

Pittsburgh: Reflections on Leadership and Collective Autonomy

Anonymous

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The following are three very initial reflections on events in PGH. They developed from discussions between individuals in a small, multiracial group of former area residents.

1. The abolitionist struggle is a struggle towards a free and egalitarian society. Its leadership must be collective, and power must flow from the bottom up. This is the organizational structure of successful anti-authoritarian social movements and anti-colonial struggles in the United States and worldwide for hundreds of years.

2. The singling out of fellow march organizers and affinity groups with verbal abuse and threats mirror the tactics used by evangelical preachers, cult leaders, and other grifters. It enforces an abuser's power over a group of increasingly docile participants by marking other potential leaders as "out groups" based on lies regarding said group's racial makeup. In the future this should be met with a harsh response, and that response should come from anti-authoritarians of color and backed up by their white comrades.

3. Bad leadership destroys social movements. Bad leadership puts us all at risk: newcomers, progressives, revolutionaries, bystanders. Leaders worthy of the title do not verbally abuse and threaten those they seek to lead. They don't scream in their faces, attempt to publicly humiliate them, or force them to sit in the mud to listen to them talk about their own personal experiences. Good leaders do not berate disabled and queer people, nor do they accuse black people who disagree with them of somehow being "white". That is the behavior of bullies: of abusive parents and cult leaders. And that is the behavior that you unfortunately now are dealing with.

This dangerous behavior, if left unchecked, will (and already has) lead to drastically smaller turnout in the streets. It has made abolitionists in Pittsburgh vulnerable to police and fascist violence.

Good leadership seeks to build coalition with others. It seeks to bring new comrades into the fold and to embrace their unique experiences and worldviews. It is based on solidarity — not a misguided sense of self-importance and shame.

Bad leaders should not be allowed to hold on to the power that they are abusing.

find each other.



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