

Bob McCubbin on LGBTQ+ liberation and Marxist organizing

written by Gregory E. Williams

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From left to right, Marxist organizers Leslie Feinberg, Dorothy Ballan, and Sam Marcy, 1991. Ballan wrote about feminism and Marxism while Feinberg helped develop a Marxist approach to the trans struggle.

Following is part three of an interview with gay communist activist Bob McCubbin, who has organized and written political analyses since the 1960s. He is the author of the 2019 book, [The Social Evolution of Humanity: Marx and Engels were right!](#) For Pride month, Struggle-La Lucha writer Gregory E. Williams sat down with McCubbin to explore the revolutionary history of the LGBTQ+ struggle and what it means for today's fight back.

- Part 1: [Targeted by fascism, united by struggle: Bob McCubbin on defending trans rights and building class solidarity](#)
- Part 2: [Inside the Bay Area's Gay Liberation Front with Bob McCubbin](#)
- Part 3: [Bob McCubbin on LGBTQ+ liberation and Marxist organizing](#)
- Part 4: [Leslie Feinberg, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and the radical legacy of LGBTQ+ communists](#)

Gregory Williams: So, after Stonewall, you came to a point where you felt you needed to come out. What was it like when you came out as a member of a revolutionary party? Was it difficult?

Bob McCubbin: I would say it didn't change anything. What do I mean by that? I was already in the party, and Sam Marcy characterized the party as a combat organization. And within the world that we were living in at that time, a world with incredibly inspiring anti-colonial struggles and everything else progressive that was going on - and again, being in what Sam Marcy characterized as a combat organization - there was a lot of discipline, but it was self-discipline. There were party requirements.

Those of us in the New York branch, which was very large, were under obligation to call in to the office at least once a day to see what was going on and if anything was going to be happening in the evening that we could plug into. Most of us had jobs, regular-paying jobs. And the social life was largely during breaks at our meetings.

Our meetings were wonderful. They were so educational, but also organizing. We were always organizing. And other groups on the left, on occasion, referred to us as the mindless activists, because we were always out on the street with our banners. But we weren't mindless at all. Under the leadership of Sam and Vincent and Dorothy, we knew a lot. We knew a lot about the past at some point.

Maybe I'll mention a little bit about Friedrich Engels' book [On the Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State](#), because that book was full of evidence that our species need not self-destruct. On the contrary, it was the most social of the animals, the most social of the mammals. I'm talking about our species, *Homo sapiens*.

Many scientists felt the development of language was based on this incredible sociality. When you were faced with, let's say, in a particular indigenous group, there might be 30 to 50 families or maybe 100 families. But the point is, under the conditions of sociality. Other animals were social to one extent or another. But we're talking about profound sociality.

Your mind had to be able to deal with 30, 50, maybe 100 different personalities. And in any case, whatever the reason was, our brains got larger and larger until we actually entered the *Homo sapiens* species. And it bodes well for us as a species that we have such intense cooperation with each other.

But what did the introduction of private property do? It introduced poison into that system. And together with the patriarchal culture that it created, fomented, increased, promoted, it left us with this problem. It's a problem of private property. And we're not talking about your toothbrush or even your home. We're talking about the capitalist system. Money makes money. Well, not really. People, workers, make value. And the ruling class, as long as there is a ruling class, confiscates most of that value, demands ownership of it.

GE: I'm reminded, a few months ago, there was an [article](#) about a new scientific study, I believe it was an anthropological study. They looked at child care in societies that have preserved some of these more communalistic aspects that predate class. And I think they were looking at existing peoples, maybe in the Amazon.

And they quantified how many people it takes to care for a child. And the short answer is it's a lot of people. [The [study](#) looked at the circle of non-maternal caregivers among contemporary hunter-gatherers, the Mbendjele BaYaka people in the Republic of Congo.]

It takes a village to raise a child. And contrast that with the extreme pressure that's put [on parents], especially on women, in this modern capitalist society to take care of a child. That's not how our species evolved. We didn't evolve to live in these very isolated conditions. And it takes a toll on people. I think that we don't, maybe even in the revolutionary movement now, we don't talk enough about that psychological aspect of the extreme alienation that people are feeling.

But when we look back at society before class and some of the structures that have survived from that time period, we see a different way, a totally different way of living. [As you recommended], I was looking at Dorothy Ballan's pamphlet earlier [[Feminism and Marxism](#), 1976]. She said that in the earliest societies, cooperation was necessary to survive.

BM: You had to have cooperation.

GW: And now, you know, it strikes me that in order to survive what we're facing with the capitalist-driven climate crisis - or even the advent of the nuclear bomb - that class society has developed to a point where we're a factor in nature, almost like an external factor that's threatening us with extinction. [Like the commodity in Marx's analysis, which is the product of human labor but appears as something

external, wielding power over us.]

Because of that, we need cooperation. We can't continue in this way. We need cooperation to survive the conditions that class society has created. And so we have to look back, you know, not that we can just recreate early hunting-gathering society, for example, but we can draw from that by dismantling capitalism and living more communally. It's a question of survival.

