Remembering Paul Z. Simons

An Unyielding Anarchist, Author, and Rebel

CrimethInc.

April 4, 2018

We're saddened to announce the passing of Paul Z. Simons, longtime anarchist, journalist, and author. Paul was an anarchist writer with a playful spirit, an uncompromising love of life, and equally uncompromising hatred for authority—be it from the right or the left. We treasure our memories of Paul. His presence will be sorely missed.

Recalled by his eldest daughter as "a uniquely intelligent writer, traveler, idealist, and fire-breathing anarchist," Paul participated in some of the most inspiring thought and action of the past forty years. We are not equipped to properly write his eulogy, but we hope others will, and now that he is no longer able to speak to you himself, we urge you to read the materials he left behind.

Paul wrote with great eloquence and erudition on everything from theater to insurrectionary strategy, from play to hallucinogens. His historical writing ran the gamut from the anti-racist insurgency of John Brown to the English Revolution of 1645, all from an insurrectionary perspective. He reported firsthand from the front lines of riots in Athens, Greece, revolt in France, and reaction in Brazil, never hesitating to subject himself to great risk or set off on a romantic adventure in pursuit of his ideals and desires.

Embracing illegalism and open confrontation with the state not only in his younger days but also throughout his life, Paul nonetheless managed to remain free, demonstrating how much is possible despite all the oppressive forces arrayed against those who defy the prevailing order. In his lifelong rebellion, he offers an example for younger people who would also like to arrive at the age of 57 without tempering their enthusiasm for freedom.

At the cusp of the 1990s, in an article entitled "Social War" in the New York publication *Black Eye,* Paul wrote:

> The single task that presents itself now is that of social insurrection, the stripping away of centuries of consensus based on coercion… the ripping up of the social contract and the tearing down of the edifice of capital.

Over a quarter of a century later, when some of us met him in Oakland after his return from the Syrian civil war in Rojava, Paul had not lost a single spark of this fiery determination. He welcomed us warmly into his company, readily sharing his experiences, friendship, and resources. Paul published "Rojava: Democracy and Commune" with us about his experiences visiting Rojava and participated in the dialogue that produced our book *From Democracy to Freedom.* The book draws on a train of thought much older than our collective, which Paul had participated in years before we joined in.

As a participant in the generation of anarchists preceding ours, Paul was a repository of the kind of historical knowledge that is rarely passed on properly in English-speaking anarchist movements. Last December, for example, Paul published Waging the War on Christmas: King Mob and the Battle of Selfridges, recounting the adventures of anti-authoritarian rebels in 1960s Britain. It is tragic that he was not able to pass on more to us before his passing.

In the photo above, we see Paul at Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, standing before the wall where the last participants in the Paris Commune were executed. He is displaying a YPG flag, proclaiming the continuity of insurgent struggles for freedom from Paris in 1871

through Rojava in 2015. His aspirations, his struggles, and his legacy are now passed on to us, and it is up to us to craft lives of joyous resistance that are worthy of them.

To learn from Paul today, you could begin with these resources:

- Read some of Paul's more recent work at Modern Slavery under his own name and his pen name, El Errante.
- Read Paul's work archived at the Anarchist Library.
- Listen to interviews with Paul on The Final Straw podcast about his experiences in Rojava.
- Read the collection of *Black Eye,* a journal based in New York that Paul participated in at the end of the 1980s.

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