

NEWS

CRASS COPYRIGHT COMPLAINTS CLOSE ANARCHO-PUNK.NET

by Donny

Anarcho-Punk.net was essentially shut down on July 16 after complaints were made about copyright infringement by the popular music-sharing website. Southern records filed complaints with Mediafire, a file-hosting service, about seven Crass albums that were available to download for free at Anarcho-Punk.net. Mediafire then closed its accounts with Anarcho-Punk.net, making Anarcho-Punk.net's entire library of thousands of albums inaccessible.

A person who helps run Anarcho-Punk.net wrote Southern records through the Crass facebook page that it operates, looking for clarification. "Crass" (really someone from Southern records) wrote back, stating that it did not want Crass music distributed for free. "Crass" said it felt filing this complaint using copyright laws was the only way to stop Anarcho-Punk.net from continuing to allow people to download these albums. Anarcho-Punk.net responded that it would have appreciated being contacted directly by "Crass," instead of having "Crass" work within a legal framework that negatively affected the work of thousands of bands. "Crass" fired back that it was hurt by some long-running negative sentiments toward Crass and Southern records from Anarcho-Punk.net, and said some things to further antagonize the situation. Hence, a controversy was created that has many punks claiming Crass to be "capitalist traitors" and sell-outs to its anarchist ethics.

This story has spread like wildfire since Anarcho-Punk.net published its perspective on July 18 (you can read it at the following link <http://www.anarcho-punk.net/viewtopic.php?f=6&p=61407>). Southern records has deleted many negative comments on the facebook pages of operates for itself and Crass, choosing to silence critics, rather than issue a statement.

Steve Ignorant, a member of Crass, has also been verbally attacked

for his perceived role in this snafu. Ignorant took a band on tour last year to play Crass songs, which was seen by some as a way to cash in on Crass' legacy. Ignorant maintains that he simply wanted to play the songs one last time.

In an age where almost any band that's ever been a band seems to be reunited and currently active, it can be difficult to differentiate which bands are doing it more because they want to play music together, and which bands are doing it more for the money. In fairness, Crass is still long-broken-up, but Ignorant's recent tour and a spate of remastered bonus versions of Crass albums have fueled speculation that someone is looking to get paid from the legacy of this notoriously anti-capitalist band.

Meanwhile, Anarcho-Punk.net is seeking to make its files available again, but it claims it will need an additional \$200 per month to fund a new server. While it admits it doesn't typically ask bands for permission before posting links to free downloads of their music, Anarcho-Punk.net maintains that it has and will continue to remove links after bands ask that their music not be available for free.

There has been considerable contention within the DIY punk world over whether DIY punk music should be widely available for free or not. Some bands and labels feel they should be paid for their work and compensated for their costs. Others are just happy to have people hear their music and spread it around. It's maybe not as ironic as some people think that arguably the biggest anarchist punk band in history is now at the center of this debate. However, it is still unclear as to what extent certain members of Crass—or their record label—are spearheading the drive to use the system they railed against to keep the money coming into their coffers.

Do they owe us a living? It seems it depends who you ask.

SPECIAL REPORT

SUPPORT NEW YORK

Support New York is a DIY collective working in the punk and anarchist communities to heal the effects of sexual assault and abuse. We're a group of friends who got fed up with the way our community handled abuse and we decided to do something about it. After six years of this work we've learned that we, the buddies, the band members, the travel partners, the sexual partners and everyone in our communities, not experts, are the best people to create a safer community. To us, that means meeting the needs of survivors, holding accountable those who have perpetuated harm, and having honest dialogue about our own experiences and our capacities both to harm and to heal.

Interview by Cindy Crabb

MRR: Can you tell me a little bit about what Support NY does?

Milo: We do survivor support and accountability processes.

MRR: For sexual assault survivors?

Milo: Right, survivors of sexual abuse, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, that sort of thing.

MRR: You figure out what you need to do to support the survivor and set up an accountability process?

Liz: If the survivor wants that. Sometimes people will come to us and just want to share stories, which is a lot of what we do. Other times they

want really practical resources, like how to look for local therapists, and we'll help people identify local free and cheap resources. Sometimes people come to us for legal advice and we try to help how we can.

Kat: It's really survivor led. We would only prepare an accountability process if a survivor asked for it. And that is the bulk of what we are doing right now, because survivors have come to us and asked us to do accountability process for someone who has abused them, emotionally, physically or sexually.

Liz: Often when the survivor is trying to regain a sense of control over a traumatic situation, we see a mirroring of the criminal legal system where there are these ripples of retraumatization. There's a bunch of

professionals running around saying that they know more than us. A lot of us are imbued with self-defeating feelings of inadequacy, it's one of the ways we internalize victimhood. One of the ways we can combat that is by helping each other. Talking with friends and finding ways to appoint specific roles is really important in creating that bubble of community support. I like that we put a lot of effort into training other folks to support each other.

Milo: We use a transformative justice approach, which focuses on everyone's capacity to transform from abusive dynamics to more healthy dynamics. The survivor has a process of healing, the person called out has a process to transform their abusive behavior and the community around them has a process to come together to support that change. That's the goal anyway. It's a very positive model and, although we are careful not to tell someone what to do, we have a lot of boundaries about what we are willing to do.

MRR: Why do you think it's important to have groups like Support New York?

Liz: I think it's personal for a lot of people and the personal and the political are always smashing up against each other, but for me, I want to do survivor support and accountability work because there are not a lot of other options. What we often see is survivors getting forgotten about and ignored and left behind, and that's really fucked up. So I feel like I need to do this because I don't see anything else happening. And I think it's important in the larger scale for combating rape culture and combating the secrecy that underlies trauma.

Milo: It would seem like the best people to deal with these things would be the people closest to them, but it is generally very messy. Intimate violence is often enabled by the dynamics that already exist. There's usually not a healthy community situation where if only people knew about what was happening they would do what needed to be done. It usually escalates with this structural stuff—I call it scaffolding—that helps enable the abuse. A common thing is a perpetrator will keep their partner away from their friends, so there are these ways they don't have to be accountable. Generally they don't have a structure to deal with it in their world. So one of the first things we help do is take stock: for example, how do your friends relate to you, and what is going on with your family and community and why is that? We can kind of temporarily hold up this artificial structure of healing and accountability where it's absent.

Kat: We are almost always stepping in at the highest level of escalation. We're usually not called in when things are a little tense and there have been a few instances of abuse. We're often called in when there's a community completely falling apart because someone's been called out and refuses to be accountable. At that point people are usually taking sides and the options seem to be either kicking the perpetrator out or ignoring the survivor. The only thing I see that can possibly rebuild that community is finding a way to both support the survivor and find some accountability for the perpetrator.

Milo: If everyone hates each other at that moment, they don't necessarily hate us, so we can act as liaisons. We can advocate for the communities healing. A lot of people are wrapped up in villainizing

the survivor or the perpetrator, we don't have that attached to us, so we can act as a bridge. It really is this temporary place we hold, because we have to vacate eventually after everything.

MRR: Did you have certain training or skills you came into this with?

Everyone: laughs

Liz: One of the things I really love about Support New York is we are staunchly non-professionals. There are people in the collective who are going to school for social work or this or that. But I've found that where I've learned the most is just from talking to people.

Kat: I think I've learned the most from making mistakes and then learning from them. Also, we've all learned a ton from great groups doing transformative justice work, such as Philly Stands Up and Generation 5. There's a lot of amazing information out there.

MRR: Does Support New York mostly work in the punk community?

Milo: Punk, anarchists. More anarchists. We hang out with punks and have processes with anarchists. (laughter)

Kat: It started with more punk processes and expanded into the anarchist community. It's something we talk about a lot; working with a community you're a part of, where you have all these connections and abilities without being too insular. It's a challenge we think about a lot and talk about a lot.

We don't want to go into a community

that we don't have roots in and tell people what should happen. But we also don't want to be this insular group that works with mostly white, mostly middle class punk and anarchist communities. One way we're working on that is doing more training and outreaching to other people who are starting groups like this.

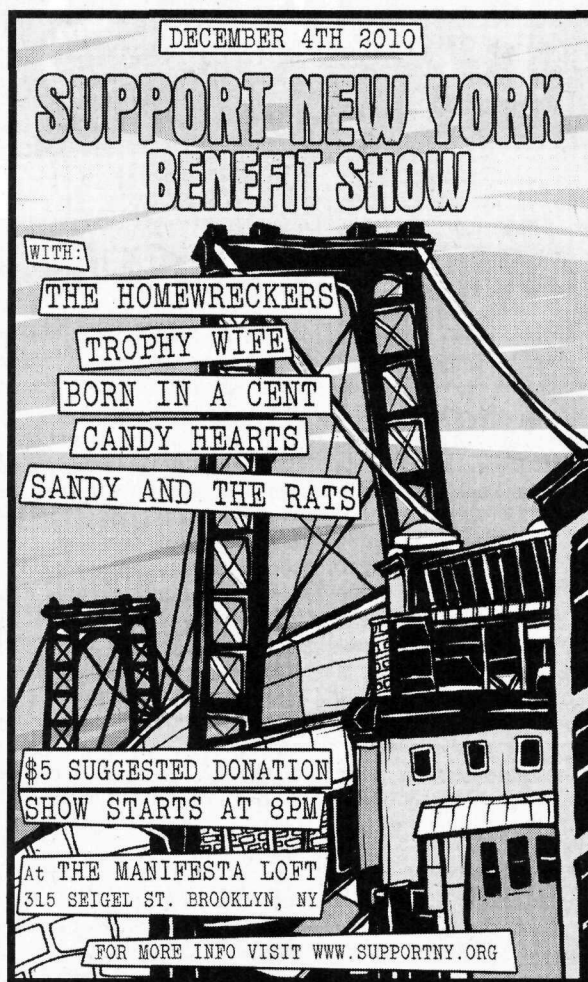
Liz: That's one of my favorite parts about not being experts. We're able to talk to people and tell them how we do things and they can build on that and expand it to however they need and however is most appropriate for their situation. I think that fluidity allows for really radical change as opposed to having these really formulaic, clinical paths and ideas about how to solve a problem.

MRR: Do you think the work is changing the community as a whole?

Kat: I definitely think people are more aware of intimate violence and people talk about it more and that's a really important change. Also, I believe that emotional abuse is really recognized more. It's something we talk about a lot and have a zine on. It's hard to gauge a shift, but I think the language is out there in a way it wasn't before.

MRR: I've seen a lot of situations that are really focused on demands and not much education about how we create a structure of support.

Kat: Right, there's the old story of the survivor leaving the community because everyone stands behind the perpetrator or has no idea of how to handle it. Then there's this middle story, where there's these really intense public call outs that start with a list of demands, while the survivor is just waiting for the perpetrator to get better and for the accountability team to get it together, meanwhile the tension just keeps escalating and the community keeps splitting. My feeling is that we are never going to be able to undo the abuse that happened or return



things to the way they were, so I see success in the new story as more of a harm reduction strategy, where instead of either person being completely kicked out of this community, we work with the person called out to be as accountable as possible and with the survivor to get as much of their needs met as possible. To me, there are lots of small successes just because the story of how we deal with these issues has come so far from how it was dealt with in the past.

Milo: And there are so many places for success and failure. You're dealing with so many different people and experiences—you have the person who's called out, the survivor, the community members. I've had a really surprising process where the perpetrator was really not accountable. It was a worse case scenario. But the survivor support was so thorough that at the end of it the survivor felt resolved. Likewise, this is even more common—we feel like we've made so many strides with the perpetrator, but the survivor has long since shut down in terms of being open to accountability; because the timing wasn't in their favor, they didn't get the things they needed, in the way they needed. And then there are communities that have learned important lessons, even if the people involved didn't feel resolved. So there are so many places for success and failure.

MRR: Could you talk a little more about the training, or give some advice for other people wanting to start a group? It seems like good friends—that's important to start with.

Kat: Yeah! I want to encourage people everywhere to start these groups. I've moved around a lot and I don't think I've lived in a town where there wasn't some situation where someone was called out and the community was torn apart. Although I feel like it's not ideal to start with an emergency situation, it's really good motivation, so if it's there, I would say use it to start. One thing we learned that's key in this work is keeping the survivor support and the perpetrator accountability processes completely separate.

Milo: One of the ideas for the survivor support is: You've survived this thing and you're outside of it now, but your success and how you feel shouldn't hinge onto what this other person does with their life. You're not responsible to them the same way that they're responsible to you. So we work on separation for the survivor so they don't reduce their healing to caring about the perpetrator, because that sometimes carries on abusive dynamics where the survivor is taking care of the perpetrator and trying to make them be a better person. And as people who do this work, we need separation as well. When I get off the phone with a survivor, I'm fuming. I feel so much for them and if I bring that into a room with a perpetrator, that's just really unhelpful. One of the nice things about the structure of the group is that all of us do all of the work. We all talk to survivors and we all talk to perpetrators pretty much, so we have those feelings and connect, but not in the same process.

Kat: One thing I've seen is groups that start strong, but then fall apart pretty quickly—it's really hard to make them sustainable. So a big part of the work is self-care. The separation piece is something that helps make it sustainable for us. Also, being as good buds as possible, supporting each other—even when we need to step back from the work—and being really honest with each other about how we feel about all these things. Working with perpetrators is definitely a two-steps-forward-one-step-back kind of process, where you feel like you're really making progress with someone and they're showing empathy for the survivor and really listening, and then the next time they're like “well, was that really abuse?”. It can be really frustrating and so knowing that's a pattern really helps me out—to know that's normal and there're gonna be these backward steps. Then the survivor process is more circular, where you're going around the same place and you're getting a little deeper each time. You feel like you're getting better and you're completely over it and then it comes around again and hits you. It's important to remember that there's nothing wrong with that. It's a normal part of the healing process.

MRR: What about therapy for the perpetrator?

Liz: One thing I think is absolutely essential is that if someone during a

process tries to turn you into their therapist, you just have to have them get in to therapy.

Kat: At the start of every accountability process, we have a contract with the person called out. The contract roughly says “We meet every two weeks, you come on time, we are all respectful of each other and you will get therapy.” It's a central agreement that we're all consenting to. Therapy is vital because it's not our job to be therapists. We're not therapists. It's a difficult process. We want them to have our support, but we also want them to have a place to go if they say “my abuse of this person brings up my own abuse.” Then we can say, “That's so insightful and this is not the place to talk about it. That's for your therapist.”

MRR: It's so confusing to me because I was perpetrator-support for a couple friends of mine who had been called out and I told them they had to go to therapy and both of them went to therapy and their therapists sort of concluded “Oh, that wasn't rape.”

Milo: Oh, we get that all the time. People saying “my therapist told me I shouldn't be here.” Therapists are generally working to meet their client's needs. So if you want your therapist to not like this process, they're not going to. Just like your friends. You could ignore the friends who are challenging and just find ones who go along with you. So I tell people “There's a reason why all the people around you are expressing this to you. It's because they're mirroring, where you're at.” This is generally a defensive strategy and it usually shifts as a person becomes more invested in their process.

Kat: Unconditional support is great, but you can't use that to define what the survivor's experience was.

MRR: Do you have readings within the group or readings you give the perpetrator?

Kat: Absolutely. We have a syllabus that we're working on that we hope will help other groups who are starting out—something they can start with and then change for their own. We have a very specific reading list for the entire process. They start with dealing with defensiveness and then various other issues that come up.

Milo: The first section is really just trust building; so there are basic readings on entitlement and we deal with the dynamics within the group and boundaries around how perpetrators discuss their own experiences, how they discuss the survivors experiences and we sort of get to know the lay of the land. Then we usually have one on gender and socialization, then usually something on sexism and heterosexism. What's next?

Kat: Survivor power and control.

Milo: Right; then the body and physical boundaries. We're trying to incorporate some bodywork exercises with that one.

Liz: Survivor empathy is next—part of that is talking about the ripple effect of trauma within the community. Specifically how the lack of community support really increases that sense of traumatization for the survivor. I think that was a really awesome turning point in processes, for people to see that it's not just an interpersonal situation. It's an easier way to understand the larger impact of violence. It usually ends with an apology note, if that's what the survivor asked for, or a note to the community and, ideally, meetings with the perpetrator's community, to give it back to them, saying “this is your continued work now.” There's no point where we can say it's OK. You never say that. However, there is an end point for us where we can say that we accomplished A, B and C and we can trust that there's been some absorption of some of the ideas and goals.

Milo: Plus we generally write a letter to the person we worked with in the end, saying, “This is everything we see in you and the good that you've done and what you need to continue doing.” It is a snapshot in time and they're going to hopefully continue having a lot of good conversations.

MRR: How long do you usually end up working with people?

Milo: It gets shorter the better we do it!

Everyone: laughs.



Milo: The longest one was our first one; that was two and a half years.

Kat: That was way too long. We're at a year and half at this point and we're trying to get it down to a year. There are also some people who we know just won't be willing to meet. There was one particular person who was not willing to meet more than four sessions. But I felt like at one point there was a moment of success, a light bulb moment, which, in a harm reduction way is what you're looking for. Something is possible; the seeds are taking.

MRR: So if people want to start a group... What do you suggest they do?

Kat: So if you get a group of friends together and you decide to do this, you would hopefully have some pillars, some agreements you all believed in, like transformative justice or whatever else. You want to all be on the same page. When someone comes to you, be sure to focus on the survivor needs. Don't try to fix things so much that you take it out of the hands of the survivor. Find out what their goals are for a perpetrator process and for themselves.

Milo: I'd recommend the accountability team check their relationships with the person called out. It's usually not a good idea to be very emotionally invested in the outcome because there are so many bumps along the way in a process and it's way easier to get frustrated if you know this person and you need them to do good.

Liz: We generally recommend that people have three group members to one perpetrator in a process. And the reason we do that is because group dynamic is this precarious beast. If it's one on one, it becomes too much like this really creepy therapy thing and then there's all this befriending stuff and it can get really wild really fast. With two people you get this weird 'good cop, bad cop' thing where one person gets pandered to in a particular way and the other person turns into the ultimate enemy. That third person, we've found, is like a wild card that disrupts all these tendencies.

I also found that boundary setting is so critical when working with folks who have a tendency to break people's boundaries. We set clear boundaries from the get-go that some things are not OK; like being late to the group, handing in assignments late and so on. Things like that are really helpful to gauge when your

boundaries are being crossed and whether or not the process is going well. You're not necessarily friends with this person, so you're not seeing them in their day to day life, but if they're repeatedly late to your group

or if they refer to you in a language that is uncomfortable, these are ways you can say 'You're not retaining this. You're not listening to what I'm saying. You're coming to this group but you're not listening.'

Kat: The boundary thing is a really important point for both processes. For perpetrators it's vital to keep everyone safe and to keep things sustainable and also to teach them how to respect boundaries. For survivors it's also important to lay down your own boundaries, say "you know, I really can't take calls at 2am. I need to sleep." Not only does that help sustain the support you can give, but it also models the setting of boundaries that is so difficult for many survivors.

Milo: Another technique is making the person in the accountability process do most of the work. I think there's a tendency to try to hand them things and that sometimes replicates abusive patterns. If I say all the right things, it's still me saying it and not them. So within our process, we have them run some of the meetings. They bring the reading and ask us questions. Otherwise it gets mixed up, who's doing this for whom?

Liz: It's also a great way for the perpetrator to prove to themselves that they're learning things. You only retain a little of what you read, but if you *teach* someone something you retain most of it. It's very different when they can come in and say "This behavior is fucked up for these reasons..." instead of me saying "Don't you see!? Don't you understand!?"

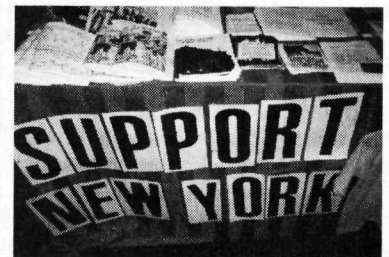
Kat: And it's really rewarding watching people develop that understanding and empathy, and it makes it worth the pain. I've had so many moments where I've actually seen someone get it. There's this turn around where the perpetrator will start from a place of blame, defensiveness and resentment and come to a place of empathy for what the survivor went through. That spark of compassion and feeling for the other person leads to all this positive change, and it's a really hopeful thing to watch.

Milo: At one of the final meetings, someone told me that when they were called out, they were inclined to just push it aside as fucked up drama, and now they see things that were invisible to them. A lot of it is giving people awareness of space that for whatever privilege or reasons, they don't have access to. And although that's hard, generally once they see that, they can appreciate the world

in a much deeper way.

Liz: It's a learning process not just for the perpetrator but also for yourself. You learn a lot about your own tendencies and dynamics, because you can't talk about this work or about violence without thinking about what types of violence you yourself have committed. How are you accountable to your friends, your lovers, your family? I think that being really clear in your head about what that looks like to you is really hard and a huge thing. By doing processes, you do get more insight in to your own bullshit and you can be working on those things in tandem and holding yourself up to those standards. It's really difficult but really powerful.

Kat: And finally, I would like to tell people that they can always email us. We would love to talk to anyone who would like to start a group or wants more information on what we do.



www.supportnewyork@gmail.com
www.supportny.org

FAIR USE STATEMENT:

This magazine contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of environmental, political, economic and social justice issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material is distributed without any profit to those who have expressed prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes.

