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# A New Kind of English: Cultural Variance, Citizenship and DiY Politics amongst the Exodus Collective in England

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## Abstract

This article addresses the construction of citizenship in contemporary England as a boundary between 'proper' and 'improper' English behavior. Through an ethnographic study of the Exodus Collective, a Rastafarian-anarchist community that was located north of London, I show that constructing citizenship also constructs criminality by indicating inclusion or exclusion in England. The Exodus Collective's alternative lifestyle and radical politics transgressed on mainstream British values, and their cultural variance marked the group as outsiders in English society. I argue that the classic model of English citizenship proposed by T.H.Marshall is too linear and static, and fails to capture the reality of a present-day English citizenship that is neither fixed nor secure. I propose that the cultural features of citizenship have become increasingly important to the social construction of deviance.

Over the course of the 1990s, a new breed of political expression commonly referred to as "DiY (Do-It-Yourself Politics)" surfaced across the United Kingdom. The precise character of this political ideology is difficult to pigeonhole. The participants are drawn from a wide array of alternative lifestyles, but it is generally acknowledged that DiY Politics was forged by increased efforts to regulate and discipline youth cultures (Jordan and Lent, 1999; McKay, 1996, 1998). The large gatherings of young people dancing to electronic music at raves, the "New Age Travellers" living a nomadic gypsy lifestyle on and off U.K. roads, the hunt saboteurs out to frustrate the hunt clubs' sport, the protestors camped out in the forests and around construction sites in order to delay the building of roads — all these disparate groups found themselves subject to the draconian curtailing of civil liberties outlined in the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJA). People now found themselves, wittingly or unwittingly, in violation of extensive laws on trespass, noise and assembly. With so much expression now criminalized, DiY politics flowered as a critique of the institutionalized power

structures. Freedom is at the heart of the concept of DiY politics (Malyon 1998; McKay 1996; Stone 1994): the freedom to pick and choose amongst alternative visions of society and the methods necessary to arrive at a more just world when novel approaches to life are marginalized by the State.

But what is the threat such groups pose to the State? I contend that the issue is one of tolerance (or further, acceptance) of unconventional approaches to living in England that are at odds with mainstream concepts of “proper” English behavior. I argue in this article that underlying the gauntlet thrown down by laws such as the CJA is a debate over citizenship. The social movements evolving in England are encouraging a new kind of citizen, one who embraces cultural diversity and sees a variety of ways in which to practice citizenship as opposed to the more traditional view of a British citizen as someone who behaves “properly.”

The author wishes to gratefully acknowledge the invaluable assistance and suggestions of Gerald Platt in the preparation of this article, as well as the encouragement of Dan Clawson, Randall Stokes and Robert Zussman. Respect is due overall to the members of the Exodus Collective who allowed me to observe their world. Direct correspondence to Lee Robert Blackstone, Department of Sociology and Criminology, SUNY at Old Westbury, P.O. Box 210, Old Westbury, NY 11568-0210. E-mail: BlackstoneL@oldwestbury.edu.

This article demonstrates, via ethnography of the Exodus Collective, how a cultural component of citizenship has become a measure of inclusion or exclusion in a society. The Exodus Collective, a mixed-race community of Rastafarian anarchists, existed on the fringes of English society from the early 1990s until 2000. The group established a community in Luton, a city approximately 30 miles north of London, and several of the distinguishing features of Exodus were set in opposition to values and forms of activities privileged as “correctly” English in character. Exodus’ religious orientation — Rastafarianism — served as a potent spiritual and philosophical boundary between the Collective’s members and mainstream

within the group splintered. Rather than compromise their founding cultural principles, the Exodus Collective ceased to exist.

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oppressed people, who had now returned to haunt England. Exodus, though, was an alternative place for the disenfranchised, and the “respectocracy” at Exodus was meant to breed acceptance of cultural differences. Guy confirmed Bigs’ assessment of the Collective: “We’re multicultural. Most of the people at parties — the Asians, the Blacks, the Whites, the Italians — they’re all English... It really mashes down that black and white divide; we are a new English.” The “new kind of English” thus referred to a new tolerance and understanding that is the opposite of the British homogeneity that emphasized the white, Anglican ideal. The theme of inclusivity one finds in DiY culture and in anarchist thought is embodied in this notion of a “new English,” a celebration of an amalgamation of diverse people who are all “English.”

My case study calls attention to the cultural features of citizenship that also may serve to define deviance. The ethnography presented here provides some insight into the difficulties of claiming rights of citizenship, when those very claims come from outsiders in search of tolerance. DiY social movements, by acting outside recognized channels of protest, threaten power manifested at both the governmental level and power that is diffused more abstractly throughout the institutions of English civil society. The Exodus Collective served to illustrate one of the most novel aspects of DiY culture as a new approach to the political field in England: how marginalized alternative groups articulate and renegotiate our understanding of power in the civic realm while practicing unconventional lifestyles as a form of citizenship.

Despite a decade of activity, the Exodus Collective disintegrated because some members came to believe that money could be generated from Exodus projects such as raves and the Long Meadow Farm. The voluntarism the group practiced and the spiritually motivated “no-profit zone” ethos of the Collective collapsed (SQUALL WebArticle). In the end, Exodus was torn apart by the lure of Babylon England. The community experienced internal conflict over how far they should engage English society, and the consensus

Britain. Exodus’ liberal use of marijuana was viewed as a moral affront by those in authority. The group’s musical preferences and their involvement in organizing raves and festivals often brought the Collective into contact with the law.

Exodus also engaged in debates over land ownership as the community moved into derelict buildings, taking possession and revitalizing them as their own, and further marking the Collective as criminal outsiders. These were cultural practices of the community’s life perceived as alien to “proper” English citizens. Even the group’s particular mode of political organization, a “respectocracy” derived from Anarchist ideology, marginalized Exodus members as renegades. The Exodus Collective was on the cutting edge of the DiY movement up until their dissolution; rifts within the group concerning Exodus’ guiding cultural and political principles contributed to the community’s downfall.

The Exodus Collective of Luton will thus serve as a prime example in exploring the contested nature of defining the boundaries of citizenship in contemporary England. My fieldwork observations and in-depth interviews offer the opportunity to expand our understanding of citizenship studies in a new light. This study builds a bridge between the citizenship canon and deviance literature. The question of inclusion and exclusion in a society has implications for the construction of deviance; at stake is who will be defined a “proper” citizen. The specific cultural practices of Exodus were essential for the community’s bid for tolerance on its own terms, even as they simultaneously marked the group as “outsiders.” I will show that the Exodus Collective would never be fully welcomed into the fold of English society due to practices and beliefs that transgressed the boundaries of acceptable behavior, especially as these were demonized in the CJA.

## Citizenship, Social Cohesion and Politics

According to T.H. Marshall's influential 1949 essay "Citizenship and Social Class," English society has reached a stage where rights of equality are integral to being considered a citizen. Marshall views citizens as "full members" of the society, and citizenship serves as a bond uniting all people in nationhood. Marshall posited that our idea of English citizenship has a lineage comprised of civil, political and social components. The civil aspect of citizenship derives from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when protections for citizens such as the rule of law and the "right to work" were established as a basic economic right. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an expansion of rights in the political realm, granting freedoms to segments of the population such as English peasants, who had been previously denied such rights. Political power, however, remained a privilege reserved for a successful economic class. The final stage of citizenship, according to Marshall, involved the "social rights" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the ability to claim political rights of equality in English society became part and parcel of being considered a citizen. Ideally, everyone can claim from the State welfare, security, and education, as it is the State's responsibility to reduce class inequalities. (Marshall 1964) Due to its linearity, I take issue with Marshall's model of citizenship, and I argue that there is no guarantee or inevitable progression towards a greater inclusion of different peoples and their lifestyles in a society. Certainly, not every instance of cultural variance is declared deviant; many people come to England and assimilate into the wider culture. DiY groups, however, test the limits of acceptable behavior, so that even those individuals who are born and bred English find that their civil liberties are curtailed. In contrast to Marshall, I argue that people may need to win, secure and defend their claims to citizenship. I believe that some individuals and groups have no desire to declare their citizenship; or they may be conflicted as to its importance, and prefer to provide for themselves what the State might otherwise provide. In contempo-

their music, their mix of anarchist and Rastafarian beliefs, their marijuana use and their association with DiY culture. The Exodus Collective was but one reminder that the very notion of a common culture within England is debatable. The group's cultural practices undermined cherished English values. According to Jurgen Habermas, the future of European citizenship cannot be based in an identity derived from common cultural and ethnic elements (Habermas 1992). Habermas' insight thus goes beyond T.H. Marshall's formulation of citizenship, and he further indicates that citizenship in Europe may become defined by agentic citizens who insist that their rights be respected.

Exodus members themselves expressed a mixture of pride and ambivalence in English identity. As Guy explained, beneficial ties existed between the Exodus Collective and other people in Luton:

We're all born and bred in Luton... We've all got mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers in this town. And if I was in America, it would be very easy to demonize me; I wouldn't have roots... The hardcore have to be Lutonians to do this. Otherwise we'd have been run out of town; but it's much harder, when you've got history.

The Exodus community attempted to carve out a space in England for themselves in order to find collective solutions to the problems they experienced as marginalized people. Exodus provided alternative housing options for its members, support for Collective participants who were addicted to harder drugs than marijuana, and a welcoming environment for people of different races. The Exodus Collective thus sought to create community social welfare services in the wake of the dismantled social rights that accompanied the Thatcher era.

Biggs, a member of the Exodus Collective, characterized those participating in Exodus as "a new kind of English." He described England's colonial policies as creating "a Frankenstein monster" out of



cash nexus. The affective ties of the Rasta's One Love culture are meant to bring people together in mutual support, but in doing so transgress upon the English social order. Religion and politics were interwoven at the Exodus Community; the Collective's anticapitalist beliefs were reinforced by both Rastafarianism and anarchism. Exodus was doing more than just critiquing the state because the Collective was actively working against the capitalist system and the welfare state. The group's activism was embodied in their raves, their social organization of "respectocracy," and their radical social planning. To a majority of those belonging to mainstream England, the Exodus Collective members were hardly proper citizens but threatening outsiders; they were the "enemy within." Exodus tested the limits of tolerance by desiring to have their alternative lifestyle respected while simultaneously seeking to turn away from an England they viewed as corrupt.

## Conclusion

Citizenship in contemporary England is a contested status, made increasingly controversial by cultural factors. I have argued that the development of citizenship must be fluid enough to include cultural differences, and that this is vitally important in an England that is growing more heterogeneous. My ethnographic study of the Exodus Collective illustrates that people may seek tolerance for alternative lifestyle and political viewpoints, but that distinctions are still made between "proper" and "improper" English behavior. Not all cultural differences are deviant, but citizenship serves as a boundary device that distinguishes acceptance from transgression. Such judgments are often due to perceived oppositional cultural elements of subaltern groups that appear to threaten the status quo.

I have indicated the numerous ways by which Exodus Collective members were considered outsiders in English society. The community was considered to be deviant due to their thieving of land,

rary England, it is now the case that culture must be considered as an important feature of legal status. I build upon and expand Marshall's treatment of citizenship by approaching English citizenship with this more fluid formulation.

Renato Rosaldo's writing on cultural citizenship reinforces my claim that culture must be treated as an essential element of citizenship, as he urges us to consider the role that culture plays in the construction of and struggle for citizenship. Rosaldo (1997) notes that the very idea of citizenship is based on the premise that all individuals are equal before the law, but the paradox is that throughout history immigrants and even people who have resided in a country for generations have been treated as outsiders and second-class citizens. Yet while Rosaldo describes cultural citizenship in light of the Chicano/Mexicano experience in America, the term itself may be applied with broader currency to other people struggling in other social contexts. The idea of cultural elements as criteria for citizenship entails a community living out its life in its own unique fashion and attempting to carve out its own socio-cultural space in which to thrive.

I propose that if claims to citizenship or a particular lifestyle are not recognized, peoples' efforts to have their voices and/or actions legitimized by the State may be treated as deviant and subject to coercive State controls. Deviance is, after all, a social construction that serves to differentiate "improper" and "proper" behavior. Howard Becker's classic work *Outsiders* (1963) noted that the enforcement of rules bearing on values relates to moral entrepreneurs who wish to see their own values exalted over competing ones. Moral entrepreneurs are those with the power and authority to enforce, and subject others to, their social agenda. While not all cultural heterogeneity is treated as transgressive, citizenship as a social status defines the accepted limits of conduct. I contend that in the legal and political realms, activities considered "deviant" or unlawful may thus become evidence of "anti-citizen" behavior. The

manner by which a State celebrates or punishes diversity is thus indicative of the State's position on individualism and freedom.

Cultural practices have become politicized as people demand expanded rights and entitlements in society. (Rosaldo 1997) Even though Marshall was writing after the Second World War, he did not adequately account for the complexities of a post-war Britain that was becoming less homogeneous. Peter Childs and Mike Storry have documented a number of the social changes underway in Britain after World War II. The island now boasts considerable immigrant populations from around the globe, and such racial and ethnic diversity has brought a wider assortment of religious faiths to coexist with the established Church of England. A more heterogeneous population raises a historical legacy of anti-immigrant sentiment in England — not so much directed at European immigrants, as it is against the Irish and immigrants of color (Childs and Storry 1997). Kathleen Paul noted in her book *Whitewashing Britain* that new communities challenged traditional notions of "Britishness," thereby making it harder for elites to maintain the illusion of "...a single and singular British imperial national identity." (1997: p. xiv)

One of the hallmarks that distinguished a uniform British identity was its whiteness. Despite the far-flung colonialism of the British Empire, the attitude in the homeland towards immigrating colonial subjects was one of intolerance. When Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher formalized her government's stance on citizenship in the 1981 British Nationality Act, she declared that the public feared "that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture." The fear of the "other," often categorized in England as "the enemy within," has proven fertile ground for cultural scholars who explore the topic of race and (national) identity. For example, both Paul Gilroy (1991) and Dick Hebdige (1979) describe West Indian youth in Britain as both creating communities around — and critiquing white capitalism through — Rastafarianism. The Rasta lifestyle, with its spiritual emphasis on transcen-

English citizen as a consumer of services vs. the State's responsibility to care for its citizens. Cutting back on welfare services exacerbated the differences between the wealthy and the poor, and increased the need for welfare on the part of the homeless, the unemployed and others who found their own economic options greatly reduced (Evans and Morgan 1993). For those marginalized by the system, such as the Exodus Collective, the necessity of finding creative solutions to communal needs was a matter of survival.

By blending Rastafarian beliefs with anarchist practice, the Exodus Collective was able to create its own brand of radical social planning. The group was leery of State power — even though many Exodus members relied on dole money to live — and an essential part of the Exodus project was fashioning an alternative to being reliant on the government. The purpose of the Ark Community Center was meant to increase the Collective's autonomy, including reducing dependency on the welfare state. Guy provided a glimpse of the potential of Exodus' approach to DiY culture for social revolution:

...[I]f we wanted to, we could subsidize all the old people who are fucking cold in the winter!... We could take back that whole street over there. We go knock on everybody's door, and we ask, do you own your own house? Yes, we do. You own yours? No. Right. So you need. Nobody pays no more mortgage, nobody's paying no more rent, nobody's paying nothing. We need an electrician, we need a fucking rug-sweeper, we need a carpenter — all of that on your own street. So really, where do the goals stop? I mean, you could take the streets back out in the country one by one; you can take the communities back one by one.

Guy's hopes for such a revolution may be more fanciful than practical, but what matters is that the envisioning of such self-sufficient, caring communities is deviant in a society ruled by the

cial services independent of the government. A key goal of the Collective was to remake an abandoned warehouse in Luton into the Ark Community Center, a place where community grocers, shops and music recording could generate revenue to support DiY endeavors. Exodus gained the rights to the warehouse after a long process of certification and applying for government grants. The group's social solutions were meant to undermine the welfare state, but in order to further its own agenda, Exodus attempted to insinuate itself into the good graces of state institutions at the same time it was attempting to leave Babylon England behind.

## DiY Welfare

T.H. Marshall wrote on citizenship at a time when welfare appeared to be a "secured right" for citizens, ensured by collective national sacrifices endured during WWII. Decades later, the social changes wrought in Britain by massive recession, unemployment and divorce contributed to the changing character of the welfare state (Langan 1998). Who was to be deserving of State aid? Would Marshall's social citizenship prevail? From the right of the political spectrum, welfare was attacked as creating a "culture of dependency." Not only was accepting welfare thought to be stigmatic, but it was also argued that welfare acted to socially exclude people rather than include them in society. Conservatives stressed social obligation, instead: "This *reverses* the original premise of social citizenship, and is based on the view that those dependent on the state must be compelled to give something back to society." (Morris 1998:221) So it was that citizenship was reconceived in England during the 1980s. During Margaret Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister, numerous social services were privatized. No longer was it a social right to claim access to services; rather, under Thatcherism, citizenship was something to be *earned*. A continued emphasis on the "bottom line" created a new tension in England, between the

dence through the fall of Babylon/capitalism, reggae music, colorful clothing and marijuana use, stood in stark contrast to the straight, white Britain that did not grant black immigrants full citizenship. In treating citizenship as a contested status within England, I am arguing that the different groups and subcultures in the United Kingdom have conflicting notions of what it means to be English and conflicting notions of their own place in the nation: both between groups and within groups. Max Weber was keenly aware that the business of nation-work privileged particular cultural values, but that the special character of a nation was to bind people together in a shared "community of sentiment" and perceived "common destinies." (Sennett 1981; Weber, in Gerth and Mills 1958) A national identity provides for a unified societal front; it is a narrative that represents the nation to itself. In contrast, my work finds that rather than a monolithic community of sentiment, the contemporary reality is one of communities of sentiment.

Accounting for the cultural diversity of citizenship broaches a topic that is essential to postmodernist analysis. Whether it is a question of a more equitable redistribution of resources, or tolerance and acceptance for members of a multicultural society, or both, what happens when those on the margins seek more recognition from the center?

## Methodological Orientation of the Research Project

My first exposure to matters surrounding the Criminal Justice Act and the clash of cultures it precipitated occurred through a compilation of modern protest music entitled *The Disagreement of the People* (Cooking Vinyl CD088, 1995). The liner notes for that pivotal CD contained a lengthy list of civil liberties endangered by the CJA 1994. My interest in the subject was piqued by this music; and for the five-year period of 1995 to 2000, I compiled a mas-

sive amount of material on the Criminal Justice Act and resistance to the legislation. My resources were not solely academic. In addition to books and newspaper and magazine articles from the U.K., I contacted numerous individuals and groups overseas who were actively engaged in or observers of DiY culture and citizenship issues. Among my initial contacts were the civil rights group Liberty; the written Constitution advocates Charter 88; Susan Alexander of the Friends, Families & Travellers Support Group; and Alan Dearling, author of two books on New Age Travellers. I then journeyed to England in 2000 to conduct an ethnographic and interview study of DiY groups, and to visit the Exodus Collective. In the case of Exodus, Glenn Jenkins was an obvious point of contact as he had the visible role of elected spokesperson for the Collective. Jenkins was the person most likely to be interviewed by British news organizations, and he was also a mediator for the Collective's dealings with the surrounding communities, the police and government agencies. Other key interviewees could be found in Jenkins' inner circle; and I conferred informally with these community members in their apartments and as they worked on projects around Exodus. All of the interviews were in addition to my field notes, which included extensive observations of practices and public pronouncements of ideological statements. I would record these observations in notebooks, and I often recorded interviews as well.

Given the highly differentiated materials I had gathered on DiY in England, I knew that my investigative project should be rooted in sociology but also open to interdisciplinary inquiry. My study was to be grounded in the cultural terrain in order to explore the social construction of citizenship and deviance. I found that the emerging methodological approach called "multisited ethnography," as described by George Marcus, matched the needs of my research. Multisited ethnography allows the social scientist to be both creative and responsive while examining cultural phenomena; the method does not treat culture solely as a product of localized vignettes, but also in a more far-reaching global/spatial terrain. (Mar-

of the unused hospice for community housing was a direct affront to the whole system of private property.

The Exodus Collective also found a deep connection with Peter Kropotkin's description of the development of human nature as "...a continual evolution such as we see in Nature." (Shatz 1972:xix) In anarchist terms, human nature should be spontaneous and creative; but at Exodus, human action also had to be imbued with the right spiritual intentions. Exodus was meant as an anti-Babylon haven and a place for the righteous Rasta. Jenkins' analysis of Exodus' deeds reflects this particular meeting of Rastafarianism and anarchism:

...[L]ife is like a field... If we plant bad seed as a society, and intend to profit off others, then in that soil, which is life — you get bad fruit, right? It's made me realize that what we did is planted a seed, 'cause the intention was not profiting from each other... [W]hen we planted this seed, this started to fucking grow, man, around us. And outside factors started to move and shift sands, like it was opening up a path for us... This is natural, this is about acting like a plant does, in harmony with the rest of the planet, freely without opposition.

Rather than head down a path of violent tactics that some social anarchists might choose, the Exodus Collective opted for non-violent methods in the course of living their lives and promoting social revolution. Rastafarianism's emphasis on One Love led the Collective to blur the lines between the individualist and social anarchist traditions. Glenn stated one of the aims of Exodus thusly: "The way to promote a government-less order is to be orderly about government... Not to be disorderly, and to lose people's consent." The Exodus Collective had planned on supporting the creation of other DiY communities, as well as ways of providing goods and so-

odus Collective's anarchical spin on the division of labor was measuring respect by the commitment of an individual to work for the good of the community. A "respectocracy" would be built through agency without a hierarchy of authority. According to Glenn:

We see [Exodus] more like a wheel, with the hub being the Mission. The hub being what we're doing it for... not me, not Guy, not you, not Steve, but the cause. And we're all spokes, each one of us as thick and good as the rest... [I]f one of them's out, the wheel don't run properly.

The social anarchism of Exodus was an attempt to provide people with more autonomy over their lives. However, building a culture of respect takes time — time for trust to grow between members of the Collective, and time for individuals to prove to others their worthiness in the movement's collective struggle. Only then could those involved in Exodus change from being disaffected, marginalized people in mainstream culture to elevated role models within the Collective subculture. In this manner, the pursuit of a "respectocracy" was analogous to the emphasis on freedom and equality desired by both DiY culture and adherents of anarchism.

The Exodus Collective adapted anarchist ideals into their community that resonated with the group's Rastafarian beliefs. Exodus took the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's dictum that "Property is theft" literally. From the Collective's perspective, no one could properly hold title to the Earth, and under capitalism not everyone has equal access to land. Hence, Exodus could conduct land grabs, and they were social anarchists at the same time. The community's squatting at HAZ Manor was reminiscent of the modern anarchist Hakim Bey's idea of the TAZ or Temporary Autonomous Zone — the construction and destruction of spaces to promote freedom and autonomy. The TAZ is a place from which to critique State control and to foster human activity (Bey 1991), and Exodus' initial taking

cus 1998) Marcus' method influenced me to explore many different sites so that I could assess not only how Exodus saw itself, but also how others viewed Exodus. Although I do not make extensive use of multi-sited ethnography here, the groups mentioned at the very outset of this article — New Age Travellers, hunt saboteurs, road protesters — are amongst the sites related to the DiY battle over cultural citizenship, and they will be detailed in future publications. Like Exodus, these groups struggled with their relationships to the British public and with official governmental agencies. Therefore, I contacted representatives from the Benefits Agency to learn the standards that affect a person's eligibility for welfare benefits. Attempts to establish interviews with the police, in order to discuss police practices regarding DiY groups and police attitudes towards the CJA, were not always successful.

By conducting my research according to the demands of multi-sited ethnography, the numerous perspectives could be triangulated so that I would emerge with a well-rounded composite picture of DiY politics and culture. Cultural forms were not treated in isolation, but instead they are described at various sites in relation to one another. While I maintained similar questions across interviews to provide some consistency to the framework of my research, many of the interviews took on an open-ended character. The methodology thus provided me with a means of obtaining a rich, descriptive context for understanding the Exodus Collective. Exodus is deeply engaged in cultural struggles that speak to the core issues of inclusion and exclusion in my thesis, and they are therefore the focus of this article. At its most basic level the project addresses the need for individuals to not only enjoy a quality of life that they find respectable, but also to recognize that there are other qualities of life and varieties of British experience demanding respect.

## Analysis of the Exodus Collective: “We are always a demonstration.”

Glenn Jenkins described Exodus’ hometown of Luton as a “cultural war zone” where different races and ethnicities struggled to get along. The economy had not been kind to the town, and the competition between people for jobs was fierce. The increasing multicultural population had experienced excessive monitoring by the police, and riots had occurred in Luton. The Exodus Collective preferred to think of itself as a haven from this modern chaos, creating a space where different races, recovering drug addicts and the homeless could build a working community. I intend to show how various aspects of the Exodus Collective’s lifestyle set it at odds with core British values.

### The Music

Exodus grew out of the warehouse rave scene of 1989, throwing its first party in 1992. Attendance at the parties grew concomitantly with the size of the group’s sound system, the wall of speakers and music equipment that powered the dances. By playing a mix of reggae and techno music, the Exodus raves appealed to a variety of people including ravers, activists, squatters and New Age and traditional travellers (Malyon 1998) — groups later targeted by the Criminal Justice Act of 1994. The rave scene was a true underground phenomenon. Early parties gathered thousands of people together — without legal licensing — in unused buildings or in fields in the country. Such activities had fallen under the eye of law enforcement with the Public Order Act of 1986, as well as the Entertainment (Increased Penalties) Act of 1990, which could levy hefty fines and imprison organizers of unlicensed events (Carey 1998). With the passage of the CJA 1994, the police surveillance of youth culture reached a fever pitch. The Act made it illegal for 100

and social change. Both groups conduct direct action, which aligns them with the social anarchist tradition, but those within hunt saboteur and RTS groups are divided on whether to utilize non-violent or violent tactics.

A clear correspondence does exist between DiY culture and other general anarchist themes. Most DiY groups are avowedly anti-authoritarian, and they stress the anarchical value of *leaderless*, anti-hierarchical organizations. The group *Justice?* describes these as “DISorganizations” (*Weekly SchNEWS* [a DIY newsletter], March 17, 1995), and this social arrangement makes it harder for the authorities to hold one person responsible for political action. The leaderless organization is more often an ideal than a reality, and many groups, including Exodus, will have particular officials such as an identifiable press officer. Also, DiY groups share with anarchism the notion of spontaneous creative activity and human association. While many direct action events and raves may be pre-planned, the idea is to create an environment in which people can indulge themselves and be presented with different ways of perceiving the world. As one member of the alternative DiY news service *SchNEWS* stated, “Whether [people] actually do anything with that awareness is another matter, but you become politicized and realize that what you are doing is part of the wider picture...”

Exodus tried to incorporate an anti-authoritarian social structure, but some individuals in the group appeared to have more power and influence than others. The particular mode of organization at the Exodus Collective was referred to as a “respectocracy.” Several members of the community described their experience at Exodus as “falling into a niche.” Each person had skills and responsibilities that other Collective participants relied upon. Emile Durkheim believed that the division of labor drew members of a society into contact with one another because people would rely on others’ expertise; specialization thus creates social cohesion (Durkheim 1933). The organizational structure of Exodus was to operate similarly with tasks being “fluid according to needs.” The Ex-

stigmatizes DiY endeavors and sets groups like Exodus apart from British society.

The main differences in anarchist thought are between *individualist* and *social* anarchists. Both contest the State and capitalism, but the two camps differ on the shape and form of a free society. Social anarchists have a communal approach to both social problems and the protection of individual freedom, while individualist anarchists favor less revolutionary activity to bring about a new society. Individualists seek the creation of alternative social institutions, such as mutual banks and communes, in order to build an alternative system of economics. Individualist anarchists also frown upon direct action, violent revolutionary protest and the taking of capitalist property (which they regard as authoritarian). In contrast, the social anarchists do not believe that capitalism can be rearranged into anarchy, nor do they believe that revolution to destroy state or capitalist authority is problematic. Social anarchists, like individualist anarchists, see the extension of freedoms as a libertarian cause that evolves under the conditions of capitalism; however, social anarchists differ from individualists by working towards the destruction of that system via revolution (Anarchist FAQ WebPage).

DiY politics draws from both anarchist traditions, but not all alternative lifestyle and political groups would agree that they practice the same type of anarchism; furthermore, some individuals may not define themselves as anarchists at all. However, ideological ties to anarchist thought can be discerned. For example, while a basic tenet of anarchism is to arrive at a new social order that is not dependent on the State, one finds that the social change sought by DiY groups varies. For hunt saboteurs, the ultimate victory would be laws that prohibit hunting and bloodsports such as fox hunting and hare coursing – but this is social change within the legal institution of the State. A group such as Reclaim the Streets (RTS), which protests against the automobile and the culture that fetishizes it, has an anti-capitalist creed and seeks greater economic

or more people to gather, with or without permission, on land for such events. Police could take action if amplified music (consisting of “a succession of repetitive beats”) was involved, if an event occurred at night, or if the land was “partly open to air.” Sound equipment could be seized, the area around the event cordoned off, and those found in violation of the Act could receive three months in prison and a monetary fine (Aitken 1994; Liberty, Defend diversity, Defend dissent 1995).

However, part of the romance of the rave scene in Britain was derived precisely from its illegality and the excitement of being part of a large, rebellious, celebratory crowd. Such large gatherings of young people have been consistently viewed in England as being threatening to the social order. “Britishness” in the upper and working classes means ties to traditional ways and old value systems that are primarily conservative; youth that act outside the boundaries of such behavior are cause for consternation and evidence that the nuclear family and local communities are being rent asunder (Croft 1997). Stanley Cohen describes the reaction by mainstream British culture to perceived threatening youth activities in his classic *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1980): young people become the objects of greater social control when they appear to violate the morals and values of British society.

Keeping deviance in check requires agents of social control – Becker’s “moral entrepreneurs” – to exercise their authority. The CJA is an explicit example of legislation aimed at breaking the communal bonds of rave participants; when the young gather en masse for a rave they will inevitably attract police attention as a public order problem for the surrounding jurisdictions. The Exodus Collective’s involvement in such parties was thus subject to scrutiny and concern by the authorities and cast suspicion on the Collective as encouraging delinquency. After all, Exodus was financing its existence via dance parties that would attract more than 10,000 people at a time.

## Land Issues

As the Exodus Collective's parties gained followers and increased in popularity, some attendees found themselves sleeping at the site of the rave after the festivities. According to Collective member Guy, Exodus felt a need to provide housing for the loyal participants in their subculture who had no place to go. The quest to find a home of sorts for Exodus would frequently result in confrontations with the police. Collective members first moved into an abandoned warehouse in 1992, but they were swiftly evicted. They then moved to the Long Meadow Farm, property that was owned but unused by the Department of Transport. From there, a derelict Luton hotel named The Oakmore was squatted in 1993, and money to refurbish the hotel was gathered from ravers. Nonetheless, the Exodus Collective was evicted from the Oakmore after extensive police surveillance and citations of criminal damage to the property.

From the Oakmore, the Exodus Collective made its way to an abandoned old people's home, St. Margaret's Hospice, and squatted the building. The Hospice was renamed HAZ Manor or Housing Action Zone. Once again, money was raised via the dance events, and the Manor was eventually licensed from the Luton Borough Council with Exodus becoming a legal housing cooperative. With HAZ Manor secured, Exodus arranged a lease of the Long Meadow Farm with the Department of Transport. In a bid for self-sufficiency, the Collective began to renovate the farm buildings as additional housing, and to raise crops and keep livestock (Kallenberg 1996; Malyon 1998).

The ability of Exodus to take — and after much effort, to keep — land made the Collective a threat to both the police and the economic interests in Luton. Local pubs lost revenues every time Exodus held a party. But the situation was more complicated, as Guy stated:

and the experience of such oppression added to the Collective's sense of identity as a community living on the margins of British society. The intolerance directed towards Exodus for its cultural activities resonated with narratives concerning Rasta warriors, who were clothed in righteousness and who sought to be redeemed from Babylon. If middle England would not allow space for the Collective to be tolerated, then Exodus members sought to carve out their own niche in which to live their lives according to their principles.

## Anarchism and Social Order

George McKay, who has written extensively on DiY politics and culture, described those participating in DiY as practicing "...an intuitive liberal anarchism." (McKay 1998: 3) DiY groups eschew the intellectualization of their movement; instead, the focus is to act on principle and to search for the freedom to create a better world. Author C.J. Stone described the inclusive nature of the new party politics as based on "Justice, peace and natural goodness... And anyone who states these things as his or her principles, and acts on them, is one of us." (Stone 1994:12)

By appealing to such natural rights as a common bond in contemporary England, DiY alternative lifestyle and political groups pose a threat to the State. While there is no single anarchist philosophy, similar themes may cut across anarchist groups (Anarchist FAQ WebPage). Most anarchists would agree that domination and exploitation by the State and the capitalist system should be ended, as the "...ultimate aim [of anarchism] is always social change..." (Woodcock 1962:9) DiY groups, such as Exodus, often express an affinity for such an anarchical social vision. Where the State is intolerant and oppressive, DiY politics and culture acts to question the hegemony of proper English social order and behavior. Because anarchism poses a danger to the State's existence by calling for the dissolution of the State, equating DiY with anarchist beliefs further



link between attitudes towards national identity, foreigners (immigrants) and drugs. Liberals tend to be more accepting of cultural diversity, while those with a more exclusive view of England not only believe that ethnic groups should adapt to the larger society, but that such outsiders contribute to crime problems (Ahrent, Gould and Shaw 1996). The marginalized status of the Exodus Collective was highlighted by members' participation in a television program called *Living With The Enemy*. The premise of the show is based on the pairing of social opposites. In Exodus' case, the proposition was to have a member of the conservative Anti-Cannabis Lobby in Cambridge, James Hellyer, stay with the Collective at HAZ Manor. The idea was to film the ensuing debates over drug use and legalization; Exodus wanted to participate in the program because its membership believed that legalizing marijuana would be a step towards reworking the national drug policy. Hellyer lasted only three days with the Collective before leaving Exodus to report his observations to the Luton Police. Following the airing of the program, newspapers editorialized over what should be done about Exodus. The police did not take any action, but instead raised questions about Exodus' pro-marijuana stance; as a result, the Employment Service denied Exodus' plans to offer work placement on the community's sites. Despite an increased tolerance towards marijuana use in English society, the Collective's noticeable advocacy of cannabis and devotion to its use was nonetheless regarded as aberrant by the authorities.

The Exodus Collective, through the practice of Rastafarian beliefs, positioned itself as being outside mainstream British life. The very name Exodus indicated that the community felt that they were journeying away from Babylon, from capitalist England. One of my interviewees claimed, "We're a lot of extreme people who pull away from society because it isn't right." Jenkins spoke of his position as spokesperson for Exodus in terms of "organizing a leaving" from society. The Collective's contact with the police over issues such as raves and drugs emerged out of the Rasta culture at Exodus,

...it became apparent really quickly that they [the authorities] didn't like us moving in on property. Land became an issue very, very quickly. And that became the fight... In the beginning, it was the right to go and jump up and down on a field without annoying anybody else. As you go on, rights get taken; and before very long, we could see what we were fighting for: we were fighting for every single thing that we wanted, that we should have.

Anders Corr defines squatting as the "...illegal takeover of vacant housing or urban land" in order to provide a housing solution (and even employment and *communitas*) for those without property (Corr 1999:9). By definition, squatting calls into question notions of land ownership, and this is yet another example of how Exodus' interests diverged from those with privileged, "proper" land claims. Squatting can be interpreted in two opposing ways. First and foremost, squatting is theft. Squatters are taking over land or buildings that belong to someone else, and therefore they infringe upon established property rights. Exodus knew such behavior was illegal. One Collective member admitted that, "Obviously you can't expect to break their laws and not expect [the police] to come." But, the Collective framed such transgressions in the context of necessity. There is romanticism in stealing from those who are wealthier in order to give to the disenfranchised. The Collective's experience with squatting cuts to the heart of the tension within civil society, where the egoistic pursuit of the good life and the valorization of wealth and property conflicts with the altruistic concern of establishing a working community (Cantor 1997; Seligman 1992).

The history of the English people's relationship to the land is full of contradictions, and as a result, the access to and use of land carries different cultural connotations across all strata of English society (Bender 1998; Halfacree 1996; Hetherington 1998; Schama 1996). Storry and Childs (1997) note that a core part of English

identity is bound up with the country's island status, and further, the rise of urban industry has attracted many residents from traditional, rural communities. Images of the countryside — fox-hunting or gardening — serve as symbols of a nostalgia for the country's agricultural roots. However, the reality is that land is a closely guarded, protected resource in England. At least two-thirds of the country is owned by a small number of private landowners, predominantly aristocratic and/or royal, the remains of a feudal legacy and the passing of land down through generations. If people were simply to take whatever land or housing that they wished, the rights of ownership would be undermined. It should be readily understood that property owners regard squatting as a threat and a nuisance, and to mitigate the fears of property owners the CJA 1994 contained provisions for forcible evictions and increased penalties against squatters.

DiY alternative groups generally have a different view of the land, and they rely on other aspects of British history to valorize their ideology. As opposed to the aristocratic tradition, one finds an emphasis on communal access to land in DiY culture. The histories of the Diggers and the Levellers are often cited as inspirational models amongst the groups most tied to the land such as the Travellers, land rights campaigners and roads protesters. In DiY culture, England is also the older realm of Albion, the mythic home of the "merrie greenwood" in which the land is open to all and class relations are more equitable (McKay 1996). Gerrard Winstanley's 1649 dictum that the Earth should be "...a common Storehouse of Livelihood to all Mankind" is still taken as radical, given the current condition of property ownership. The Exodus Collective operated in accordance with this British tradition. The land was not only a physical need, but a symbolic one, as well. Land represented the very system of privatization and exploitation from which Exodus sought to distance itself, according to Glenn Jenkins. Successfully taking land from the system was a way of criticizing the mainstream culture. As Jenkins put it:

The opinions of Guy and Glenn were rooted in their adopted Rastafarian beliefs, and the dichotomy between Exodus' anti-Babylon position and capitalist England was also evident in that Exodus considered itself a "profit-free zone." People were not supposed to be gouged on entry fees to the Exodus parties, and monetary contributions would be rolled over into community projects determined at Exodus Collective meetings. Exodus' sound system was one such community endeavor (Malyon 1998).

The Collective's sound system linked them to the traditions of West Indian reggae. Rastafari congregates around their sound systems, and the loud Caribbean gatherings that occurred in the wake of the migration to England often resulted in clashes with the police. The authorities' attempts to shut down the sound systems was interpreted as a symbolic attack on the community, and served to reinforce black identity (Gilroy 1991; Hebdige 1979). The Exodus Collective similarly ran into such conflicts with the police. In 1993, one event led Exodus to further align themselves with U.K. Rasta culture and history. The Luton Police confiscated Exodus' sound equipment and arrested several members of the community. The raid culminated in a mass gathering of as many as 4,000 people in support of the Collective's alternative lifestyle. Outside the Luton Police Station, the crowd began dancing in protest of the police action until the sound system and the Exodus members were released (Malyon 1998).

Rastafarians smoke marijuana as part of their spiritual practice, and at Exodus, marijuana was well integrated into daily life. Everyone in the Collective was allowed to grow 10 of his own plants, and cannabis was in evidence all around the gardens and terraces of HAZ Manor. The British Social Attitudes surveys have shown that a majority of the British public believe that marijuana should remain illegal, but this is a viewpoint that has been on the decline; people's attitudes towards the drug are becoming increasingly favorable. Conservatives, though, remain more wary than liberals towards all drug use. Furthermore, the BSA has substantiated a

violence, and nonlove of money. And theirs is based on exactly the opposite.

The "One Love" theme that Jenkins refers to above is a Rastafarian ideal that expresses the desire for a caring community. On his 1977 album *Exodus*, Bob Marley sang "One love, one heart/Let's get together and feel alright." The Exodus Collective drew inspiration from the sentiment; "One Love" was the group's creed, and it justified and legitimated their communal experiment.

If the Exodus Collective's existence was to prove successful, it would depend upon the ability of members to turn their backs on the cash nexus and the egoism associated with capitalism. The Rastafarian view of capitalism as a corrupting force was echoed in my interview with Guy, who believed that Collective members had to rise above greed and put the Babylonian obsession with money behind them. Guy was trained as a farrier, and his skills as a stone and metal worker could have led to a lucrative job. Instead, Guy chose to live on the dole and apply his talents to community projects, which provided him with a sense of selfworth and an anti-capitalist lifestyle:

I live on a dole-shit wage... But — I would rather put my time and effort into the community for everyone's benefit. And the effort... I'm rich. I mean, look at my house... Look at my ganja. To buy a house like this you'd have to have a fair job, you know what I'm saying? To smoke the amount of ganja I smoke, you'd have to be doing something. So what you give away in one hand is compensated, but it's getting through that time... It is very hard to dis the money, but when you do, you do get rewarded in the right way, with great feelings, absolutely wonderful feelings of working for the community.

Our job is to build proof, right in their face. And when I say right in their face, I mean take land, and say: "Your value structure, your principles, your laws, you're sort of ungodly," as we would see it, because of a single spiritual outlook we've got, sharing and cooperation, not competition and hoarding... That's obviously fucking confrontational.

Another Exodus member described the taking of land in spiritual terms:

"...[I]f thine is the kingdom of power and glory — who owns it? Is he thine? Who is 'thine'? They know they don't own [the land], [and] we know we don't own it."

Land issues would thus become part of the Exodus Collective's anti-capitalist rhetoric, to be explored in the section below. Making this point, though, required Exodus to break the law, thereby inviting police attention while testing the limits of tolerance.

## Rastafarianism

Even though England has become a more diverse country and a home to many faiths, Christianity has remained the predominant religion. The Christian religion enjoys a highly institutionalized status in England so that despite the large presence of followers of Islam, Judaism and Hinduism, England's cultural identity is often spoken of as being Christian in spirit (Cusick 1997). While Rastafarianism has gained in popularity in England, the Exodus Collective's devotion to Rastafarianism also marked the group as a minority. I argue that Exodus' beliefs, rooted in Rasta ideals, were practiced in such a manner as to make for a more exclusionary community rather than one integrated into the broader society. Four factors emerge as significant in this light: the group's identification with

the black experience, reggae music and sound system culture, marijuana use, and an avowed anti-capitalist political and economic position.

Exodus derived its name from reggae artist Bob Marley's music, and indeed Marley had titled both an album and a song "Exodus." Marley was an instrumental figure in popularizing reggae music amongst both blacks and whites. The Collective treated Marley as a prophet, and evidence of the music star's influence was everywhere: members would often quote from Bob Marley's lyrics in their conversations; pictures of Bob Marley could be found in people's living quarters and in the hallways of HAZ Manor. One Exodus member even had the entire lyrics to "Exodus" tattooed on his back. Another interviewee felt that the Exodus Collective's social experimentation was blessed by Marley's tenure in England, and that the Collective was following the same spiritual path Marley had blazed.

Even though Exodus was a mixed-race community, the group aligned itself with the Black Diaspora that voyaged from Africa to the West Indies. Both Paul Gilroy (1991) and Dick Hebdige (1979) situate the musical form of reggae within the context of this movement and the sorrowful past of slavery. Reggae's foreign tone sounds "...intrinsically subversive, posing a symbolic threat to law and order." (Hebdige 1979:31) The Jamaican patois utilized in the lyrics highlights the *otherness* of the music, and the songs are steeped in slang and inverted meanings — a linguistic method of altering the white master's language and investing Biblical salvation with metaphors (e.g., Judgement Day, Zion) that spoke to the black experience.

In Rastafarianism, West Indians developed a religious belief that envisioned deliverance and release from conditions of exploitation. Rastafarians believe that the placement of Haille Selassie on the throne of Ethiopia in 1930 was a precursor to black freedom, fulfilling both Biblical and secular prophecy by ushering in the imminent passing of Babylon. For Rastafarians, Babylon means the home of

white imperialism and the sinful world of capitalist exploitation and oppression; Babylon must fall for freedom to be achieved. Because West Indian Rastafarianism does not shy away from issues of alienation, the Rasta message has been an important cultural movement amongst both dispossessed black and white Britons suffering from poor housing, police harassment or joblessness since the 1960s (Hebdige 1979:30–33).

Rastafarianism and reggae music contain a critique of life under capitalism, and members of the Exodus Collective were well aware of the oppositional nature of their lifestyle. The Collective described their communal project in spiritual terms in contrast to the world around them, which they saw as corrupt and capitalistic. Jenkins explicitly described the difference between Exodus and mainstream England as a cultural war zone:

What I mean by "cultural war zone" is that there's a culture that's opposed to that [conformist mindset]... There's a culture that naturally reacts to being in groups — large groups which haven't been channeled into the shopping mall. They want you to walk down the streets you're going to buy from. They want you to have the job of a consumer. And as soon as you start opening up a meandering river, where people can go to a place where consuming ain't the main [thing], it becomes dangerous to them. ...[T]hey've been doing their damndest to wipe us out, because we cost them profits from their pub customers [when we hold parties]. We provide warmth; by comparison, it's like a fucking furnace over here spiritually. So that's what I mean by "cultural war zone." Because once you've been to a warm place, the cold you was in before, the best of the cold, is crap now... There's our culture, which is a One Love culture, and ours is based on One Love, non-