced or arranged marriages. As of 2016 there were at least 30 of these centers all over Rojava. Asayish-J also set up a suicide hotline for women offering emotional support and physical rescue 24/7 as a response to the high rate of suicides caused by forced marriages.

Feminism is a foundational principle of the Rojava Revolution. It is not enough to claim to support women, society must be directed towards women's liberation. Feminism is an essential practice in all social interactions in Rojava's 3 cantons, where women are considered to be necessary political participants with weight behind their voice. This should not be radical but we live in a world where it still is.

streets women protested for and against the veil. At one of the protests a German journalist took a photo of Marjane's mother. While this made Marjane very proud, her mother she was scared, especially when her photo appeared in an Iranian magazine. She died her hair and wore dark glasses for a long time.

Marjane and her friend pretended to be revolutionaries when they played in the building courtyard, taking roles like Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and Trotsky, making their own little protests in the garden of their homes. Marjane read about the school children of Palestine, the young Vietnamese killed by the Amerikkans and the revolutionaries of Iran, like F. Rezai, Dr. Fatemi and H. Ashraf. Her favorite was a comic book called "Dialectic Materialism". I'd like to point out that when I join the YPG International I would be sitting with comrades discussing politics and I often had no idea what they were talking about at first. At once point I said "What the fuck is dialectic materialism?" Friends explained it to me, but children in the Middle East know more about politics than the average working class American adult.

Men in the 1980's in Iran were forbidden from wearing neck ties and short sleeve shirts, lest their arms tempt women to sin. Everyone began to pretend to be pious Muslims, saying that they pray 5 times a day and never drink or smoke. But people still made demonstrations to oppose the Muslim Regime and had private parties. This reminds me of where I grew up in Jupiter Farms, Florida, where the conservative Christians pretend to be pious but do all the things they preach against behind closed doors. Often the most outwardly pious are the most corrupt and perverted in private. Having a little honest fun and a few bad habits goes a long way to prevent people from getting strange and corrupted.

Marjane wanted to go to protests. She had gotten in trouble for going out on Black Friday before, and her father said it was too dangerous. But after the incident with

the bearded men her mom had changed, and she demanded that Marjane join them in demonstrating against the regime. She said it was time for Marjane to learn to defend her rights as a woman. Her mother had a changed a lot in one year.

Marjane passed out flyers while the women chanted "GUNS MAY SHOOT AND KNIVES MAY CARVE BUT WE WON'T WEAR YOUR SILLY SCARVES!" Suddenly things became dangerous- mean showed up with weapons, yelling "THE SCARF OR A BEATING!" Marjane saw a man stab a woman. That was her last demonstration. Her family fled the protest together.

Marjane's family went on vacation to Europe after this stressful street battle. When they returned they found their country to be at war with Iraq. Iranian fundamentalists had tried to stir up their Iraqi Shiite allies against Saddam Hussein, so he retaliated with air strikes. On that day Marjane was visiting her dad at his job in an office building. Fighter jets roared overhead and bombed the city, shaking everyone to their bones. Marjane felt outraged and wanted to fight. But she rushed home with her dad to check on her mother, and they found her healthy and alive.

The fundamentalists had locked up or executed most of the Iranian fighter pilots. One was the father of Marjane's friend, Pardisse. The new Islamist government had banned the Iranian national anthem and replaced it with a Muslim hymn. The jailed fighter pilots agreed to attack Iraq if the new president, Banisadr, would broadcast the national anthem. This was like Iran's version of "The Star Spangled Banner". The theocratic regime agreed. When the national anthem played on the TV Marjane and her family were overwhelmed by patriotic emotions. Then the BBC announced that 140 Iranian bombers had attacked Baghdad. Marjane's family felt proud and cheered, but then they heard that Iran had lost about half of the planes. Marjane's friend, Pardisse, had lost her father again, forever this time.

war against women, fighting for their lives and their rights in a society that institutionalizes rape and sex trafficking as a military policy. But these women have been fighting for decades. Generally half of the Kurdistan Worker's Party have been women. The only thing new about this situation is the ideological developments, their applied feminism that has become part of the political culture of Rojava itself. Kurdish culture is strongly influenced by the patriarchal culture of the region surrounding it, in which male dominance is common, and arranged and forced marriages are common. The YPJ are fighting against the so called Islamic state and they are fighting for equality and feminism, with words, ideas, direct action and bullets.

The YPJ exists to balance the YPG. Women of Rojava hope that the YPJ will be unnecessary one day, but until then it is an entirely female force who fight Rojava's enemies and resolve social issues. The YPJ plans to eventually become part of the YPG but the KCK is very practical and has decided that for now the YPJ will remain an exclusively female unit which is needed to balance out the macho militia mindset that influences even the YPG and its parent organization the PYD. The PYD is the Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat, the Democratic Union Party, a Syrian political party started in 2003, affiliated with the Kurdistan Worker's Party and a member of the KCK. The leadership of all governing council of Rojava are required to be at least 40% women. The leadership of the YPG tends to be 50-60% female because leaders are recruited heavily from the YPJ leadership. There is also the Asayish-J, the Security-J, J standing for Jin, which means women. They are responsible for investigating crimes against women, children, domestic abuse and hate crimes. They also operate checkpoints and other functions of the regular Asayish.

The YPJ is inspired by the Mujeres Libres of the Spanish Civil War, a women's only army. This is an accurate example because they were an effective combat unit

western backing, having been trained by the CIA

In 2012 the Rojava republic was declared in Northern Syria and it's first self defense militias were formed- the YPG and YPJ. The YPG is the Yekineyen Parastina Gel, the People's Protection Unit. It was founded in 2004 but didn't become active until 2012. It is a coed militia, the main fighting force for Rojava and made up of about 45,000 to 50,000 men and women. The YPJ is the Yekineyan Parastina Jin, the Women's Protection Unit. They are an armed, all female militia, 10,000 strong alongside the YPG. In 2013 the YPG and YPJ repelled the Syrian government and troops and various rebel militias. In 2014 the YPG and YPJ stopped the so called Islamic state from taking Kobani. In October of 2014 Anarchists crossed international borders to join the YPG. By 2019 the YPG and YPJ had defeated this so called Islamic state in the battle of Deir Ez Zor and scattered their surviving cells, which still operate. I was a member of the YPG International and fought on the front lines in this battle for 2 weeks of continuous combat. There were intense battles where 50 friends died in a single day.

The so called Islamic state is a hardline conservative Sunni jihadist group formed as a radical offshoot of Al-Qaeda. It is unusually violent, crucifying and beheading prisoners and practicing sex slavery to fund and supply their terrorist attacks worldwide.

Images of Kurdish female fighters have recently been appropriated by western media to sell fashion magazines, music and clothes. This kind of profiteering is only glamorizing the life and death struggle of the YPJ to make money from their suffering while they ignore their ideology and politics. Many westerners unconsciously fetishize the YPJ and YPG without realizing the significance of women volunteering for front line combat in a region where the culture is oppressively patriarchal. The female soldiers of Rojava are struggling to survive a

In class they were assigned to write a report about the war, Pardisse wrote a letter to her father. She promised to take care of her mother and little brother. Everyone in the classroom wept. Marjane tries to tell Pardisse that her dad was hero, but she said "I wish he were alive and in prison rather than dead and a hero."

As the war waged on the food at the supermarkets disappeared and people fought over groceries. Everyone was on edge and gasoline was in short supply after Iraq bombed the refinery in Abadan. People fled the bombings.

As a result Marjane's mother's childhood friend and her family came to stay with them. With her husband and 2 sons there were now 4 more people in the house. They ignored the inconveniences because their home had been destroyed and people need to stick together in difficult times. But other locals in the city were cruel to them in public spaces, like the grocery store, as more and more war refugees came to town. But they still stuck up for each other and supported one another.

I Iraq had high quality modern weapons. Iran had quantity, a large population of potential soldiers. So Iran had lots of casualties as they sent waves of boys to fight the Iraqi army. According to Shiite tradition when an unmarried man dies a nuptial chamber is build for him so that he can symbolically attain carnal knowledge. Many such chambers were built in all the streets or the young virgin martyrs. Twice a day the government made student line up to mourn those killed in action and casualties of war. Hitting yourself is a Middle Eastern ritual. During certain religious ceremonies people beat themselves, sometimes with chains and blades. It is considered a tough guy thing. Christian monks and fanatics have done the same and similar things.

After a while everyone stopped taking the professional mourning seriously. Marjane had immediately started making fun of them, flopping around on the ground, yelling about martyrs. Her classmates enjoyed the spectacle and the girls continued to mock the veil. They decorated the classroom with rolled of toilet paper on the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and talked back to their teacher. The girls unified themselves against the teachers in small acts of daily resistance. Their parents backed them all up when the whole class was suspended. Marjane's father told her teacher "If hair is as stimulating as you say, then you need to shave your mustache!"

At the boys schools they were given plastic keys painted gold and told that if they were lucky enough to die in battle the key would get them into paradise. They boys were being radicalized and send into combat as front line soldiers. They were spun up into a frenzy with religion, chanting and singing songs on the way to the front. Most of them died right away.

At the same time Marjane went to her first party. Her mom helped her make a punk rock outfit. I know many of the people I grew up with can relate to this, as well as the mixed feelings of patriotism and the instinct that something about this war industrial complex being very wrong. Small acts of daily disobedience and resistance kept them sane.

Air strikes began to hit closer to home. Everyone called each other after hiding in basements during bombing. Many people fled to larger buildings, like hotels, which had thicker foundations and safer shelters.

Parties were forbidden. Men caught with booze, a chess set, a deck of cards or music were given 75 lashes. But Marjane's mom put up black curtains and they continued to have parties. But parties were interrupted by airstrikes.

coordinate and share resources. PJAK is a member of the KCK. KCK is the Koma Civaken Kurdistan, the Groups of Communities In Kurdistan. It's an umbrella organization started by the Kurdistan Worker's Party in 2007 to replace Kongra-Gel. KCK puts into practice the ideas of Democratic Confederalism, which, when applied, is called Democratic Autonomy. It is an international group and covers Kurdish groups in Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq and ex-USSR regions. Most KCK activity is in southern Turkey.

Kongra-Gel was the general assembly of the KCK. It had 5 subdivisions which still reflect the structure and priorities of Kurdish organizations: political ideology, social services, international politics, military, and women's divisions.

The Mahabad Republic of Kurdistan was a short lived independent state situated in Northern Iran from 1946-7. It was backed by the Soviet Union and was crushed by the Iranian government when the USSR withdrew support.

The KDP is the Kurdish Democratic Party, a main political party in Iraq founded in 1946 during the collapse of the Mahabad Republic of Kurdistan in Iran. The KDP was a broad coalition of communist and socialist groups. During the First Persian War (Iraq/Iran war) it repositioned itself as more of a nationalist and populist coalition with some social-democratic groups included.

Persian is a word for a people and a language. Persians are non-Arabic people, related to the Kurds, mostly found in modern Iran. Persian subgroups and languages can be found in Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Oman, Kuwait, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

SAVAK was the organization of intelligence and national security of Iran from 1957-1979. It was the Shah's secret police. It was famous for it's brutality and

The Kurdistan Worker's Party was founded in 1978 by a committee including Abdullah Ocalan, who was part of the leftist student protests of the late 60's and early 70's. In 1979 the Kurdistan Worker's Party declared war in order to liberate a Kurdish state within Turkey and northern Syria. Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution in Iran sparked a Kurdish uprising in northern Iran. The region of northern Iran which used to be part of Kurdistan is called Rojhilat. The Kurdish region in northern Syria, called Rojava, has successfully declared and maintained autonomy by defeating the so called Islamic state and defending themselves against the Turkish military, which supports Islamist terrorists in Syria, and the Syrian army. This is largely due to the Kurdish focus on liberating women.

In 1988 the Kurdistan Worker's Party launched a "Women's Education Project" to bring feminist ideas to their Marxism and made women's battalions. In 1989 the first women's school was created by the Kurdistan Worker's Party. This had a policy of co-command requiring a woman and a man to command regions, battalions and other organization, inside the Kurdistan Worker's Party.

In order to understand the Women's Revolution we have to understand a few terms and groups that make up the avant guard of this struggle in the Middle East, and the other belligerents in this struggle.

The HRK is the Hezen Rojhilata Kurdistan, the east Kurdistan Defense Forces. HRK is the armed wing of the PJAK in Iran. The HRK have carried out ambushes, industrial sabotage and robberies aimed at the Iranian state since 2005. A few thousand people have died on both sides of this conflict.

PJAK is the Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistane, the Free Life Party of Kurdistan. PJAK is a large Kurdish militant and political organization in Iran that was founded in 2004. It is strongly aligned with the Kurdistan Worker's Party. They

After one party the family was stopped by morality police on the way home. Marjane's father was questioned and they were followed home, but the women managed to get inside while the men stood outside arguing, on the excuse that grandma needed her insulin. They quickly poured all the booze down the drains. Marjane's father bribed the police and they didn't even come inside. It was a close call.

As the war raged on Marjane began to skip school to meet boys with her friends. She smoked cigarettes she stole from family members. She heard about people being rounded up and shot by the Islamic regime. One of Marjane's many uncles had a heart attack and died from the stress. Before he died the family was trying to get him a fake passport to leave the country so he could recover from his heart attacks, but the passport forger was raided because he had been providing a safe house for an 18 year old communist woman named Niloufar. She was spotted, followed back to the forger's home and arrested. She was then executed by firing squad. The forger managed to escape and fled to Sweden.

Marjane was caught by morality police while buying illegal music tapes and wearing punk rock clothes and Nike shoes. She managed to lie and cry her way out of trouble. But the bombings continued and one of Marjane's neighbors was killed by a rock and she saw the carnage that had been her friend. Her friend's name was Neda Baba-Levy, a girl from a Jewish family who had moved to Iran 3000 years ago. It was now 1984.

Marjane was 14 now and fully a committed rebel. She talked back to her teachers and got into a physical fight with one, which got her expelled. Even at her new school she talked back. Her parents were worried that she'd be arrested and executed. They explained to her that it was against the law to execute virgins.

That meant that cops would rape a female prisoner before executing her. To make this a legal process they would send a dowry of \$5 to the girl's parents and force her into a very short legal marriage. Marjane thought about her friend Niloufar, the communist girl who had been executed. Her parents had received a \$5 dowry. Marjane's parents decided to send her to Vienna in Austria, to a French school.

Marjane was heartbroken. She gave away all her favorite things, her rock and roll posters, music and clothes. Her friends came to say goodbye and she realized how precious they were to her. Her grandma told her that if any jerks broke her heart she should tell herself that they were stupid and to keep her dignity and always be true to herself. At the airport her parents wept and did she as she left her home for a new country.

On the day that I wrote this, 12/12/22, Iran executed a second protestor by hanging him. This man had been demonstrating against the morality police who killed Masa Amini. She was a Kurdish-Iranian woman arrested for not wearing her head scarf properly. Please take a moment and try to imagine how this feels for everyone involved- don't say "Oh I can't imagine!" Yes you can imagine and you should, because if you don't you won't be properly motivated to do what it takes to stop these atrocities and make the world a better place for everyone. Take a moment of silence to feel the weight of the situation we face, which has been going on for so long. Reflect on the life Masa Amini and those being lynched by the regime for fighting for freedom. Then do something about it.

You can reach out to Iranian people online and ask them to tell you their story and then share that with friends. You can travel there to support the resistance. You can send money to the people who fight for women's liberation in Iran and worldwide. You can look into the HRK, the Hezen Rojhilata Kurdistan, the east Kurdistan defense forces. HRK is the armed wing of the PJAK in Iran. The HRK

have carried out ambushes, industrial sabotage and robberies aimed at the Iranian state since 2005. PJAK is the Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistan, the Free Life Party of Kurdistan. PJAK is a large Kurdish militant and political organization in Iran, founded in 2004.

Kurdistan is a region that was divided into what is now Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria by the Sykes/Pequot Treaty after previous world wars. Kurds were not invited to the table to discuss the fate of their nation and so they were divided into four parts. Kurds in these various regions have been put under martial law, been subjected to attempts at genocide by rulers like Saddam Hussein, and had their language outlawed.

In the Middle East the most recent conflicts are sometimes considered to be World War 3, as the first Gulf war, the invasion of Iraq, the Iran/Iraq war and the Syrian Civil war are all related and lead directly from one to another due to foreign influence and agitation by intelligence agencies like the MI5, MI6, the CIA and Turkish MIT, all of whose countries profit from these wars and use the Fertile Crescent as a testing ground for their weapons, much like how far right wing Zionists in Israel use Palestine as a human testing ground for their new weapons and ammunition. These wars are related to the wars in Afghanistan and Ukraine, as Russian mercenaries have been present throughout each conflict, and some people have been known to go to fight in Ukraine and in the Syrian Civil War.

The Kurds in these nation states, and worldwide, often unite to support each other. They are also manipulated against each other on occasion by nation state governments. The U.S. has used and abused the Kurds as cannon fodder to fight their enemies from WW2 to Saddam and most recently the so-called Islamic state. They continuously abandon them afterwards.