The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org
Magsalin: We’ve really been trying to expand abolitionism to other countries in Southeast Asia. So, if you’re from Southeast Asia, try to connect with us.

TFSR: Get a website or an email address?

Adrienne: I think one of the things that I want to bring attention to is the feminist struggle in leftist spaces and even especially anarchist spaces. It’s really been one of the biggest problems we’ve been confronting. The abuse and the harassment, the misogyny and trans misogyny, homophobia is just really, really bad. One of the things that I really wanted to do is to link up with different whether anarcho-feminists or just people who identify as feminists, wanting to link up and talk about our common struggle and political spaces as still being really violently affected by the patriarchy in the left. I would love to talk to more people and find out how we might be able to move through this together. So they can tweet us at @Dinner-PartyPH.

Magsalin: Cempaka Collective is currently underground. But if they do resurface again, you should definitely reach out to them and interview them. They do really good work in Malaysia. In Indonesia, Anti-feminist Feminists Club really does interesting work with anarcho-feminism.

TFSR: Well, thank you all so much for being a part of this conversation. I’ve really enjoyed meeting you. And again, thanks a lot for having a talk at this hour in English with me. I’ve learned a lot and I hope that we can keep in touch.

Adrienne: Thank you so much for your time and for giving us the space. It’s really a lot and I am really glad to be able to share this space with you and every one of my friends.

Honey: Thank you so much for the opportunity, for this space, and for sharing it with us. We really appreciate it. We were so excited and so excited up to now, I think because the possible connections or network of people we can connect with after the interview is a good opportunity.

This week we’re sharing an interview that we conducted with anarchists and abolitionists mostly in and around Manila, the capital of the Philippines. You’ll hear from K, Honey, Adrienne, Castle, Magsalin and R. During the chat they share about their projects, discussions of abolitionism in the Philippines, decolonization discourse, informal organizing, accountability and challenging patriarchal dynamics in the traditional left and more.

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TFSR: Would you please introduce yourself with names, preferred gender pronouns, and location information you’d like to share? And it may also be helpful for you to mention your political perspectives and what projects you’re involved with. We can go into a little more detail after an intro if you want or you can just roll right into what your projects do.

K: Okay, I can start by introducing myself. I go by K, she/her pronouns. I’m from the Philippines, and I’m part of Abolisyon.

Adrienne: I guess it’s my turn next. I’m Adrienne, I use they/she pronouns. I’m also from Abolisyon, but I’m also with The Dinner Party. I’ll be speaking on behalf of everyone in The Dinner Party today, I guess.

Honey: I’ll go next. Hi, my name is Honey. I’m also part of Abolisyon, I am Filipina, but I’m currently in occupied Hohokam and O’odham land which is known to be modern-day Phoenix, Arizona. But I’ll be going back to the Philippines by next month.

Castle: I think I can go next. I go by Castle and he/they pronouns. I’m part of Paglaya and also Project Kapwa. But I also converse with people in The Dinner Party and Abolisyon.

Magsalin: Okay, so that leaves me. Hi, I’m Magsalin from Abolisyon as well. A bit of a writer, aspiring at least.

TFSR: Cool. It’s very nice to meet you all. I use he/him pronouns. Thank you all for being here. You’ve mentioned Abolisyon, The Dinner Party, Paglaya, Project Kapwa. Could you talk a little bit about each of these projects in turn, the work you do, and how the projects came to be?

Magsalin: Abolisyon was started out as a working group in 2020. But later the team held an educational discussion on what if there were no policing persons, and from that developed a core group of people to expound upon abolitionist organizing here in the Philippines. And from there, it’s been growing a little. I like the growth so far. We’ve made some headway and actually getting abolitionist ideas – defunding police, restorative justice, these things out there. I’m pretty happy with what you’ve done so survivors, shutting down people that have been harmed. Because most of the people that got engaged with our spaces have this similar experience where someone from their collective or their group has been harmful, and they try to address that issue within their collective, and the collective has been dismissive about it. And that’s something that I would like to emphasize that is very important with Abolisyon, The Dinner Party, and other spaces of our engagement: we’re really big into accountability and transformative justice, because we believe that without those, we’re just basically being hypocrites with our politics.

TFSR: If one doesn’t have an alternative to carcerality or the idea that someone can be thrown away to make the rest of society better, understanding that we have to work through these problems without just either sending in a third party with guns to deal with it...Yeah, we’re definitely losing a thing. And that topic of how do we address harmful activity? How do we point to someone’s activity being harmful, and that person not necessarily being a bad person, but having bad patterns? That if they want other people to work with them they should work through and that maybe somebody has space to work with them. And it’s not the responsibility of the person most directly harmed to do that work. Those are topics that I’ve heard coming up over the last 30 years that I’ve been involved in activism. I just don’t think that there’s one answer that’s a solution for everyone. But I think that that is super important to work through. I don’t know if that’s what you’re talking about, too.

Honey: Yes, yes, definitely agree with that.

TFSR: Well, thank you all for having this conversation, for staying up so late where you’re at, I really appreciate it. I do want to leave it open. If there are any subjects that you’re really burning, like “We didn’t get to this, and I really want to talk about it,” then I totally have space and energy for it. I understand if folks want to wrap up. Assuming that there isn’t something that someone wants to jump in with, I’d like to hear about where people who are outside can find the projects that you and Castle were kind enough to leave with, like a PayPal link for Paglaya. But if you have either writings that you think are important that have been produced inside of your milieu or ways that people on the outside can support or start to engage, either from the diaspora...
ca not only got Trump into power but also got Duterte and Marcos into power. So we see how these sites of struggles – the United States and the Philippines – are connected to Cambridge Analytica. But these sites of struggles are connected in the sense that the Empire connects them. But those people in the sites of struggle do not necessarily connect their site of struggle to one another. That’s why we say that we should actively intervene in struggles together.

Another example, in terms of intersectionality, in terms of physical sites of struggle, men are oppressed by the patriarchy, and their liberation is ultimately tied up with the liberation of women, queer people, and trans people. Our challenge then is, again, to go back to the Invisible Committee, “it is not up to the rebel to learn to speak anarchist. It is up to the anarchists to become polyglot.” It’s up to us to speak all these languages of struggle to one another and link them together in some sort of common tale. And this is also what we’ve been trying to do in Abolisyon.

This is the last example. What do people who use drugs, sex workers, and incarcerated people have in common? Well, not much in the at first sight, but through the framework for abolition, these sites of struggles can be connected to one another, to actually resist policing in a way that combines all the sides of struggles together.

**Adrienne:** I just would like to emphasize everything that has been said by Castle and Magsalin about what we are really doing and aspiring to do in our spaces in Abolisyon and The Dinner Party, Cevite Mutual Aid, and the projects that Castle is involved with. Because again, the tendency with leftist organizing spaces is that they always separate what is political from what’s personal. They do not see that a lot of our personal issues have something to do with how we fight the system, with how we fight this state, and with how we fight systems of oppression. And without addressing those personal issues, we’re unable to really address these larger issues that we have.

As you’ve mentioned earlier, the leftist groups do have this concept of self-crit. I think that’s their attempt at accountability and transformative justice. But as Adrienne mentioned before, with our experiences with the leftist spaces here in the Philippines, they tend to focus more on not holding the person accountable because they’re very good organizers, instead of saying that that person can be a very good organizer, but there is still an opportunity to hold them accountable. And it’s possible to do, this is something that we can work on, instead of just shutting down far. But we could still do more. Honey was actually one of the speakers at that event. So that’s why I think I’ve always looked up to Honey as a role model.

**Honey:** Thank you, Magsalin. We organize Abolisyon coming from that online discussion that we had. And we do a lot of things in Abolisyon. We don’t want to be confined to very specific kinds of organizing, because that’s something that we are trying to challenge within our group. We do survivor support, we do harm reduction and mutual aid, and we do a lot on transformative justice and accountability. We are trying to do a lot more on prisoner support. We’re trying to work on that because it’s hard to navigate it with our current political climate here in the Philippines. We are also trying to engage with other organizations and projects to engage them in abolitionist ideas and organizing. Anyone else want to add in?

**Adrienne:** The Dinner Party grew around Abolisyon and other adjacent and parallel projects with people who were similar or sharing different spaces and getting to know each in these related spaces together. We pulled everyone into just a random group chat and were like “Hey, maybe we should have a name for ourselves.” And then, we found one of these tweets that were targeting the affinity group we were in, and then they started saying, “We shouldn’t be too fluffy with our politics.” And they started saying things like “The revolution isn’t a dinner party.” But then we were “Why shouldn’t that be?” That’s how we got our name. The Dinner Party isn’t necessarily the collective, it’s an umbrella for different collective efforts like Abolisyon, Paglaya, and Project Kapwa, but it’s this space where we all come together and gather and just talk and share ideas and find interest, inspiration from each other’s different projects and efforts, whether it’s political or personal.

**TFSR:** This is pointing towards a question that I was going to ask later. But I’m curious about the genealogy of the term Abolition in the Philippines. It has a pretty specific historical context within the US coming from the movement to abolish slavery and then developing through a critique of the 13th amendment in the US Bill of Rights that said that slavery was abolished, except for when someone was convicted of a crime. And there’s a racialized and class element to who gets convicted of the crimes in the United States at least. And I would imagine, it’s pretty common in a lot of countries. But I wonder what abolitionist
discourse is, how that trajectory developed in the Philippines, and how it looks different to your understandings from how it is in the US.

**Magsalin:** The name of Abolisyon is rooted in the black radical tradition, it’s very clear we borrow from and pay homage to it in a sense by the name itself. Other abolitionist groups probably have friendlier names, but we just thought that Abolisyon is declaring: Abolisyon now!

**Adrienne:** While we’re very conscious about the difference in context, obviously, in Philippine history, we also had a context of slavery. But the context is so different, it’s more related to class than race or different ethnolinguisitic groups or anything. So it’s that consciousness as well. I think we are also there when we practice and when we talk about abolition because it’s really a very Western concept that we’re working with, but we’re also trying to adopt a lot of ideas so that it really fits in our context in the Philippines better.

**TFSR:** Okay, thanks for that. I personally find a lot of inspiration that that philosophical and action-oriented heritage has found its way and expression in so many different contexts. And necessarily, in each of these different contexts, whether it be the Philippines or be abolitionist work in South Africa, or in Chile, or wherever people are implementing that terminology, there’s a lot of commonalities that even despite the different histories, you can say, we have these generalized sources of incarceration, we have these structures of policing, they may have a different history or slightly different scent to them, but they all stink in the same way. So I think that’s a really interesting point for me. Would anyone from Paglaya or Project Kapwa want to speak a little bit about what those projects are, who’s involved in them, and what your goals are? Unless somebody wants to react directly to what I just said.

**Magsalin:** I’d like to react directly to what you said. It’s interesting to note that Alex Vitale, for example, noted that the model the American colonial government used in the Philippines was directly transplanted and used to suppress proletarians in Philadelphia. So it’s very clear how policing was brought to the Philippines as a colonial concept and then through the machinations of imperialism, this was transplanted and used against those in the core, the proletarians in the core. So that’s very interesting, very important to know that little thing.

dictatorship because of how proactive we are in such spaces.

And I’m just going to share right now how Project Kapwa started from an initiative inside the university with Paglaya. We started from an initiative where we ideated from practicing mutual aid for animals inside the university. And from there we were somehow ostracized, because we were beyond our jurisdiction, at the same time beyond the orders of the university. So we realized that what’s the point of having spaces like these, but not being able to organize them? They also said, “Why are you focusing on animals? It’s the beginning of the pandemic? Why are you doing actions for animals?” So we’re checking on the people and how they would be receptive to mutual aid actions inside the university. So from there, Project Kapwa came to be so. Right now we’re focusing on local community action, building conversations within the community. I feel like it’s very threatening right now. Because we’re going against the structure of how authoritarian the current administration is within the dictatorship right now and the implications of the prior administration of Duterte.

If you can support Project Kapwa through PayPal, it would be really helpful, especially to organizers within the community that we are in right now. It’s @terreyera.

**Honey:** I’d like to add as well. I think what Castle – correct me if I’m wrong – is trying to say is the tendency with other leftist organizing spaces is that they tend to be class-reductionist, they tend to force people, especially in organizing spaces to feel like there’s only one important issue that should be addressed. So for example, the issue of Marcos being voted as the president, instead of seeing our struggles to be interlinked, or to be intersectional with each other, which I think is the reason why they’ve been questioning Castle as to why your group is doing support for animals instead of people struggling... Just looking into what’s the more important issue to be addressed, instead of changing that mindset and thinking that all our struggles, again, are connected, interconnected. And there are ways to address our struggles together instead of just focusing on one issue.

**Magsalin:** Jumping off from what Honey said, this concept that our struggles are interlinked is an important idea in our minds. We call it “our struggle’s in building.” this idea that not only that our struggles are already interconnected, especially how, for example, Cambridge Analyti-
tionists. Even without the jargon of abolition, and transformative justice, a lot of Filipinos already engage with ideas of abolition and transformative justice in their own ways. Since, for example, the War on Drugs affected poor Filipino families very disproportionately, a lot of people choose not to engage with the police, because they feel like it’s going to be more harmful to them. Indigenous people (IPs) fight against militarization and the like. So I just wanted to uplift that even if there are people who don’t identify as abolitionists, there are people who are already practicing ideas related to abolition and transformative justice.

R: Hi. I’m just going to try to build up from what has been established here, from this entire discussion. One of the main problems that we’ve had with the left and others is that despite their unwavering optimism, there’s still this insistence on taking politics seriously and taking it romantically. I’ve seen this in liberals, despite their pretenses of hope and positivity, there’s still this latent undercurrent of “this is the most important election of our lives, we have to do this, or we have to fight for some weird reason.” And it’s definitely draining, at least speaking personally. So the fact that people take themselves seriously, there’s this insistence, at least towards the people in themselves to burn out because the people think that these things matter too much, there’s a lot of pretenses towards this higher ideal, just because these things are in abstract bigger than themselves.

But this is one of the things that The Dinner Party wants to address – that in the first place, it’s not necessarily that we don’t want to have any pretenses towards something bigger than ourselves. Because in one sense, it’s a drain for people within this particular movement. And also, it’s a tired trope within our own society. So, in one way, I hope for The Dinner Party to have some – not a focus on politics in the sense of identities, campaigns, or ideologies, or at least the theatrics of it – but more focusing instead on the personal aspects of it, in which way we want to befriend people. We just want to have fun in general. You want politics to be less about the issues in the abstract, but rather about making it more like everyday life.

Castle: Basically the dictatorship of Duterte, now the threat of the Marcos dictatorship is really... Before Marcos was even pronounced as the president we were really scared because we know our history. We know our roots in the Marcos era. So we were really active in organizing in the university before the elections. But we are often attacked under the Duterte

Honey: I think it’s important to mention as well, that there are other organizing spaces or tendencies, specifically, the leftist movement, the National Democratic Movement, who do have a different meaning for abolition. They do want to abolish police and prisons, but they want to replace them with something else that represents their group, so they want to replace them with what they call the People’s Court and People’s Police. That’s different from what we do because we want to totally abolish carceral systems and with them, and their meaning of abolition is just abolishing the current power structures and replacing them with theirs.

TFSR: Is that party – one that we’re going to be addressing when we talk about interrelations between other leftist formations – would you say that that organization is on the left of a just an authoritarian strain that is wanting to just grab the government basically and implement it and by renaming stuff People’s this and People’s that it suddenly becomes a dictatorship of the proletariat type thing?

Honey: Yes, definitely.

Adrienne: There’s been a lot of antipolice sentiments in the past couple of years because of the pandemic and how it’s been utilized. One of the things we see a lot online is sentiments about abolishing the police but replacing it with people’s police or people’s defense or something similar to community police. But then for Abolisyon, it’s always been the question of why does it have to be the police? Why does it have to replicate these kinds of dynamics, and not just that, but even in the current relations, that are present in leftist spaces that are dominating our spaces now, it’s really clear now that their dynamics, the way they relate with one another, a lot of different movements and different organizations don’t really align with their ideologies are still very similar to the dynamics of policing. We in Abolisyon want to abolish such structures.

TFSR: I don’t know if anyone else had had commentary on that because that says a lot. And that seems like a pretty common struggle that we see here is that there are organizations that are “Yeah, all cops are bastards, except for the ones that we’re gonna hire and put in doing the job.”

Magsalin: Yeah, actually, it’s so wonderful, what we’re trying to do here.
In our engagement with the leftists, we try to tell them how carceral manifests in the left and how socialism is actually anti-carceral. Because socialism is about the abolition of classes, police and prisons are actually things that reinforce classes. So obviously, police and prisons can’t be instruments for a classless society. This is very hard because there’s a lot of resistance to the idea. But we’ve been trying to explain to them.

**TFSR:** There are some pretty clear questions that people pretty naturally have socialized into whatever system that you’re socialized into: you see harm exist in the society around you and between people in your community. And if the answer that’s given to how do we resolve issues of harm, how do we keep ourselves safe, and our neighbors safe and our family safe. It’s pretty easy these days to just say – if you haven’t done some thinking – “The solution is for this arbitrary third party to come in and be a giver of justice and balance the scales between the issues or resolve the issue by removing someone who’s been causing harm from the situation.” So there’s a lack of imagination on the part of those folks.

Do they react pretty well when you offer a picture of how the carceral system and policing operate within their society? Or do people point to “existing socialism” in other countries and say, “That’s a model that actually resolves this issue, their prisons, and their police work well”?

**K:** Yeah, that’s one of the things that we have to confront when we talk about these things. They do cite a lot of experiments with socialism and communism. But at the same time, when you try to point out how these things failed, or eventually will fail, or whatever issues are existing now, they will be saying, “Oh, but this country isn’t actually socialist or communist.” So they flip-flop in different ways. It’s very much a lot of dynamics is cherry-picking with what arguments work for them, depending on what context. And one of the reasons for that and the difficulty with really bringing these conversations to bigger spaces and engaging with them in a deeper and more meaningful way is because there’s really a struggle and issue with the lack of political imagination that exists in the Philippines. So a lot of the concepts and ideas we have about participating politically, getting involved, and talking to people are very much skewed towards just showing political will. It’s really a numbers game in a way, as well as just hammering people in with a lot of jargon that comes from leftist spaces, of doing politics themselves. Things are still patriarchal in that sense that there has to be a father, there has to be a leader, there has to be this figure who’s running things because people tend to get infantilized, they’re so treated like they don’t really know what politics means, what managing resources actually looks like.

To me, the decolonization project in the Philippines in that aspect doesn’t really have to jump through a lot of hoops in that sense, because even with the presence of governments, even with the presence of Barangays, people are already living life outside of the grasp of the state. They’re already trying to make ends meet on their own. They’re already trying to settle their own conflicts on their own. They’re already trying to get people out of trouble on their own. The presence of that devolution of powers existing parallel to people, already existing in the cracks of the Empire is what we refer to it in The Dinner Party. There are already such huge opportunities for people to be able to govern their lives and to really self-determine on their own. It’s really just a matter of getting people to believe in their own capacity and their own agency. And for me, that decolonization project is really bringing the power and not just giving it to the people but also making the people realize that they have had this power all along. So I hope that somehow addresses that more concrete and current framing of the question on decolonization.

**R:** Just to put everything into context, back in December last year Duterte signed an amendment to a law that allows 100% ownership of common carrier industries like mining, railways, and other big projects, as opposed to the 40% capacity that was instituted back in 1987. And during the election campaign, one of the big business-oriented platforms that Bongbong Marcos had is to allow, “sustainable mining” to operate in the country. So as far as foreign intervention and extractivism in the Philippines, we can only see that expansion in the future.

**TFSR:** Yeah, that was a helpful contextualization.

**K:** What I wanted to bring up was in connection with what Adrienne mentioned, and also relating to what we brought up in the beginning about the genealogy of abolitionism in the Philippines. Because earlier, Adrienne mentioned about people already trying to solve conflicts on their own outside of the state. And I just wanted to uplift the fact that in terms of Abolisyon, it’s not just about us as people who identify as aboli-
the idea that there should be a bourgeois revolution before a socialist revolution. This idea still reproduces wage labor, because you still have capital, you still have the building of productive forces, using capitalism, using wage labor, and you still have the state, you still have police and prisons. And we probably might even have gulags because after all, the Communist Party did kill all those people. The vision of the left doesn’t really take decolonization into its own terms, in terms of actually undoing what colonization did to us.

**Adrienne:** I want to respond more to the context that Bursts was talking about with this question on decolonization. So currently, the state has been taking up this project of devolving its powers in a way. They’ve been talking about federalism for a few years now, quite a long time, actually. And, as we’ve mentioned earlier, there are Barangays in the Philippines. Barangays are basically smaller communities, I guess they’re religious circles in a way, but the more local version of this. So there are local governments, Barangays, etc. that really govern and have authority within their very small localities. So the state has been trying to devolve its powers to the Barangays, the city governments, and local governments, so that things don’t get stuck in the central anymore, so that the national doesn’t have to do every single thing that happens in the local.

I would like to raise the idea that the federalism project that the state is trying to accomplish and the devolution of powers that’s going on is something parallel to what anarchist ideas and abolitionist ideas would talk about, which means putting the power in the hands of the people who really know their context better, the people who actually live in that situation. However, there’s still this presence of authority, basically, of leaders who are making decisions for people without really understanding what’s going on in their personal lives, and what they actually need. Not to mention the fact that politics in the Philippines really focuses a lot on not only personality politics, but really a Padrino culture, which is basically getting close and cozy with people in power, and that whoever is friends with that person, they get positions, they get more resources, etc. There’s already an approximation at really giving power back to the people. But it still doesn’t do away with this whole idea that there has to be a figurehead, there has to be someone who’s running and calling the shots and stuff like that. I think with a project of decolonization, well, there’s one focus, or one reality, one attempt, at least, in the local about really giving the power back to the people, it still does not trust the people to be able and capable and not really much attention to how we prefigure politics and the future that we want in our current practices. In my personal experience as well.

In the different threads and sectors of the left here, you will see that they will be talking about socialist futures that are economies destroying and abolishing the patriarchy within their personal relationships, the dynamics are so fucked-up that they actually cause more harm than they do good in their immediate spaces. So there are a lot of predators and abusers and harassers that are loose, and they get excused in these spaces, because they’ll say, “Oh, these people are really good organizers and speakers, so we can’t just kick them out.” That forces a lot of survivors of abuse and harm to just lie low, go underground, or maybe totally drop off the space altogether. When we talk about Abolisyon and the future that we want to work on together, not just in Abolisyon, but even in The Dinner Party and maybe even Paglawa and Project Kapwa. It’s really not just about that distant future, but really trying to bring these ideas into our direct personal relationships in our immediate spaces. Because otherwise, they wouldn’t mean anything, if they’re not things that we can actually act on right now in the present moment. It’s just that these are building blocks for us. But for the mainstream left here, or for a lot of the leftist spaces, they would think that we’re talking about something that’s too idealistic. If it’s not too idealistic, it’s too soft, too fluffy. It’s not really political, because you’re just talking about relationships and the personal, but for us, it’s like why can’t these be arenas and spaces and battles in which we actually try to bring in and live these ideas that we already have and we already talked about a lot?

**TFSR:** Yeah. Castle, do you want to talk about the projects that you’re involved in?

**Castle:** Yeah, you were talking about accountability and how community organizers do organizing work in our spaces. Basically, Paglawa means ‘to liberate’ or ‘liberation’ in English. It was founded by a group of people deciding and realizing that we should go beyond common structures and hierarchies within our organizing spaces. So we are a group of people who were advocates, and we are still advocates of students’ rights and welfare, we were focusing on having strong legislation or even laws that would protect and uphold our student’s rights and welfare as students in the university setting. We realized that we should organize beyond legislation, and we’ve reformed.
We were empowered even more when our group was discussing what Magsalain wrote, actually. It was a paper discussing liberatory politics and anarchism in the archipelago Philippines. So we were ostracized in the mainstream organization movement in both our university and on the national level of organizing because as anarchists and the norm of organizing right now in the context of the Philippines, we are seen as the irrational number in organizing spaces. We often say that we should drop out of colleges and universities because it’s basically it’s what anarchists should do, but Paglaya is a university-based anarchist organization that explores, imbibles and prefigures anarchist practices. So it also hopes and organizes for and with autonomy, consent, direct actions, and free association. So within our spaces, we decided for collective total liberation and the cultivation of libertarian tendencies. I feel like that’s how Paglaya is and how we identify as members of Paglaya. It was just a network of people realizing that we should go beyond.

In the Philippines, when you say ‘progressive,’ that’s the right way to do it. If you’re a progressive individual, the politics that you’re in and the practices that you live by are the best things that you can do to contribute and to live as an individual. We realize that, as individuals, especially in the university setup, we should go beyond progressiveness. And we should go beyond the established structure of organizing because we were ostracized by the seniors, by people who are part of the higher levels, by fourth-year college students, by well-known organizers in our spaces, because we were exploring, and it was dangerous because we do not have leaders to guide us in these organizing moments of our lives. So that’s Paglaya.

Talking about Project Kapwa, it’s one of our Paglaya members practicing and experimenting with how mutual aid goes. Fun fact about it actually: in the university, we have this one specific professor who did not attend one of our classes, so we just decided that we should reach out and explore, as proactive individuals in our university, we should try and encourage them, we should do our own activity and projects. That’s Project Kapwa. It is our channel and medium of practicing and prefiguring a society wherein mutual aid is mainstream, we live by mutual aid in terms of not just exercising but espousing the society that we want when we are in crisis when we are struggling with different — Especially in the Philippines, since it’s an archipelago, we are really indifferent natural disasters and everything. So Project Kapwa and Paglaya are basically our new bodies of exploring and experimenting with anarchism and prefiguration.

don’t you speak Spanish?”

We’re not really indigenous, but we are what Benedict Anderson would call Creole because they don’t exactly exist in settler colonies. After all, we were forcibly separated from our land and our traditions. Therefore, we are not colonized. As Creoles, we are creolized. There are still indigenous peoples in the Philippines. So when in contact with indigenous peoples, creoles become settler-colonists. This is true in the sense of Turtle Island’s ideas of decolonization, so “land back” is quite applicable here. So the decolonization in this regard is the Creole respect for indigenous lands, the cessation of colonial logic indigenous people and lands, recognizing indigenous stewardship, all this.

But outside of the settler colonial zones, what is exactly Creole decolonization? If we are speaking of Creole decolonization as the transfer of sovereignty from a colonial overlord to a Creole state. In the Philippines, this was the United States giving the Philippines formally its independence. But we don’t really recognize it, because the new Creole state continues to reproduce many colonial institutions and features: centralized state apparatus, the police, the prisons. Before colonization, there was no state, the police didn’t exist, and prison didn’t exist. So Creole decolonization is really the replacement of one colonizer head with a Creole head. So with all the institutions of colonization still in place.

This project of decolonization is incomplete as long as they have state apparatus and settler colonialism, the Creoles and other colonizing patterns exist, the archipelago, the so-called Philippines, is not decolonized by virtue of having Filipinos in charge of the state, especially if we see colonization as the explicit process of state-building. In this sense, decolonization for Creoles – that’s us in Metro Manila – is the undoing of the state, the undoing of wage labor, undoing of the police and prisons. The colonization imposed these things upon us, so decolonization should mean doing away with these things. That doesn’t mean, however, that the decolonization is to return to an Eden before the colonization. This is impossible because we can never go back. Rather than decolonization is the recognition of these institutions of colonization. These institutions aren’t permanent features, aren’t inevitable features of society, and thus, there could be a future without these institutions, without the state, without the police, prisons, wage labor, without capitalism, all these things that colonizers brought over here, and the colonization continues to this day. So this thing isn’t really well understood by the left. National Democrats believe in Stalin’s theory of national democracy. National democracy is
stand, because the whole question is “who gets to be indigenous and who doesn’t?” How do we trace this heritage when a lot of us are really mixed blood? A lot of us are either children of people who came from colonizers or just people who came from trade intermarriages and stuff like that. And so I think, with the conversation on decolonization, there’s a particular context we’re coming from and that we want to center and that it cannot be reduced or simplified into a ground zero situation where we go back to the very roots, where we go back to talking about precolonial histories and identities because that’s just not the reality for many of us. So many people will be displaced, and so many people will be forced into situations or relationships of harm because it’s not discourse and reality that applies.

For me, when we talk about decolonization, it’s really more about talking about confronting “Okay, we’ve been colonized three times for over 300 years. And because we’ve been colonized in that way and our identity is basically not something you can cut off, or untangle from all of this history, cultural, transcultural, intercultural influences, and backgrounds. It means that when we decolonize, we actually have to face and confront head-on these realities because if by decolonization we mean going back to the pre-colonial, we mean going back to the indigenous, that’s just a simplification of wanting to go back to a non-existent time and point in our history, where our personal and political histories were not linked to one another.”

Magsalin can expand on this a bit better but I just think that the colonial discourse in the Philippines or in our archipelago is not going to be the same as the decolonial discourse that exists in other parts of the world.

**TFSR:** Is there discourse around decolonization going on in terms of people’s communities, and relationships with the rest of the world culturally? We’re all speaking English. That was brought up jokingly in the beginning, I find it very useful because my Spanish is poor, and that’s the only language other than English that I can speak any of. I value the fact that you all are willing to speak in English but I just wanted to touch on that general framework. Sorry to be long-winded.

**Magsalin:** We don’t speak Spanish because funnily enough, the Spanish never taught Spanish to us during the Spanish colonization period, although they did during the last few years of the colony, by then was still too late. So many people around Latin America who talk to us ask, “Why

**TFSR:** You mentioned Paglaya being limited within the realm of people relating as students and people wanting to drop out or get out. I don’t know how long or how institutionalized that project has been going, but if there’s room for it to bridge to the outside... Because having a space for libertarian-minded students seems important, even if the people that are in the group maybe are not wanting to be in the school space anymore. I don’t know if there’s room for a bridge to organizations or groupings outside of the student realm.

**Castle:** Actually, right now, because we were really attacked by both the administration and the student organizations within our university, we decided to structure it in a way that’s acceptable inside the university. But right now as our organization and our network are really growing, and we are learning anarchism and prefiguration, we are currently deciding on and talking about how we can destructure it and disorganize the network, to really go beyond the norm of organization of “When you are a student, you should focus on the student movement, you should focus on student organizing” because that’s how we were conditioned in the mainstream organizing of the left in the Philippines, that you should be part of the masses and be aligned with a specific strand of politics.

So right now, we are actively discussing and learning how we can destructure and disorganize Paglaya so that he can go on a more local set-up and at the same time on an individual level, not just really organizing for being part of this membership, but like as people. We were talking within Abolisyon, TDP, and other anarchist spaces that rather than membership, we should build and work together within our societies and communities. So that’s how we see Paglaya right now in terms of the question that you asked.

**TFSR:** What does Kapwa mean in English?

**Adrienne:** Probably it is not a directly translatable Tagalog word, but I guess the closest word that was mentioned in the chat is fellow, ‘kapwa’ refers to an other, but it’s this other that isn’t necessarily a stranger, but someone you still actively care about and treat as part of your community. So it’s something like that.

**Castle:** I can add on that as well. Actually, Project Kapwa was our envision, a project where we want to espouse the mutual aid aspect of the
key tenet of anarchism. So, Kapwa, for us, is really someone who is your equal, equal with potential and equal with the knowledge that you have. Because in our spaces right now, in the context of the Philippines, you’re not considered as a Kapwa by part of the movement if you are not organized, and if you are not part of the membership. You’re not considered a fellow activist, even if you’re ranting on Twitter, if you demanding accountability on different platforms of social media, and different platforms on ground and online, you’re not part of our spaces. Especially on a political and theoretical level, if you’re not knowledgeable about such stuff. So, Project Kapwa really wants to acknowledge that issue. And at the same time, practice that. Even if you do not know these things on an academic level, you’re still part and you are still capable and able enough to be part of this community and organize mutual aid.

TFSR: Yeah, that totally makes a lot of sense. I think there’s a lot of jargon that activists can sometimes bring up and gatekeep others. That’s a really good approach – recognizing that a lot of the anarchisms that I’ve interacted through throughout my life... Sometimes it’s based on a lot of studies, but a lot of the practices are based on things that people normally do in community with each other and mutual respect as opposed to having a degree or being able to quote some dead bald or bearded guy. So I really think that’s a pretty cool approach. Was anyone wanting to speak about Cevite Mutual Aid?

Honey: I am part of Cevite Mutual Aid. I invited someone from our group to actually speak but they were unable to attend, after all. I don’t want to be taking that space because I’ll be speaking for Abolisyon.

Basically, Cevite Mutual Aid started before Abolisyon, it’s a mix of people. They’re not necessarily anarchists, but there are a couple of people from the anarcho-punk community. So basically what we do is mutual aid stuff. It’s somehow related to Food Not Bombs in Cevite. It’s basically not the same, most people from that group as well. Cevite Mutual Aid, there is already an established community for Food Not Bombs in Cevite, so it’s very easy for us to do food pantries or food distribution projects.

But also, since I’m in the US, I’m able to do fundraising and send some money over there to help with our projects. Another thing that we do with Cevite Mutual Aid is that we support the medical needs of people in our community. We’re basically the group that does the fundraising for them and distribute that money to them. But also we do a bit of survivor movements and social welfare for the sake of extractivism. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about how that trend has been coming out from under the Duterte presidency, including during the early days of COVID. And what you see coming out of a new Marcos era, since the son of the dictator was just elected again. I wonder not only if you could talk a little bit about these dynamics nationally, but also about how you see your communities and how you see other interesting parts of what might be considered like leftist movements engaging around the concept of decolonization, whether it be in support of ecological struggles against extractivism, or around challenging or troubling historical hegemones? Or language, cosmology or centralizing certain ethnicities in the archipelago?

It’s a big question. You’re welcome.

Adrienne: One of the things that we fell in and I talked about earlier, when we were discussing this question is that there’s really a particular historical context that the Philippines is also coming from. Because the archipelago, even before colonization, has really been deeply embedded in trading networks, especially because it’s an archipelago, it’s the middle of the ocean. There’s really no monolithic identity for it from the get-go. But at the same time, because it’s so accessible and has been so embedded in trade networks, the question of indigeneity is just not something that we can apply as easily as more landlocked discourse and dialogue might zoom in or how these dialogues might work. So for example, in my particular context, I am technically Filipino Chinese, I have Chinese blood. But I’m so divorced from the Chinese side of my family that I don’t really know what goes on there anymore. And I identify really more with a post-colonial or more neocolonial context of the Philippines and the identity aspects of it.

This isn’t just my reality, this is the reality of a lot of people who identify as Filipinos because you can’t really distill the identity of a lot of us into who’s indigenous and who’s not. Because from the very beginning, even before we were colonized, there have been intermarriages that have mixed and mingled with different cultures, backgrounds, and heritages. There have been intermarriages, for example, in the Taosug ethnolinguistic group and Chinese traders because they were really a hotspot for Chinese trading, even before Spain got to anywhere in the Philippines. Just talking about the colonization and equating it to indigeneity is such a difficult thing for us too, or for me personally to process and to under-
people who are not really politically involved at all? How are they going to do it?

Most of our discussions, we will have so much political discussion, but we – me and other non-men in the group – like pointing out domestic labor or about emotional labor that women and non-cis men does within a group and how we would like to distribute that labor because that is necessary. That should be like everyone’s work. At this time, it’s mostly women and non-cis men doing supporters and how do we want to distribute that labor and want everyone to engage? We’re trying to create – Maybe we can have a discussion, we can have a workshop so people will know what to do. And then from that, we can extend that outside space.

Adrienne: Just to add to that as well, going beyond our spaces, I really noticed that what’s resonant with people who are political here, but hate the current state of politics and the left, or don’t want to get involved with the mass organizations, is really this whole message and focus on the relational and personal aspects of politics. That’s somehow one thing that I consistently notice from a lot of people. They would resonate with a lot of anarchists or abolitionist ideas. But it’s particularly because of how personal and focused on improving personal relationships these ideas are that they tend towards that direction.

So I think there’s really this existing critique, although maybe something that people can’t verbalize as well yet that there’s something really wrong with the political state of the Philippines, whether it be because of the state or the left. And so when you talk to people, or when you hear about their complaints, and how they struggle with participating politically, it’s really that focus, on the one hand, we know that the status shit fucking sucks, but at the same time, the left isn’t doing any better. So what space is there for us? We’re trying to nurture and incubate this space and help people find ways to express themselves and be able to create their own versions of our comfortable and safe spaces. So that it’s not just us, it doesn’t become like a centralized dynamic again, but it’s something that people can do with their own friendship groups, or with their own affinity groups, or with their own spaces. And, therefore, decentralize this idea that politics has to be a strict and formal organization.

TFSR: So the Philippines has obviously had a very long history of colonization and neo-colonial dictatorships that suppress popular support. There are a lot of things that we do based on what people within the group are capable of – the same with Abolision. We call it a mutual aid group because that’s the main thing that we do in Cevite Mutual Aid.

TFSR: The Philippines being an archipelago and being a series of islands that are, surely, very culturally distinct – a distinction with the fauna and the flora across all these islands. And I’m sure that power is dispersed differently, whether someone’s in one of the major cities or in the countryside. Are you all based in the same location? Are there certain cities that you have in common?

Magsalin: We live in what’s called the National Capital Region, it’s a national core, which is an imperial core, but for a country. So this national core actually has a name, which is Imperial Manila, where Filipinos can see Manila as an imperial capital, where the peripheries always have to follow the rule of a very distant president very far away. And so this notion of core-periphery relations is something deeply felt by Filipinos. And yeah, we live in the core.

K: I do want to mention, though, that we do have members, people associated with our collective that live outside of the National Capital Region, but I think the majority of us live in NCR or have had a lot of experience within the National Capital Region.

Adrienne: That doesn’t mean by any means that the experience is monolithic because I live in a part of the National Capital Region or Metro Manila, as we call it, that’s a bit newer. It’s like a young city. And so a lot of the experiences I have in the periphery of the imperial core are a mix of urban realities with a more rural pace. So even within Metro Manila, because of the local governments, because municipal governments are Barangays. Even experiences within the core are very different. Different levels of poverty, different levels of government responsibility, and action or inaction. In Metro Manila, we have a joke about some cities being called the Soviet East because the cities in the East have a better functioning and more responsive government compared to the rest of Metro Manila. But even then, we still live in the core. And it’s just a difference between how competent people in government are not necessarily how much better they are at their job.
TFSR: Sometimes less competency is a better thing.

Honey: I think Castle and me are from the south. Specifically, I am from Cevite, I don’t know how to describe that place, but people used to refer to it as a Florida of the Philippines.

TFSR: That means a lot of things to a lot of different people.

I wonder if you would share a little bit about your understanding of the introduction of the theory of anarchism into the Philippines. Obviously, there’s a lot of really important discussion about whether the theory is the important thing or it is a way that Western philosophers were able to point to commonalities among communities and urges towards equality or tendencies towards equality and commonality in those communities. So the Circle A or capital A or whatever maybe isn’t the important thing but I wonder as an organized movement or project, if you could talk a little bit about anarchism in the Philippines and how it’s been suppressed in the past by communist parties, the church, the state in different ways at different times, and how did you all get involved in that tendency, or in autonomous anti-capitalism, if that’s more your jam?

Magsalin: Anarchist tendencies only emerged in the past 30 years in the Philippines. A long time ago during the American colonial period. In the first decade of the 20th century, there was anarchist literature spreading around the country brought home by the first Filipino socialist Isabelo de los Reyes. But this never really resulted in a coherent tendency. It didn’t ever become an anarchist tendency. They were just anarchist-inflected.

And later, because of the success of the Soviet Union and the revolution in Russia, they were absorbed into the old Communist Party in 1930. Then fast forward decades later, on the eve of the Marcos dictatorship, there’s this one historian suggests that the Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan Mendiola, or the Association of Democratic Youths of Mendiola (which is the place) was an organization. And they commandeered a fire truck and rammed it into the Presidential Palace, which is pretty cool, but it’s difficult to tell if they were actually anarchists. I haven’t been able to find surviving literature from the period, so it’s still up in the air. But if they were, Paglaya is the first anarchist organization in 50 years, which is something. But they eventually were absorbed into the Communist Party, the new one, CPP, and they disappeared. That brings us to the 90s, where relationship with each other, we just don’t treat each other as comrades in the way the left typically uses it. We’re friends. And because we’re friends, we care about each other, and we want each other to be better. And we want to reduce the harm that we meet out on each other. And so it’s really a mutual work of trying to live our politics in better ways with each other. In such a way that we can hold each other accountable, and, therefore, bake politics into our personal relationships and make our personal relationships that space of prefiguring these politics that we really want to do and show the people that we can do without really having to resort to hierarchical structures and organizations.

Honey: We want to have this relationship with each other within our organizing spaces. It’s easier for us to call in each other, and address if we’re having issues because I do have experience being in the older anarchist milieu, and we are trying to stay away from that group. That’s why we call ourselves the newer anarchist milieu. I see the dynamics and differences in both groups. With the older ones, you’re not really into accountability or transformative justice. How do you resolve conflicts within your group? It’s more of replicating the same systems that we have right now, the 60’s thing. And so the question is how are you going to address conflicts or issues within your group, even if the state is gone if you’re replicating the same systems? This is something that we want to do differently within Abolisyon, within The Dinner Party.

And it’s funny because I think a couple of days ago, we had what we call a Kamustahan session with our reading group, which is for reading The Joyful Militancy. Kamustahan session is more of a check-in session that we have with each other where we just talk about anything too personal for other people to talk about, or to talk about in the organizing spaces. What I’ve seen from this is that a lot of cis men within a group are comfortable enough to share their experiences and admit that “Hey, with this experience of mine, I fucked up, I was sexist, I was misogynistic. And I’d like to do better, how can I? How can we do better? What else can we do?” And so from the previous Kamustahan session that we had, we came up with this idea of how about we create a workgroup or a space specifically for assessment within the group, to talk about how they can do better when it comes to being accountable, calling in each other instead of relying on women or non-men within our groups to call them in and do so much emotional labor for them to understand what their issues are. And how they can call in, or address these issues outside our space, with
“you are elbowed” when you demand accountability, because they have leadership and experience within these organizing spaces, even if they’re considered radical, they’re considered leaders, basically. So these are the tendencies that we should really look into and explore unlearning because the harm and the violence towards survivors in organizing spaces is not really acknowledged enough.

TFSR: It feels like when I’ve been in organizations, or in milieu where there are these informal hierarchies that I mentioned before, or where there’s an ongoing abusive style of relationship or communication or whatever, if a thing continues on for a while, it becomes more and more difficult to address it in a comrade-to-comrade manner. I wonder if that is a thing that you all have talked about is an informal – I know this is a Maoist term – crit-self-crit. How do you work on creating community spaces where there’s room for people to take each other aside, just informally and say, “Hey, check-in! How are you doing? You blew up at me during the meeting and discussion. Is there anything you need?” Room for feedback in that way. Does that undermine the building up of abusive formal or informal hierarchies?

Adrienne: This is why it’s particularly important that our political core and political base in our work really starts in relationships within The Dinner Party and our general milieu. Because when we talk about situations where the harm comes in or where someone gets hurt, or when there’s something that we really need to talk about, those personal relationships tend to be what eases and helps facilitate those conversations of confronting and holding each other accountable. For example, when we have an issue where someone made someone else feel uncomfortable, it’s really about talking with each other, bringing up that, “Maybe, am I crazy, or did this sentence or did this interaction come across like this to you as well?” When you get that validation – just because a lot of us have also experienced a lot of manipulation and abuse and trauma in our life, so we really need to have that survivor support, interaction going on as well. When we establish that thing that “Okay, this is how this is what happened, it is what you felt in that interaction,” we get to really talk with each other, and bring these issues up without feeling like we’re being attacked. Because when we talk about this thing or that thing, we’re talking and we’re coming from a place of love and care for this person.

It’s not difficult, because we just don’t have a strictly professional punk rock brought new anarchism to the Philippines that developed into a punk anarchist milieu that moved around Food Not Bombs.

Later on, we emerged in the last decade, I suppose. So that’s us, the latest wave. And we represent something hopefully new, not just new to the left, but also new to the anarchist scene because the anarchist scene here was what you call “manarchist.” “Manarchist” meaning is man plus anarchist – very patriarchal, very insular, very navel-gazing. So we’re hoping to introduce some new articulation that reaches out to more people, not just very niche circles. As a first impression, it’s very clear that the government suppresses the National Democratic Movement, which is a tendency that emerged in the new Communist Party of the Philippines. But they’re not all actually affiliated with Communist Party. Anyway, this tendency is the one that is most heavily suppressed by the government. And not only that, but the tendency inside the Communist Party also suppresses other leftists. 20 years ago, they started an assassination campaign against a Marxist Leninist & Social Democrats. And just last year, they bombed the Labor leader with “Centro.” And that was bad. They apologized, but they never were transparent why these things happen. We don’t actually know why he was killed. So this is the same Communist Party that thirty years ago murdered hundreds of their own country. So these people definitely can’t be trusted.

Honey: I think it’s very important as well to mention that for me personally, I think that a lot of people got into anarchism because of the anarcho-punk scene, because that’s my entry point, listening to music and then reading zines, such as Profane Existence, Slug & Lettuce, Slingshot, Maximum Rock’n’Roll. So more of my politicization is into zine readings and exchanging zines with people from abroad. From my experience as well, a lot of people from anarcho-punk spaces have been organizing long before like Food Not Bombs, mutual aid initiatives, and Really, Really Free Markets. Because there’s a very rich zine culture before in the Philippines, I think that’s where most of the anarchists in the Philippines’ entry point is, the hardcore punk scene as well.

Adrienne: To add a bit to what Magsalin was talking about a while ago. So, for a bit of context, I worked for someone who used to be intimately involved with the CPP. So my boss used to be involved there. One of the things that I learned from there was really how much of the leftist politics
of what we would call the peak of the mainstream left here is really also super personalistic. It can get really petty. There are issues about money that have literally led to people being kicked out of the Party and then not being able to come back to the country because they’re blacklisted, and they couldn’t access any direct route back to the Philippines, etc.

And I think one of the conditions that they were talking about wanting to do for this was really acknowledging the bridges that happen and trying to help the families of the comrades who died back on their feet, like giving financial assistance to them. And so the leadership of the CPP rejected that, they didn’t want to get involved in it. They’re still like a stalemate. So you get a sense of how petty and not even ideological all these struggles and battles within the left are. But at the same time, it’s not just on the leadership level, because of the structure and that dynamic that’s going on in the party, it cascades and gets replicated even in the personal lives and interactions of a lot of the members of the mass organizations.

I came from a very different background, I came into anarchism by way of feminism. I really only got roped into it, because my professor who was also starting his journey into anarchism just pulled me in and said, “Okay, read all of this stuff that I’m reading.” For me, it felt like a natural progression in that direction. Because for me, a lot of the things that I believe in and identify as a feminist for are things that are common in anarchism, a lot of it is about really equalizing a lot of the vertical and hierarchical power dynamics and relationships, and really talking about how it’s not just about liberating people from the patriarchy, from gender oppression, and suppression and gender struggle, but also about a lot of how the intersections of class and gender, and ethnolinguistic background or race, religion, etc. are things that we have to collectively address and not just reduced into the issue of class. I got radicalized in the university, and I wanted to join the left. But then I found a lot of people who said that they had really negative experiences, not to discourage me, but just to give me a context of what I wanted to get into. So in my experience, a lot of these people would talk about how harmful the dynamics have been. And the organizations really focus a lot on class, the left here is very class reductionist. They would rant about anything that doesn’t relate to class as identity politics and dismiss it as a bad thing as if identity wasn’t an integral part of your humanity. And so for me, it was a constant and ongoing question of what is it really that we are experiencing? Why does it have to be reduced to class when we know that a lot of the things that we struggle

and worked with national organizations. It’s really damaging and harmful, realizing how they organize. And it’s really helpful and healing to realize that there are spaces like The Dinner Party and Abolisiony. They do not pressure you really. The Dinner Party, when they organize you – we are having a reading thing right now on joyful militancy – they don’t pressure you on reading on chapters one and two before moving forward. But in the mainstream left, you have to go through this process of learning, but you are not allowed to engage with the conversation if you’re not yet finished with chapters one and two.

That’s the general theme of how organizing happens right now with the left in the Philippines, you have to go through a series of training and educational discussions. With The Dinner Party, it’s really an open discussion of regardless of the level of learning and knowledge that you have, it’s open and really joyful, at the same time really accepting to the availability that you have, physically, mentally, in everything – in all aspects. It acknowledged you’re human and your being involved with other activities, not just in this discussion and such.

Honey: We are living by that article from Nadia from Crimethinc titled “Your politics are boring as fuck.” We would like to make sure that the way that we’re engaging with each other is the same way that we’re gonna engage with people who were not involved in any organizing or radical spaces. How are we going to talk to them? Is it the same way that we’re going to talk to each other? How are we going to treat each other as well? It’s like witnessing how our group is growing. We’re not necessarily everyone anarchists, there are abolitionists and other people as well, who are still in the National Democratic Movement, or who have left a space or movement engaging with us, that’s like a very big win for us. Other leftist organizing spaces might see us as something small, doesn’t really matter. But yeah, for us, it’s a very big win. Very important.

Castle: I was thinking of discussing the culture of harm and violence inside radical spaces we have and the lack of accountability within the spaces. I feel like we should discuss it right now. In The Dinner Party and Abolisiony, I really learned a lot with them, along with them, how these things really impact our lives. I’m just new to this whole thing. In the radical spaces that we have right now in the Philippines, there’s really a lack of accountability, especially if you are running with a Party. The accountability is shrugged off your elbow, we have slang in the Philippines,
time. I think I’m just looking for a space where I can organize because there aren’t that many organizing spaces that are focused on anarchism, or that are organized by anarchists. I’ve experienced that the dynamics in the leftist space is that they’re measuring your productivity when it comes to organizing the same way that capitalism measures you and I have a joke where at least under capitalism, I can take these off, I can file for PTO, and that’s something that you cannot do in the leftist organizing spaces because they’re gonna gaslight you. Someone else experienced it, but I’ve heard someone was told that “the revolution will continue even without you.” And that’s not a good thing to say to someone who might want to take some time to take care of themselves. Not only self-care, but it’s also supposed to be collective care, it is supposed to be caring for that person as part of your collective.

This is one thing that we’re very critical of in Abolisyon. We don’t want to be replicating those dynamics. What we do in Abolisyon is that there will be a time that we’re really going to be full of energy, when it comes to doing projects and organizing, everyone is high, the chat is non-stop, and even at night, it seems like people are not slipping and just like putting in their ideas. But then there will be a time that people will be dealing with their personal struggles, with their personal issues or whatnot. And we aren’t going to ask much from that person, like say, “Hey, why are you not doing this? Why are you not doing that? Why did you stop organizing?” We’re more like “What we can do to support you, to make it easier for you? Not necessarily because we want you to go back into organizing with us. But because we want to support you in your struggles. It’s us embodying or living by example, that this is what anarchists do, this is mutual aid, these are the systems of care that we want to nurture, we want to create in our communities. That’s a very good dynamic that I’m really proud of in Abolisyon, and that we in other spaces that we’re creating, that we have established, like The Dinner Party, that’s the same dynamics that we have there. Castle’s project as well, that’s the dynamics that they have adopted. And so I think, because of that small effort, as other leftist organizers see our efforts, we have created systems of care not only in our spaces but in a larger space that we aspire to engage with our organizing or other communities that it’s not really part of our circle, but we want to engage with.

Castle: I just want to add to all of your frustrations with the mainstream left in the Philippines, especially on a personal level. I’ve organized with against aren’t really things that will go away when capitalism goes away?

Just a bit of background: I’m a sociology graduate. So those are the questions that kept me up at night and helped me not get into a lot of mass organizing and mass organizations or groups really, because I felt like they weren’t really sufficient in addressing a lot of the fundamental inequalities that we struggle with, especially in the Philippines.

Magsalin: I’d like to point out that our milieu is not just an anarchist, but an anarchist abolitionist milieu, because we do have people who don’t identify as anarchists, but they are abolitionists. And I think that’s important because after all, the Invisible Committee said, “It is not up to the rebel to learn to speak anarchist. It is up to the anarchists to become polyglot.”

Honey: I’ve mentioned before that my politicization and my entry point with anarchy stems from the anarcho-punk scene. This is one of the issues as well that we have within our anarchist abolitionist milieu. Because we have a joke, where since people’s politicization are different, there is this division between anarchists in the Philippines where there are people who are anarcho-punk whose entry point is more on the music scene. And then some people are more into the academy. And so, from my experience, being involved in the anarcho-punk community, there is this fear of people from this space from engaging with people from the academy because of a lot of barriers with language. People from the anarcho-punk scene don’t like discussing theories a lot, but I think it’s important as well. And it’s crucial to challenge ourselves when we’re replicating harmful systems or harmful behaviors.

One of the challenges and one of the questions that we have within our group is how we are going to be more engaged with people whose entry point or politicization with anarchism is different from us. Say, for example, Cevite Mutual Aid, as I mentioned before, a lot of people from that group are from the anarcho-punk scene, and we would like to be able to engage them more with projects from Abolisyon, though we’re already doing that. We’re already supporting each other with our projects and initiatives. But we want more of an engagement, talking, discussions on how we’re going to apply our politics in our personal lives, how are we going to organize better that’s different from the normal organizing dynamics that there are, from the leftist spaces. If Adrienne would like to discuss more what The Dinner Party would like to do with this challenge...
Adrienne: Yeah. As mentioned a while ago, not only the existing left spaces, but even anarchist spaces here don’t really focus on how immediate actually in every day a lot of the political ideas we talk about can be. In The Dinner Party, we tend to focus a lot on this everyday aspect, particularly on relational politics, and building relationships with each other. Because we think that the harm and oppression that exists not only on a state level but on a very general structural level gets replicated a lot in our personal relationships because that’s how socialization works. That’s how these structures were supposed to sustain themselves, maintain themselves, perpetuate and survive. They have to really embed and incorporate themselves in the everyday lives of these individual people – of us. Even we, as people who identify as radicals, are also implicated and required to do the personal work of actually asking what does a better future look like? What does an anarchist Utopia look like for us?

The things that we’ve mentioned and seen in our spaces is that the politics that they talk about, that they preach about isn’t really something that they live. But for The Dinner Party, we find that it’s urgent, and it’s actually more concrete and doable when we start talking about the practicality of our politics existing in our personal relationships. Because when we talk about politics, it is something that we have to confront in our everyday lives. It means that it’s not just that the personal is political. It’s also that the political is personal. And therefore, it’s something that we have to really actively and consciously live in and live through. And one of the most immediate and certain ways to do that is in your personal relationships, in our friendships, in our families, in our romantic relationships, like the idea that the revolution starts at home. It’s not just some motto, or like some sappy thing that radicals say, it’s an actual truth. Because unless we look at how we replicate inequalities and violence and harm interpersonal relationships and change it, we’re not going to be any good radicals, we’re not going to be any good activists, we’re just saying, we’re just hypocrites, basically, because we don’t actually live and act on the politics that we talk about. Talk about it and keep on preaching to other people about it.

For me, it’s not just abolition of the state, it’s not just a revolution in the streets. It’s actually a revolution that involves every single aspect of our humanity, of our personal life. So for me, it’s that thing that if you don’t struggle with the change, if you don’t struggle with your politics, if it’s not difficult for you, maybe you’re not doing it right.

K: I really resonate a lot with what Adrienne said. Just to give context, I’m actually one of those people who don’t identify as an anarchist, but I’m still part of Abolisyon, and I also engage with The Dinner Party. And I really appreciate spaces like these because I don’t feel forced to have to identify as an anarchist. Although I do feel like I have anarchist leanings, I do feel like I resonate with anarchist values, but being in this space, I don’t feel like I’m forced to be an anarchist to engage with them. It’s a very welcoming space. And I feel like I learned so much from them.

Personally, I’ve never had any experience in mainstream political organizing spaces, even though I did graduate from the university, I don’t think any form of like politicization and radicalization came from that. For me, it came from being exposed to Twitter. Initially, my view of mainstream organizing came from Twitter, particularly Philippine Leftist Twitter, and I did always get the feeling and notion that to be a legitimate organizer, you had to join specific rallies, or you had to be part of a mass organization. And this was something that wasn’t really possible for me because I have multiple health conditions, I can’t even work at a regular corporate job because I get sick very often. So imagine joining a mass organization where there’s a lot of work involved, I thought that was out of the question for me. So luckily, I was able to find this space. When I realized how organizing works in this space, at first, I was a bit shocked, because it really wasn’t the same organizing that I saw on Twitter. But I really appreciate that because to me, organizing was work.

And when I first got to Abolisyon, I did volunteer for a project, but I was unable to follow through with it because I got sick. And because I was dealing with a lot of personal things. However, it wasn’t taken against me at all. What I like about organizing in Abolisyon is that they really take into account what happens to each person personally. So there’s no forcing, meaning that you can engage with whatever level you’re comfortable with. If you have to take a break, it’s really not a problem at all. And this was really so different from what I saw, from the feeling I got from mainstream political organizing spaces.

Honey: One of the things that the leftist spaces, organizers in general use against anarchists or anarchism to devalue our efforts is to say that we need to measure our productivity when it comes to organizing. That’s a thing that we’re very critical about in Abolisyon, we don’t want to replicate those dynamics. I’ve been part of the National Democratic Movement for quite some time, but I’m already into anarchism during that