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Keywords:

Protest, Activism, Nonprofit industrial complex, productivity, capitalism

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Productivity and Protest: The Institutionalization of Activism

Dakota McKnight

Abstract

Under capitalism, time spent being productive and effective is the ultimate goal of human life and interaction. What can be produced or accomplished and how much it is worth is the guiding principle of labor, governance, and now, protest. Over time, protest culture and activism have been institutionalized and fallen into the same patterns of the systems they intend to change. The demand to be productive results in activists pulling long hours for underpaid or even unpaid labor, with a focus on filling canvassing quotas, and counting donations, rather than engaging in meaningful community-based action. This inevitably leads to the burnout of activists, and actively stifles the revolutionary potential of movements by centering hours spent and accolades rather than the goal of worldchanging. This phenomenon is a result of colonial white supremacist culture inside of activist spaces that must be expunged if movements are to be truly radical spaces. To respond to this I offer an alternative worldchanging strategy based in community care and sustainable, communal work.

Keywords:

Protest, Activism, Nonprofit industrial complex, productivity, capitalism

Author Biography:

Dakota McKnight, originally from Asheville, North Carolina, is a senior American Studies major at Macalester college. They have spent their time in college involved in numerous orgs, movements, and moments in the pursuit of climate justice.

Further Reading

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