

Riot Grrrl Document Set

Document 1 - Bikini Kill Biography



Photo: Tammy Rae Carland

Bikini Kill was a punk band formed in 1991 in Olympia, Washington, whose music community produced or aided bands and artists like Sleater-Kinney, Bratmobile, Elliott Smith, and Nirvana. They are largely considered to be early pioneers of the Riot Grrrl scene. Comprised of singer-songwriter Kathleen Hanna, drummer Tobi Vail, guitarist Billy Karren, and bassist Kathi Wilcox, the band paired radical feminist themes with DIY/hardcore punk music to carve a niche space in an aggressively masculine punk scene.

Bikini Kill didn't just espouse feminist politics in song, though. They were seen as de facto leaders of riot grrrl, a third wave feminist political movement. Their live shows were deliberately made femme-friendly (with Hanna often encouraging "all girls to the front") in the face of male-violence, encouraged women and girls to start bands themselves, and built a feminist community through independent fanzines and forums that spread across the country.

The band burned hot and fast--they released only one independent demo tape, two EPs, and two full-length albums before they broke up in 1997. In 2019, the band reunited for a series of shows. In 2019, the band announced they would reunite for a new tour.

Document 2 - Riot Grrrl Manifesto

WHAT IS RIOT GRRRL?

riot grrrl is

BECAUSE we will never meet the hierarchical BOY standards of talented, or cool, or smart. They are created to keep us out, and if we ever meet them they will change, or we will become tokens.

BECAUSE I need laughter and I need girl love. We need to build lines of communication so we can be more open and accessible to each other.

BECAUSE we are being divided by our labels and philosophies, and we need to accept and support each other as girls; acknowledging our different approaches to life and accepting all of them as valid.

BECAUSE in every form of media I see us/myself slapped, decapitated, laughed at, objectified, raped, trivialized, pushed, ignored, stereotyped, kicked, scorned, molested, silenced, invalidated, knifed, shot, choked, and killed

BECAUSE I see the connectedness of all forms of oppression and I believe we need to fight them with this awareness.

BECAUSE a safe space needs to be created for girls where we can open our eyes and reach out to each other without being threatened by this sexist society and our day to day bullshit.

BECAUSE we need to acknowledge that our blood is being spilt; that right now a girl is being raped or battered and it might be me or you or your mom or the girl you sat next to on the bus last Tuesday, and she might be dead by the time you finish reading this. I am not making this up.

BECAUSE I can't smile when my girlfriends are dying inside. We are dying inside and we never even touch each other; we are supposed to hate each other.

BECAUSE I am still fucked up, I am still dealing with internalized racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, etc., and I don't want to do it alone.

BECAUSE we need to talk to each other. Communication/inclusion is key. We will never know if we don't break the code of silence.

BECAUSE we girls want to create mediums that speak to US. We are tired of boy band after boy band, boy zine after boy zine, boy punk after boy punk after boy.

BECAUSE I am tired of these things happening to me; I'm not a fuck to. I'm not a punching bag, I'm not a joke.

BECAUSE every time we pick up a pen, or an instrument, or get anything done, we are creating the revolution. We ARE the revolution

- No we are not paranoid.
- No we are not manhaters.
- No we are not worrying too much.
- No we are not taking it too seriously.

Our zine is 1\$ + 2 u.s. stamps (please no checks).
RIOT Grrrl
P.O. BOX 11002
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

FOR MORE info send 1\$ to

start a **HELP ME**

riot

Fuckin

Document 3 - Concert Photographs



Document 4 - Song Lyrics

Bikini Kill, "Double Dare Ya"

Is that supposed to be doing that?
Ok, sorry, ok we're starting now
We're Bikini Kill and we want revolution
Girl-style now!
Hey girlfriend
I got a proposition goes something like this:
Dare ya to do what you want
Dare ya to be who you will
Dare ya to cry right out loud
"You get so emotional baby"
Double dare ya, double dare ya, double dare ya
Girl fuckin' friend yeah
Double dare ya
Double dare ya
Double dare ya
Girl
Don't you talk out of line
Don't go speaking out of your turn
Gotta listen to what the Man says
Time to make his stomach burn
Burn, burn, burn, burn
Double dare ya, double dare ya, double dare ya
Girl fuckin' friend yeah
Double dare ya, double dare ya, double dare ya
Girl
You're a big girl now
You've got no reason not to fight
You've got to know what they are
'Fore you can stand up for your rights
Rights, rights?
You do have rights
Double dare ya, double dare ya
Double dare triple fuckin' dare ya girlfriend
Double dare ya, double dare ya, double dare ya
Girl

Document 5 - Academic Account

“Riot Grrrl, Race, and Revival” by Mimi Thi Nguyen

In the most familiar histories told about riot grrrl (in academic study, and in popular or underground accounts), a new strain of punk feminism, weary of both the soul-crushing criterion of commodity culture and the masculine bravado of punk subculture distancing girls from knowing themselves and one another, posed the solution through the promise of do-it-yourself—that is, make music, make art, make the world, make yourself. Girls pushed their way to the front and onto the stage with guitars in hand; girls sent concealed dollar bills in exchange for each other’s passionate manifestos passing as cut-and-pasted zines; girls traded mixed tapes of favorite bands, and each song, and every page, was a revelation. Doing it yourself made it possible to know yourself as a revolutionary act; or as the third issue of Riot Grrrl put it, “tired of being written out—out of history, out of the ‘scene,’ out of our bodies...for this reason we have created our zine and scene.” [. . .]

Through girl love (girls learning to love themselves, and each other, against those forces that would otherwise see them destroyed or destroy themselves), riot grrrl engendered an aesthetics of self-referentiality and transformation as a means of producing an experimental feminist bloc. As the slogan went, “every girl is a riot grrrl” unties a knot of promises that bound self-actualization to communion with others. In this way, girl love was at once radical—and yet not quite. [. . .]

Riot grrrl drew from liberal formulas that define racism as ignorance, and ignorance as the absence of intimacy; in the words of a zine I admittedly have long discarded, “racism is a lack of love.” (We also know this in the familiar disavowal, “I’m not racist, I have black friends,” which suggests that proximity is a social prophylactic against virulent racism.) In the name of a transformative love, white girls (and some boys) confessed to failures of social bonds—admitting a lack of non-white friends was popular—and proposed solutions through which racism might be overcome through experiences that would then yield intimate knowledge of the other. The presumption is that intimacy is a pathway to a good relationship is the passage to social justice. [. . .]

Thus *Slambook*, a zine by one of the multiple incarnations of NYC Riot Grrrl, topped its list of “twenty-two quick ‘n’ easy (not even) things white people can do to fight racism” with “nod and say hello to latina/black/asian/native people as you pass them on the street.” In *Fantastic Fanzine*, Erika Reinstein wrote: “i think growing up around people of different cultures, religions, and races has helped demystify the whole issue of racism in my mind. plus my cultural experiences growing up were not typically ‘white,’ especially compared to my more middle class friends.” In *Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars*, Tony took note: “Erika told me that if I want to understand and work on my racism, classism, sexism...that I need to actively pursue intimate relationships with less privileged people and prove I can be a real ally to them.”

In these and countless other examples of how the difference of race both confounded (and was contained by) the prescription of intimacy, it became apparent that girl love could easily, intensely, perform as a feminist mode of control and psychic violence. Such confessional gestures and professed desires for intimacy with the other produce possessive investments in an antiracist whiteness. That is, confession here enacts ownership, naming one’s property (“I am owning my whiteness,” “I have friends of color”) or the desire for it (“I need more friends of color.”). . . Here, antiracism becomes a matter of generating a positive white identity, an identity that makes the white subject feel good...



But it is also important to observe that people of color made significant connections outside of these conversations, writing—or singing—about language loss and acquisition, the ghosts of empire, mixed-raced identifications, migration histories (because of war, or the demands of capital), the pitfalls of non-profit organizing, queer of color critique, “black girl travel stories,” and much more. We assembled compilation zines like *Race Riot*, *How to Stage a Coup*, and *Chinese, Japanese, Indian Chief*, made documentaries like *Afropunk* and *Mas Alla de los Gritos* (Beyond the Screams), reclaimed the too-often unobserved significance of pioneering women of color including Poly Styrene, Alice Bag, Conflict’s Karen “Nurse” Maeda Allman, and the Go-Go’s Margot Olaverria, 53 and otherwise pursued what might be called a multisubculturalism (a coinage I attribute to Sta-Prest), traversing punk, hip hop, and other scenes to trace their entangled genealogies. Such connections can be found in zines including *Gunk* (Ramdasha Bikceem), *Housewife Turned Assassin* and *Revolution Rising* (Dani and Sisi), *Framing Historical Theft* (Athena Tan), *Quantify and You Might As Well Live* (Lauren Jade Martin), *Hermana*, *Resist* (Noemi Martinez), *Paint Me a Revolution*, *How to Stage a Coup*, and *Hard as Nails* (Helen Luu), *I Dreamed I was Assertive* (Celia Perez), *Bamboo Girl* (Sabrina Margarita Alcantara-Tan), *Nappy Bush* (Dionne Herbert)...

In these other histories, other archives, race is not an interruption into a singular scene or movement but the practice of another, co-present scene or movement that conversed and collided with the already-known story, but with alternate investments and forms of critique.

These other stories of riot grrrl in particular and also punk at large unfolding enact historical and theoretical provocations with which we have yet to reckon, then or now....do I worry that riot grrrl retrospectives will take the form of a story of the loss of a more utopian moment of feminist intimacy, into which race is either a disruption (generating bad feelings) or an intervention (feeling bad to assure that we are good) and otherwise contained as such. Such a continuous history locating women of color feminisms as a historically bounded moment along a progressive teleology would deny these feminisms a co-presence in our contemporary political and intellectual life, and their arguments a urgent relevance. What would this mean for riot grrrl retrospectives that “hold a place” for women of color to say their piece, but in such a way that contains their critique and segregates it from the story of the movement’s contribution? What if their critique was the contribution?