

The Brick

<deep inhale>

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Practice:

i.

Imagine a brick wall spanning your entire field of vision.

Imagine one brick removed from the wall.

What can you glimpse through that brick's absence? What do you see on the other side?

ii.

Imagine someone hands you their brick. Feel their palm touching yours. Concentrate on the weight of the brick you hold.

What will you do with it?

Will you throw it?

Will you continue to bear its weight?

The Brick

<deep inhale>

"Language is a circular shape around us. It has legs and sounds and blows and silence. Do you know this? It is a *brick pulling out another brick* and toppling down on top of itself only to be built back up again. Do you know this?"

<emphasis added>

- Sable Elyse Smith, FTP - Fear Touch Police

"She agreed emotional wounds had no structuring capacity: though sometimes she picked her pain up thinking it could provide a strut or brick, it melted immediately in the warmth of her grasp into dark, liquid rot."

- Hannah Black, *Tuesday or September or the End*

The brick is everywhere and nowhere. I learned this as a young punk, enamored with disruption, chafing against any kind of structure, and against all authority.

I have never thrown a brick— not at a cop, not through a window, not in any of the ways made immortal by radical lore. I have held one, felt its weight in my hands, felt its roughness against my palms and known its potential: a

potential taught to me by all the times I heard about bricks from others.

The brick looms large in the political imagination: the first brick thrown at the Stonewall riots,¹ a brick through a window, impenetrable brick walls that imprison us and divide us from our neighbors and loved ones. Once someone threw the first brick and it felt like the world changed. The possibilities shifted. A potentiality was activated. We heard about the first brick being thrown and believed that we, too, could do the throwing.

The mythology of the brick is that it initiates resistance. The brick exists at the inception of *something different*, shaping the conditions for what follows. The brick gives form and energy to the first moment of movements— it is the straw that breaks the camel's back, the initial crack in the breaking of the dam. It is imagining something into the future, something that this moment can shift. It is a fissure in the anticipated trajectory of our lives, a turn in a different direction.

One element in the architecture of our systems, a singular brick exists differently alone rather than mortared in formation. Considering the brick in

¹ O'Neill, Shane. "Who Threw The First Brick at Stonewall? Let's Argue About It." New York Times, May 31, 2019.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/31/us/first-brick-at-stonewall-lgbtq.html>

architecture recalls fortresses, carceral zones, structures meant to withstand fire and the test of time. In an era when words like “wall” and “border” deploy a particular violence, a wall of bricks is a specter, topped by razor wire and armed. Together, bricks form an impenetrable barrier. However, one brick alone regularly shatters the same.

The brick invites us to meditate on the singular versus the collective. Alone, a brick has mobility. Alone, a brick can divest. A brick alone is already transgressive and outside of its use as a part of a whole; however, a brick remains in relation to that whole, to a larger structure in which it serves as a single element. Imagine a single brick in relation to a wall of bricks. What I ask us to consider from the tension between them is the way that movements, actions, and experiences are all in relation to larger systems. This is not to argue for the infallibility of the systems; after all, a wall can be demolished. A wall has edges and a start and end point. A wall can crumble with time.

As I have conducted oral histories at the intersection of tattooing and the prison system, and being struck by moments in narrators’ stories that resisted and reshaped the conditions of their lives, I began to think of *bricks* as a conceptual embodiment of and visual metaphor for these moments and their effects outwards into the life preceding and beyond them. Here, a *brick* is at

once disruptive and formative, destructive and foundational. It ushers in an alternative, at a point where the systems that hold us are still intact and without requiring a total divestment from or remaking of our worlds all at once; instead, the brick is a point of origin.

I propose that bricks are sites of reorientation: places where change, a new possibility, a rerouting, can occur. Such moments may be illegible in that they are often small, deeply personal, and do not always materially transform a life or its conditions. What is significant about the brick moment is that it shifts the possible, “crack[ing] open the space of the sayable and the imaginable.”² The brick is not only in relation to present, past, and future simultaneously, but in relation with all systems that hold and constrain a person: a shift that is still in constellation with our worlds and the forces that limit them.

“The queer futurity I am describing is not an end but an opening or horizon. Queer utopia is a modality of critique that speaks to quotidian gestures as laden with potentiality. The queerness of queer futurity, like the blackness of a black radical tradition, is a relational and collective modality of endurance and support. The gesture of cradling the head of one’s lover, a lover one has betrayed, is therefore not an act of redemption that mitigates violence; it is instead a future being within the present that is both a utopian kernel and an anticipatory

² Introduction by Brenna Bhandar and Alberto Toscano to *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*, Ruth Wilson Gilmore. Verso, 2022.

illumination.”

-Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Futurity*

Far from being fruitless or futile, these shifts are critical to transforming worlds. They are a point of departure from the systems that hold us— systems that often feel impossible in their enormity and daunting in their totality. The work of the brick is the endeavoring to find “some of the contours of the new world being built in the shell of the old³,” as David Graeber writes. Honoring moments as bricks requires the releasing of a binary opposition between “free” or “unfree,” liberated versus subjugated, and honoring instead how change appears when movement is limited, without losing sight of utopian possibility. Though the brick may not transform these immediate worlds, it transforms the potential of them. Jose Esteban Muñoz names potentiality as a “*thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense*”⁴. The brick generates an otherwise⁵, and is the change that makes way for the “anticipatory illumination” of a future.

While it is generally understood that both large-scale revolution and small-scale acts of resistance are reactions to inciting conditions or

³ Graeber, David. *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004. P. 82

⁴ Muñoz, Jose Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Futurity*. NYU Press, 2009. P. 91

⁵ Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Duke University Press 2016, p.11

circumstances it is important to note the ways in which the openings for such actions are created. Here is where the brick exists. The brick is the sum of the set of circumstances that allow for redirection and a different outcome. The brick is not the action itself, but the rupture— the space that engenders the action. By noticing a distinction here, we do not deny the power of the individual to decide when and how to act, but instead see sites of possibility where we may not have seen them before. In recognizing that, we can begin to think of change that happens not only in spite of the mechanisms of oppression, but because of their slippage.

<laughter in voice> The Spectacle of the Brick

“The dance is over and seemingly gone, but it lives as an ephemeral happening that we remember, something that fuels anecdotes we tell one another.”

-Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Futurity*

What bears equal potential to the brick, if not more, is its reputation and rumor: the spectacle and believability of the brick. Through the debate over who threw the first brick⁶ inciting the Stonewall Riots, it's suggested there *may*

⁶ Tensley, Brandon,. “How the Memory of Stonewall Lives on In a Meme.” The Atlantic, July 1, 2019.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/07/who-threw-first-brick-stonewall-meme/592999/>

not have been a brick at all.

This suggestion does not dampen the power of the incitement. The identification of the brick after the fact prolongs and, in some cases, enhances its efficacy as an intervention and example of the possible. Trans sex worker lore proposes that the only brick present at Stonewall's queer uprising⁷ may have been one kept in Marsha P. Johnson's purse as a weapon, a self-protective measure among women engaging in sex work at the time. This version of the story speaks to the potency of the brick as a generative symbol: though neither visible nor put to use, the mere suggestion of a brick became entrenched in the lore of queer and trans liberation.

Further entrenching the symbolism of the brick in movement documentation is a recent report on the 2020 George Floyd uprising published by Unity & Struggle, a "nationwide anti-state communist collective." Titled *Big Brick Energy*⁸, the research details the findings of a year-long study of the uprising among five cities, comparing interviews with organizers and participants with media coverage and local law enforcement reports. The

⁷ Page, Morgan M. "It Doesn't Matter Who Threw the First Brick at Stonewall." *The Nation*, June 30, 2019.

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/trans-black-stonewall-rivera-storme/>

⁸ Ever, Lamont and Chino. *Big Brick Energy: A Multi-City Study of the 2020 George Floyd Rebellion*. Unity & Struggle, 2022.

research describes the significance of protest documentation circulating nationwide: “images of burning police cars gave courage to other protesters, as did the sacking of the third precinct in Minneapolis on May 28th.” Here, the representation of burning cars and precincts performed as a brick, invigorating the protests already in motion and initiating a feedback loop that sustained the movement. In keeping with the conception of the brick as in relationship with systems, the report details specific tactical findings and their lessons for future rebellions in addition to naming the brick as the “energy” that fuels uprisings.

Foucault describes the function of spectacle within the “mechanics” of penalty: “punishment is directed above all at others, at all the potentially guilty⁹.” The details, scenes, and economies of punishment “teach a lesson”- “each punishment should be a fable.”

If the spectacle of punishment is a lesson in state-appointed moral code, what, then, do we learn in witnessing a transgression of such? In contrast, gestures towards liberation are directed at all who are potentially free. The witnessing of these moments can be done through direct and literal presence, or through shared networks of repetition. One such example is the Orchi Farm or “ball barn,” an underground trans surgery center created and operated by two

⁹ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Pantheon Books, 1977. P. 108

trans women in the Pacific Northwest between 2004-2006. While the clinic served a small number of patients (performing only 14-16 orchiectomies in 2-3 years of operation) and was kept quiet out of necessity both during and after its tenure, word of its existence spread internationally through trans whisper networks:

“Willow and Ní Fhlannagáin went their separate ways, and largely kept quiet about the experience. Then something strange started to happen.

Ní Fhlannagáin's Irish friend Nóirín, who had been in Germany when the clinic was operating, told her they'd heard about it through a friend. Sybil Lamb described it in her essay about orchis, though she changed some of the details. The legend of the "ball barn", as some dubbed it, was spreading through the global trans community by word of mouth.”¹⁰

The smuggled rumor of the clinic here is a brick: by mere suggestion of its existence, it destabilizes the seemingly impervious walls that the medical industrial complex has built around itself. The idea that two trans women could

¹⁰ Dodds, Io. “Never Ask Permission: How Two Trans Women Ran an Underground Surgical Clinic in a Tractor Barn.” The Independent, July 30th, 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/trans-history-underground-surgical-clinic-b2114777.html>

perform life-saving surgery themselves at little cost to the people who needed it most begins to chip away at and ultimately disintegrate the mortar that cements the medical industry's control. That brick cannot be put back into place.

<pause> Bricked/Bricking

In technological parlance, a thing that is *bricked* is one that is beyond repair, damaged at its most basic point of operation. In *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*, Legacy Russell describes the “machinic anxiety” of the glitch as an indicator of “something having gone wrong.¹¹” Within the cyber logic of the digital and the binary, writes Russell, glitch is “a vehicle of refusal, a strategy of nonperformance.” Similarly to the brick, “The glitch creates a fissure within which new possibilities of being and becoming manifest.” Employed as a feminist tactic, glitch feminism expands the possibilities of gender and the body by establishing the “*in between*” as a necessary site of resistance to a binary construction of bodies.

“A glitch is an error. Glitches are difficult to name and nearly impossible to identify until that instant when they reveal themselves: an accident triggering some form of chaos.”

-Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*

¹¹ Russell, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*. Verso Books, 2020

Bricking as an action can refer to intentional and malicious hacking efforts that render their target non-functional, damaging both software and hardware to the point that they must be entirely replaced. The term and definition recalls “monkeywrenching¹²,” a term widely popularized by Edward Abbey’s 1975 novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, which follows a group of saboteurs committing acts of vandalism against bulldozers and trains in order to strike a blow against the government and corporate systems wreaking environmental destruction. Also known today by the alias “ecotage,” monkeywrenching is a tactic to— at times literally— throw a wrench in the gears of the apparatus¹³ that grinds us down, from small-scale work stoppage to the torching of construction equipment and SUV dealerships¹⁴.

The brick possesses a kinship with both glitch and monkeywrenching. It is the point beyond repair, beyond the anxiety of workings gone awry. Here we reach the end point of workings as they have been; though the order of things

¹² Abbey, Edward. *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 1975

¹³ Savio, Mario. Sit-in Address on the Steps of Sproul Hall, delivered 2 December 1964, The University of California at Berkeley.

"There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart that you can't take part! You can't even passively take part! And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus -- and you've got to make it stop! And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it -- that unless you're free the machine will be prevented from working at all!!"

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mariosaviosproullallsitin.htm>

¹⁴ Rosenbaum, Craig. *Burning Rage of A Dying Planet: Speaking for the Earth Liberation Front*. Lantern Books, 2019.

may appear to be restored, they cannot undo the possibilities that have arisen from the interruption. Whether through redirection by brick, or interruption by bricking, the wall has been revealed as fallible. What does it mean to observe the smooth workings of a machinery knowing that it was, at one point, ground to a halt by workers for whom its conditions were intolerable? Can that temporary intervention “bring new movement into static space¹⁵”? How can the residue of that bricking remain, and what of it refuses to be erased?

Ceramicist Brad Menninga speaks to the reaches of the brick in an oral history interview we conducted, expressing his frustrations with the mischaracterizations of 1999’s Seattle shutdown of the World Trade Organization summit.

“If you look at the WTO protests...it seemed like it was a whole bunch of single issue groups coming together in an ad hoc way to win something. It may have looked that way, but that’s really not how organizing happened. There were a lot of organizations that had more narrow focuses involved, but I think the analysis was fairly shared, a much more complete analysis was shared by the people there...It wasn’t like there wasn’t a unified movement there...the idea of it being ad hoc when there was a lot of organizing, a year of organizing leading up to it, and then a good year or more of organizing that came out of it, where we had environmentalists coming to Jobs With Justice meetings, we had anarchists coming to Jobs For Justice meetings, wanting

¹⁵ Russell, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*. Verso Books, 2020.

to work with unions. And those were new things. Some new energy.”

-Brad Menninga, oral history interview 7/2/2022

Here, Menninga names the brick of the WTO shutdown in relation to the structures of the organizing and political systems that shaped the event to begin with: the big business interests that continued to erode human rights, the coalition-building that began more than a year in advance of the protest itself, the previously agreed-upon tactics and support strategies going into the week’s events, and the reverberations of the win on organizing well beyond the protest’s conclusion. The spectacle of the protest, characterized by media representations of rioting and property destruction, interrupted the notion that the mechanics of the WTO summit— or any event of the kind— were untouchable. But Menninga reminds us to map the interlocking of cause and effect that surrounds the spectacle, to see this brick in relation to the wall.

This mapping exercise complicates the narrative of uprisings as spontaneous and isolated. While certainly oppressive conditions engender reactions and resistance, framing protest solely as ad hoc reaction invisibilizes individual and collective political knowledge and strategy. In the case of the WTO shutdown, we can understand the singular brick as an agile agent of possibility, as a site of attention, while the wall contains the building blocks— both oppressive and supportive— that enabled that liminal site. Gloria Anzaldúa

employs the term *Nepantla*, a Nahuatl word for “the space between two worlds,” to animate “a space where you are not this or that but that you are changing.”¹⁶ The temporality of the brick site corresponds still with the “worlds,” or as I argue, the systems, on either side of it while generating a different knowing.

The narrators in this project are all impacted by the prison industrial complex¹⁷. The PIC is a space where the brick and its relationship to the wall can be traced most visibly. We can map this in physical, architectural ways—the concrete walls that control a person's movements, and the systems that dictate a person's abilities while being “held”. The brick takes on particular potency in these spaces as resistance and agency can range from the small-scale: invisible and internal (Chance’s pursuit of learning), to the large-scale (Faith and TGI Justice’s¹⁸ involvement in legal action and advocacy¹⁹ to ensure trans rights for California detainees). These actions are always in conscious and unconscious negotiation with the potential effects: retaliation, punishment, liberation.

¹⁶ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

¹⁷ Critical Resistance: “What is the PIC? What is Abolition?”
<https://criticalresistance.org/mission-vision/not-so-common-language/>

¹⁸ TGI Justice Project

<http://www.tgijp.org>

¹⁹ TGI Justice Project- Legal Policy
<http://www.tgijp.org/legal--policy.html>

The oral history brick is specifically one that inhabits these contradictions, these relations with systems in all directions. Joe is arrested, but it disrupts his heroin use, an intervention he prayed for on his knees. Faith and her cohort of transfemme resisters bear the violence of a yard lockdown, but they get the bras that prison guards had denied them. Future iterations of the festival at Stonehenge are cancelled, but Bernie experiences ten days of cooperation between people of all kinds.

This is, most certainly, not to argue for a simplistic reframing of the prison industrial complex as constructive or for reform within the system to be sufficient. The brick is instead a vehicle to imagine the possible, to hold those systems in all that they touch at the same time as we imagine their rupture. The brick is a moment in which the spinning cogs of oppressive systems line up, if only for a second, with our desires and needs— a sliver of alignment which we are able to capitalize on and use as a springboard towards something different despite that system's opposition.

<stammers> Oral History and the Brick

Listening for bricks invites us to practice connection and witnessing beyond empathy. Rather than connecting around singular events or personal

emotional resonance, hearing a brick means seeing a person in all their relations and complexities. Oral history's stated aims²⁰ often include eliciting empathy from listeners, but the mechanics by which empathy is encouraged can run the risk of reinforcing stereotypes and strengthening existing biases and relations.

Saidiya Hartman writes powerfully on the “difficulty and slipperiness of empathy” in “Innocent Amusements: The Stage of Sufferance²¹,” describing empathy as “a projection of oneself into another to better understand the other.” Oftentimes, an invitation to feel empathy is an invocation to substitute one's own consciousness or experience and to transpose it onto that of another. In doing so, we feel for another only insofar as we can locate ourselves in their place, “fail[ing] to expand the space of the other but merely [placing] the self in its stead.” Additionally, we run the risk of producing what Jill Stauffer terms “ethical loneliness,” a “condition undergone by persons who have been unjustly treated and dehumanized by human beings and political structures, who emerge from that injustice only to find that the surrounding world will not listen to or cannot properly hear their testimony...on their own terms.”²³

²⁰ Oral History Association: Core Principles
<https://www.oralhistory.org/oha-core-principles/>

²¹ Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

²³ Stauffer, Jill. *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard*. Columbia University Press, 2018.

Oral history is uniquely suited to understanding the brick because of its scope as a method of documentation and relation. Moments of rupture and reorientation exist as part of a much larger whole of a life narrative, and the long-form interviewing format of oral history work invites a slow, attentive listening; the term “witnessing” is often used in the genre. Oral history places value on the more slippery aspects of memory²⁴— misremembering, personal bias, multiple recollections of the same event²⁵— because these disparities and specificities illustrate not just *what happened*, but the ways we make meaning of experience. Employing the framework of the brick holds us to a standard of integrity in how we engage with and deploy narrators’ stories by asking us to honor their turning points while giving equal weight to all parts of their retelling and thus, the meanings they make for themselves.

In *Curated Stories: The Uses and Misuses of Storytelling*, Sujatha Fernandes criticizes what she describes as the “contemporary boom of storytelling in legislative campaigns, cultural diplomacy, and advocacy,²⁶” and its effect of shifting storytelling towards personal narration. “Curated personal stories shift the focus away from structurally defined axes of oppression and

²⁴ Portelli, Alessandro. “What Makes Oral History Different?” 1979.

²⁵ Portelli, Alessandro. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. State University of New York Press; 1st edition, 1991.

²⁶ Fernandes, Sujatha. *Curated Stories: The Uses and Misuses of Storytelling*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

help to defuse the confrontational politics of social movements,” she writes, naming the “utilitarian logics” that guide neoliberal storytelling along “transaction and negotiation” rather than “building mass movements that [confront] power.”

Fernandes’ words give shape to the discomfort I’ve often felt at the ways stories meant to “humanize” leave out the sharply observed political context provided by narrators. In interviewing for this project, narrators drew clear, direct threads from the legislative, institutional, and cultural forces around them to the emotional and psychic impact of the prison system they personally experienced, describing policy changes, shifting legal landscapes, and predatory bail lending. Finding the language of bricks came as a result of hearing moments that were incredibly striking and felt worth upholding, and understanding that their impact was such because of their connection to the whole. The mechanics of that upholding, as modeled by audio media and oral history blueprints, often felt inadequate when they required an isolating of a section of audio or an editing for audience engagement, leaving the rest of the story untold.

Bernie's experience of freedom²⁷ cannot be honored in its totality

²⁷ Oral history interview with Bernie Lieving conducted by Tamara Santibañez, March 6, 2022.

without seeing that it includes illegal drug use, tattooing and other stigmatized pursuits, and comes at a peaceful gathering suppressed by police the following year in a notorious confrontation now referred to as the Battle of the Beanfield²⁸. Chance's pursuit of education is not purely for the love of knowledge, but specifically as a way to resist the isolation perpetuated by the prison system: the “extremely insular world by design²⁹” that he names. Faith’s organizing of a direct action³⁰ is situated within her deep and ongoing commitment to trans liberation and in relationship with Miss Major and the TGI Justice Project’s free world organizing. Narrators explicitly name these connections, and to sever them— naming the brick without seeing the wall— erases the importance of their experiences and characterizations.

I propose the brick and its wall as a framework through which to preserve individual narrators’ personal political knowledge and retelling. In this project, I have chosen to include the short audio clips I have identified as “bricks” alongside ethnopoetic transcriptions that are annotated with timestamped excerpts giving additional context from elsewhere in the full interview. In doing so, I hoped to construct the "wall" around the "brick," and to

²⁸ Brash, Rose with Mark Hodkinson. “That’s Me in the Picture: Rose Brash, 20, is led away by police at the Battle of the Beanfield, June 1985.” *The Guardian*, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jan/15/battle-of-the-beanfield-stonehenge-1985-rose-brash-photograph>

²⁹ Oral history interview with Chance G, conducted by Tamara Santibañez, February 2, 2022.

³⁰ Oral history interview with Faith Phillips conducted by Tamara Santibañez, November 20, 2021

provide structure to the knowledge and experience of the narrator without giving away their entire interview. Oral historians often grapple with the ethics of visibility and the consequences of providing open access to the stories of already vulnerable narrators. The timestamps are not always linked in order, which serves to disrupt the linearity of time and information while still elucidating the analysis provided by the narrator. Here, my intent is to consciously protect the narrator's "full story," while insisting that their political knowledge is necessary to understanding these small bricks.

<inhales> "A World Outside of This"

"So here we are in the weather, here in the singularity. Here there is disaster and possibility."
-Christina Sharpe, *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being*

The brick is a moment, a happening, a realization that reorients us within the web of the systems that hold us. Christina Sharpe writes in *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* "...I mean wake work to be a mode of *inhabiting and rupturing* this episteme with our known lived and un/imaginable lives [emphasis mine]³¹." In a brick, the systems by which we are held remain at the edges, still holding, but not containing. History is contained there, as is structure, both

³¹ Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press, 2016. p.18

superstructure and infrastructure. As in Sharpe's characterization of present as always in relation to past, our freedom, our alternative— our resistance— is always in relation to the conditions we desire to transcend. The brick is not a breaking free, necessarily, nor a departure that asks for total divestment from the pervasive structural forces that have infiltrated the furthest corners of our lives. To ask for such a divestment asks us to disentangle ourselves from a web of which we are not the weavers; to step into a world that does not exist— how, then, do we find reprieve while still held? In the same way that a single brick removed from an expanse of brick wall provides a view beyond, the brick in a life history animates the already happened and the yet to come, the conditions and the limitations as well as the possible.

In listening for the bricks, in attending to their presence when we encounter them, we are able to better situate ourselves in relationship with the things we oppose and not resign ourselves to being bound by them. Instead, we are able to look for opportunity to resist and to escape in new forms and to hold the effects of those opportunities after they are no longer visible. The brick and the potential created by it are a site from which to expand the spectrum of challenges to power, from the microcosmic personal refusal to the initiation of global movements. I invite a close, slow listening to the bricks in this series, and an attention to what that listening generates. What new sense of the possible

can we take from these examples, and what example can they set? How can the shape and space of the brick initiate new shapes and spaces of imagining resistance?

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Bernie Lieving <very freeing>

I I got that tattoo at— at— at Stonehenge

<stammers>

some—
somewhere between like the,

the

couple days before, couple— couple days after
Summer Solstice,
1984.

And it was a trip, man. I mean—
there

that— *that*

<pause>

that two week, ten day to two week period,

I mean, <stammers> at Stonehenge with—

Hell's Angels

and punks

and

and - and

rockers

um, it—

and there were black *flags* flying,

and— you know,

there was *vegan* food, and people were—

doing *drugs*, and—

sort of— ten day period of
of

mutual aid and—

e— even though there were so many different,
it wasn't any violence. I mean

it was like Hell's Angels

and
Rastafarians

and punks

and all these people hanging out together and—
and

taking *care* of themselves
and each other and not having

conflict.

It felt very revolutionary.

Uh, and— and very *freeing*.

Carlos Truan <just blossomed>

I got out
immediate — first thing I did was meet with a sponsor. And like, <*almost laughing*>

start working the steps

all over

You know, I
I went to this meeting

and

It was right by where I was living, everything was just right there.

It wasn't an official — the, uh — Lambda meeting

But it was like — it was

all

It was all gay.

Men,

You know?

They were all older,
They all had like real jobs It's like

the upper echelon of

<*chuckles*> of — AA, you know what I mean?

I didn't really *fit in*
but I was like
very welcome
you know what I mean? Like

Nobody else there had tattoos.

Everyone was like, over fifty.

And there I was,
fresh out of

<laughter in voice>
fresh out of prison

You know, I still had this look on my face

Trying to be hard, or whatever, you know what I mean, So you don't get
taken advantage of or whatever

and *<deep inhale>*

And they just welcomed me with like open arms you know and I became like It became my
home group, you know?

I was veryvery close with those people and I

I ended up —

stopped working with the first sponsor
And got a sponsor there

And

And just blossomed.

Chance G <take your mind outside>

By the time I got to *prison*...

Prison in a lot of ways is a lot chillier
than jail

And so—
after a little while

there

I started

just *studying*.

And I got really into— to *reading*,
I was reading like a lot of like *magazines*
and newspapers
and

books

and uh—

I just like
that really helped me

to like

contextualize my, like life experience

and give me some grounding to like—

<pause>

to like understand like—

Okay I've made choices,

people around me made choices—
everyone here made choices

but also there's like a much larger like
context

here

that was really liberating
to like learn and understand.

And then also just like—
through reading and stuff like this
just like access with—

um
a world outside of this like
extremely

insular

world

by design.

So I was like yeah.
It's like you can take your mind

outside of— of that place

So I really got into— to education
And I ended up doing some
correspondence
courses
through the mail
and um

Yeah, I stuck with that when I got out.
Went to college when I got out.

Faith Phillips <we got bras though>

Yeah, they didn't wanna give us bras.

The— their reason was like well—

There's— I don't see anything but *men* here.
And I said okay bet.

And so I got all the girls together and I was like
 bitch—

We should just *streak*!
You know what I'm saying? Like—

do your normal routine.

Go hit them *pull up bars, girl*
Do your lil laps on the track, do all that stuff,

no shirt.
No *nothin*.

And let's see what happens.

They put the fuckin' *yard* down!
They hit the *alarm*!

<inhales>

There was all these women running around here with
just titties just *free*,

you know.

And they put the fuckin' yard down.

We got bras though.

Joe Ezekiel <what happened to me?>

What happened to me?

You know what I mean? like what *happened*?

Like I've always been so sovereign— you know now I'm—

My life is dictated by a *drug dealer*.

You know, like, I I was like a, such a,

free person

And now, like I'm—

You know, I just I was like man this is *crazy* and I just remember crying

like whatever powers that be,

you know?

I don't have the strength to get

out of this.

And, uh,

the next day I was arrested.

You know I was facing a life sentence at first. So—
and then I'm
<laughing> you know,

kicking dope in the county jail <continues laughing> like <inhales>

I don't think I'm ever gonna get out of a county jail for as long as I live.

It was
It was very
Um <inhale> you know.

But I had a big spiritual moment there, you know it was like I—

I've always had a very—
good connection to
whatever the powers that be are

And I remember getting on my hand and knees
and being like

Father save your servant

and

make it so fucking bad that I lose the taste for this shit.

And

It was funny, years later I was watching a movie and that's the first line of an exorcism.

CARLOS ————— JUST BLOSSOMED

LISTEN PAUSE

What do you know of bricks?

ONE TWO THREE FOUR FIFTH ESSAY HOME ABOUT

JOE ————— WHAT HAPPENED TO ME

What do you know of bricks?

ONE TWO THREE FOUR FIFTH ESSAY HOME ABOUT

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