Bad Vibes in Activist Circles

On bad-jacketing, bullying, & trashing

A zine in progress
* Summer 2026 *

Equitable Education .ca

"Plausible Genocide"

A lesson from collective incorrectness

Everyone you heard say the International Court of Justice ruled it was "plausible genocide" in Gaza, was wrong. It actually ruled (Jan.2024) there was a "real and imminent risk" of genocide, and it was "plausible" the Palestinians in Gaza were a group as defined in the Genocide Convention.

The people mischaracterizing it probably either had simply taken it on faith based on what others said, or looked at the ruling but didn't actually understand it.

People meant well, but they illustrated that accuracy can get lost very easily. This principle applies broadly, with varying impacts.

Badjacketing, Snitchjacketing, Copjacketing

It is important to acknowledge that in activist spaces there are people who do bad things intentionally, who do collaborate with police, and/or who are actually undercover cops.

But it is when people are wrongfully accused of those things, the three 'jacketing' concepts apply. There are real and serious harms associated with this. And it happens much more often than need be; it is toxic behaviour.

How do we ensure we have practices to effectively address the threats the former things pose to our movements, while also being able to prevent (and/or deal with) the latter?

'Trashing'

This is a term introduced in a seminal 1970s feminist essay by Joreen aka Jo Freeman. Pulbished in Ms. Magazine, it struck a collective chord, articulating an experience shared by many who had felt alone in it, being dishonestly marginalized in groups and movements.

One of the essay's notable points was how it identified the characteristics of when (and to whom) the trashing is likely to occur. Another was the author recognized how well she'd been able to reject judgements of mainstream dominant society in order to become an activist, but the difficulty she had in being wrongfully judged by her comrades.

Explanations / Analyses

There isn't only one explanation for the reason this happens. You can probably find or think of some reasons yourself.

But one thing worth pointing out, is about when activist groups or movements feel powerless because they aren't making the changes in society they want, there is the seduction of being able to exert power over another individual, to actually feel you can change things.

People can use various 'jacketing' accusations (honestly or not) as a proxy for other things they have against an individual that aren't so easily collectively affirmed as valid.

Etc.

The whisper network is good, except when it isn't

When accusations are circulated, is there a desired outcome? What is it? Sometimes it is not explicitly clear.

Accountability would be a solid principle after someone does something wrong / harms someone. That includes after someone spreads wrong and harmful information about someone else. Accountability requires a process of some sort, with some balancing of any potential different sides of a story.

Whisper networks don't generally allow for different sides of the story. They ae open to exploitation (whether well-meaning but wrong, dishonest, / even sabotage by police)

Some other principles

Often, most people will go along with what their peers say or do. Activism isn't necessarily an exception. If someone is being treated unfairly, a lot of people won't do anything because they know the likelihood of it happening to them as well will increase. If you get one in ten people who do stand up in a group against something like that, that may be about average.

Let alone standing up against collective opinion or outrage, how many will even directly privately ask the person targeted what the situation is about from their perspective, given what the asker has heard from others? Again, on average, don't expect many

Someone else's zine:

not liking someone doesn't mean they're a cop

or a zionist, or a fed, or a white parachuter from montréal



alternatively:

on bad-jacketing

kick the bucket distro
kickthebucketdistro@riseup.net

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