

STOOP TALK



So I moved to Florida essentially with nothing to my name and a small amount of money each month made off a socialist magazine. Anarcho-communist magazine. Counterculture magazine, whatever you want to call it. Why Florida, especially when there's a strong current in places like the PNW? Especially when I already know people in the Seattle area? Maybe I'm an insane person but it seemed to me that there's a need for people like me in these spaces, and Florida is incredibly bleak. I'm talking poverty like I haven't seen since I was growing up in South Louisiana. There's essentially nothing here, what is here is run through the churches.

I live in a motel, the cheapest motel in this town. I pay by the week. I basically have no material possessions, sold them all — lost them all in the move. The single homeless shelter in this city is run via the churches, and it's always over capacity. Living in a motel means I'm on the stoop, and that's where people who are turned away from the shelter go. They post up on the motel stoop, unable to afford a room, needing somewhere safe to smoke a joe and avoid the police.

The other night, there was a woman, she was clearly fiending for a bag of that britney, her name could have been Britney. I'm chilling on the stoop, smoking the tiniest, littlest, the

skimpiest little slut of a blunt, the weed? came from that same stoop — roaches gathered and repackaged. Stoop weed from those trapping out the motel. I'm reading Gramsci, skimming the prison notebooks. She asks me for a hit of the blunt, I let her smoke, least I can do. We get to chatting a bit, small talk. I notice she's gotta be at least 4, maybe 5 months pregnant. Still fiending for the dog food. She's talking about how she ain't ate that whole day. I believe it. I've got half a pizza, the pizza? someone in my collective bought it for me. I gave her the pizza, only had a slice of it myself but I knew she needed it more. Again, back to the Gramsci, she leaves with the pizza, and there's just a little weed left. I look down at the parking lot, it's caked in filth, black and mild tips, 305 menthol packs, all types of plastic debris and let's keep it a buck, used needles and other shit. Kids live in this motel, got a single mom with 2 kids having to leave them in this motel so she can hit her shifts. Can you imagine trying to explain to that woman that she actually benefits from imperialism? That she's not working class because the job is at a Circle K and not in a factory? The things I've been told and read online are simply not the lived reality of the masses.

So I'm smoking this pathetic little stoop weed blunt trying to read Gramsci, trying to get a bigger picture in my head of how to make actual change happen, to be the revolutionary I set out to be. But Britney shattered something in me that night. What good is theory to a crack baby? What good is me reading theory when the poverty that surrounds me, the poverty I live in and was born in and am so familiar with seems to be an immovable object. The best I could offer her was just that little bit of mutual aid, that pizza, that hit of the blunt. I told her about my magazine, the website, I knew she wouldn't look it up. She's a base head, she's got other priorities. But even if she did, is there anything that I've ever said that could impact her? That could make a difference? I sat with that for a while before coming to the realization that no, nothing I've done, said, no internet clout is going to change her conditions.

One small collective and one single revolutionary showing up in the pits of Florida, a deep red part of Florida, with limited resources and nothing but a will? Feels like pissing in the wind. Feels like an intellectualization of my inability to actualize legitimate change. All the while, I'm living in the same poverty, the same motel, the same pit.

The next day, I spoke to another person who lives at the motel, came to find out Britney is a regular, she's been tricking at that motel for a while now. This is why I move the way I do, it's not an intellectual exercise, nor is it something to wait for. Every day without a revolution is another day of suffering for people like Britney. The majority of "the left", at least those I've interacted with online and offline, are highly disconnected from this poverty, these material conditions. I can't stand listening to talks about how there's either no working class in the USA at all, or how everyone here is a labor aristocrat, or how there's no revolutionary potential here, there's nothing to be done. These are all things that are said from a position of comfort. Did you know they've cut food stamps? I have a friend who makes 22k a year as a special needs teacher, 2 kids, she relies on food stamps, and those are gone now. Did you know they cut medicaid? Yeah her kids aren't going to have healthcare either. She's only 1 to 2 degrees removed from Britney.

Do you think this disconnect is caused by the wealth of those who act as spokespeople for a socialist program? Can someone who makes 70k a month relate to someone like Britney? Is your success as a revolutionary measured by your ability to make money on Patreon? Have we lost the plot entirely? Irregardless, there is work to be done, and it is so much work that I simply cannot give mental energy to those who have lost the optimism of their will. Those who have embraced a comfortable nihilism cannot be the face of revolution. The failures of the left to actualize change are to be placed on the left, on our people, it is our burden to bear, the attempts to shift the blame to those victimized by hyper capitalism, these attempts are falling on deaf ears.

"This pessimism is closely linked to the current situation in which our country finds itself; the situation explains it to a certain extent, but, of course, does not justify it. What difference would there be between us and the Socialist Party, between our will and the party's tradition, if we also knew how to work and were only actively optimistic in periods when the cows were plump, when the situation was favorable? What difference would there be between us if we were only actively optimistic when the working masses advanced of their own accord, because of an impulse they could not fight, and the proletarian parties could take up a prime position and grab hold of the reins of their own accord?"

—Antonio Gramsci, Against Pessimism