Collective Dictionary: Political

Campus in Camps

In April 2016, BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, brought to life the Here We Are Academy: a spirited temporary recomposition of a refugee-initiated platform for learning called We Are Here Academy. Established in Amsterdam in 2012, We Are Here is the first large-scale organization of refugees living in limbo in the Netherlands. Through projects organized with artists and activists, the group explores the space of art as one wherein members can practice visibility, solidarity, self-representation, and action—structurally unavailable to them due to society's denial of the right of refugees to have rights. If We Are Here Academy is where refugees can learn, Here We Are Academy is where they can teach (each other and those with citizen rights) the knowledge of survival.

Campus in Camps joined the Academy's temporary "faculty" to co-develop its curriculum and gather with refugees, artists, students, researchers, and activists to continue our commitment to writing-by-embodying an ongoing Collective Dictionary. We have taken to heart curator Maria Hlavajova's guestion of how to conceive of "future vocabularies" in times like ours; of how to think and practice a lexicon of "being together otherwise." Such a lexicon could enable us to move about the current impasse, negotiating refugee participants' knowledge against the reality of a contemporary western society that hides its own failings behind the label "refugee crisis." It has been a complex, humbling, and at times conflictfilled process of figuring out how to speak a language of neither victim nor victor, but that of confident political subject who recognizes and acts upon the urgencies of the contemporary. It has led us, if tentatively, to shape the contours of an entry for Political into the Collective Dictionary; here are brief insights into its making.

Isshaq Al-Barbary and Diego Segatto, Campus in Camps

• WILL IT BE READY TO SPEAK ABOUT AND FOR THE MANY CASES ?

"As we were engaged in a task of not only deconstructing but decolonizing language, I wanted to ask why all the words we unpacked were in English. Why did we not include words from Arabic, another language common amongst the group, or Dutch? Perhaps we could have invented new terms to include in a dictionary for our political praxes?" (Sumugan Sivanesan, artist and researcher)

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Indeed, while deconstructing was pretty easy and precise, the group didn't succeed in offering a propositive field of confrontation, that we identified under the realm of responsibility. It was rather literally stuck in understanding what responsibility is at large. This led us the four day to jump directly into that movement pressing any person in struggle, or in the will of change, to recognize thoughts and actions to free oneself from oppression or uncomfortable situations." (Diego Segatto, artist and architect)

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Prepared for something unavoided of a deeper Know FULL TEXTS AVAILABLE AT http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/political.

"I will always remember the first time that I had to face power structures, the first time I had to break down the first wall of my own oppression. It didn't begin with the deconstruction of my own beliefs in a theoretical way or with fed to liberate the decolonization of the language that somebody taught me: it was something more physical and corporeal than any other thing; it was more related with disobedience than with the seeking of something more novel." [Felipe Zapata Zuluaga, artist]

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"In other words, occupying the border mobilizes 'border thinking', it makes the border — that which separates us – the 'object of study' as opposed to the various, distinct subject positions that live on either side of the border (and supposed differences or similarities). The politics of this kind of border thinking — which extend to living on the border of activism and theory — is dependent on working through why such divisions exist in the first place ... but only if one can remain on the border rather than on either side of it." (Veronica Tello, researcher)

"That is the main thing that stayed with me, the specific people I saw and heard, their clashing hopes, ambitions, dreams, creating a very specific eruption of outcomes with contrasting directions — so realistic in a non-consensus world — as the background."

(Daphne Alexandra Gambieraki, activist and student) 🍗

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