

Anarchist library  
Anti-Copyright



## Addendum to Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto

Alyson Escalante

November 2015

It's been a few months since I first wrote and attempted to distribute *Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto*. In that time, the reactions to this piece have been diverse and divisive. While there have certainly been some who have praised it as useful, there has been some very pointed (and often very important) criticisms of the piece. It is in light of this criticism that I am writing this addendum. My piece lacked a few important things, namely: context, an explicit address of race, and explicit articulation of gender as a colonial product, and perhaps a clarification as to the nature of the piece itself. I hope to add those here.

First, it would be deceptive to pretend that I am unaware of the amount of critiques which also have called my character, social location, and motivations into account. Let me address these. I am writing from an academic context, I study trans theory in an academic context, I am planning and aiming for a career in the academy. I understand the academy is a massively corrupt and oppressive institution and I understand its products are imperfect. I think we need to walk a fine line of realizing these products have

Alyson Escalante

Addendum to Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto

November 2015

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/  
1YeYm5TuNQ5WWhHquZu7iBAr4P87teHqlzRRzkYFf78s/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YeYm5TuNQ5WWhHquZu7iBAr4P87teHqlzRRzkYFf78s/edit)

[en.anarchistlibraries.net](http://en.anarchistlibraries.net)

value, and that they are never the end all or authoritative voice in any context.

I have also been accused of anti-blackness for various reasons only slightly related to the anti-manifesto, but this is being used to make a tacit critique of the piece. Let me acknowledge that as a non-black person of color, I am inherently bound in anti-blackness to the degree to which my social location is dependent on its structural instantiation, and my ideology is informed by that location. I will not contest how black folks within the online community I was part of have perceived me, it is not my place to say whether I am anti-black or not. I will say I try hard to interrogate my own anti-blackness and step down when a failure of that interrogation causes me to place myself into contexts and conversations I ought not be. It is ultimately non up to me, or any other non-black person to decide what this means. That is all I have to say on that.

This leads me to the first important addition to the text: context. I wrote the anti-manifesto out of desperation. Like many trans women before me (Susan Stryker has articulated this phenomena beautifully), I turned to theory to try to explain and contextualize my lived experience. Gender Nihilism was conceived in community, through discussion between myself and a group of comrades primarily composed of other trans women of color. It was an attempt to articulate how gender had affected us all and to expose the violence of that. What we discussed was largely centered on a few thinkers, but one who was very important to us but did not make it into my piece was Maria Lugones. Through her work on the coloniality of gender, we had tried to articulate how the gender we refer to in gender nihilism is not a term inclusive of indigenous and non-western genders, but is a specific regime on knowledge imposed onto bodies through colonization. For the sake of time, I did not include this in the Anti-Manifesto; for those of us having this conversation this assumption and framing of decolonial critique of gender was implicit.

This was a mistake, not everyone had this context. Without this context it quite understandably appeared that my critique of gender was not of a specific colonial phenomena but rather of all the diverse, and multiplicitous phenomena which that term could possible call to mind. This was wrong of me to exclude, this was a mistake and this is why this addendum is necessary. If you want to understand this context I highly suggest you engage the work of Maria Lugones, especially Towards a Decolonial Feminism. I no longer blog, but the work is easy and I trust that if you are interested you can explore it yourself. I also implore you to listen to the voices of the other folks involved in Gender Nihilism. I think its telling that I am presented as the voice of the gender nihilism, when two of the other largest contributors are indigenous trans women. Their voices matter in this debate more than mine, yet people have completely and consistently centered my voice and perspective. This is harmful.

Finally, this piece was not meant to tell anyone how to think about gender, it was the result of a collective analysis by a specific group of people which came to conclusions that allowed us to understand our lives. If you don't like that understanding, feel free to discard it. I do not ask or demand you agree with me. I am happy that discussion and discourse towards these ideas continues. I made mistakes with omitting crucial contextual framings which caused my piece to be at least tacitly complicit in whiteness and coloniality. I am not back to defend myself, I simply wanted to point out where you could pursue a way forward in thinking through these ideas to avoid that mistake. Keep resisting, keep struggling, keep discussing, keep surviving. I hope I have not made that more difficult, and I sincerely hope I may have at least somewhat helped.