

Introduction

My intention in writing this is not to smear someone who has already been dragged through the coals, brag or gloat, or any other nefarious reason. Rather, it is to provide an overview of how a space created by anarchists was infiltrated and overtaken by opportunists, one of whom posed a serious threat to people involved in the community. The purpose of this writeup is to warn other online leftist communities about the tactics used by opportunist infiltrators, including possible bad actors. The fact is the Anti-Work subreddit was taken over by opportunists, who used their newfound power to dilute the message of the subreddit at the direct expense of its anarchist founders. One of these opportunist infiltrators appears to have been a known bad actor, Laurelai Bailey, who has been repeatedly accused of rape and who is responsible for several anarchists being sent to prison after cooperating with an FBI investigation.

Infiltration

Following an ill-advised interview with Fox News given by r/antiwork moderator, u/AbolishWork, the Anti-Work subreddit was plunged into chaos. The subreddit and Discord server were both brigaded by trolls and people coming out of the woodwork to express disappointment with the interview and how the Anti-work community had been represented in it.

As the sub had experienced a meteoric rise during the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting growth in anti-job sentiment, the subreddit began to drift away from its anarchist roots and became a more centrist space in which screenshots of people quitting over text when their bosses crossed a line could go viral. The content, over time, shifted away from totally abolish work and more towards making work more tolerable. As this happened, there seemed to be a split between the moderation team. Some felt the growth in the sub should be used to spread awareness of anarchism and anarchist thought and others saying that would scare away new members and that the continued growth of the community should be prioritized.

The interview proved disastrous. u/AbolishWork's comments were poorly received by the growing majority on the subreddit that simply wanted some changes to work. These were people who were tired of mandated overtime, low pay, and shitty bosses, not necessarily people who wanted to do away with capitalism outright. So when someone who claimed to walk dogs part time for a living said "laziness is a virtue," they felt that "ordinary" people had been poorly represented. Many of the most vocal users of the subreddit who were upset by the interview felt that the views expressed no longer represented the views of the majority of the people on the subreddit and lashed out at the moderators,

especially when the response to u/AbolishWork stepping down revealed that another young anarchist moderator was planning even more media appearances for the moderation team.

With u/AbolishWork stepping down, there was a void in leadership within the community and there were questions about how the moderation team would proceed. The subreddit went private for a while, and upon going public, it was obvious that the void had been filled by power mods. Perhaps the biggest takeaway from this is that organic leadership structures are virtually impossible to sustain when organizing communities through tools such as Reddit and Discord. By nature, they require a hierarchy of moderators with varying levels of privileges. As a nature of the site, if these hierarchies and structures are not carefully curated and protected, opportunist moderators can quickly infiltrate the community, rise through the ranks, and rapidly take control of a group during a time of crisis or drama.

Another example of how quickly such a takeover can happen is the work-reform subreddit. That subreddit was created to capitalize on the drama in the anti-work community and grew rapidly to around 500,000 members while the anti-work subreddit was made private temporarily. As a result of the quick rise and the inability to quickly establish a functioning mod team, the Reddit sitewide admins became involved and required the appointment of more moderators. A “power mod” was appointed and given the top mod spot on the subreddit. A power mod is someone who moderates many subreddits, sometimes up to hundreds at one time. Roughly two years ago, a user discovered that 6 power mods essentially controlled 118 of the top 500 subreddits. They frequently take advantage of a sub struggling by offering their expertise in some aspect of moderation to be added to the moderation team. As their influence grows, they continue adding their fellow power mods to mod teams. Almost immediately, the founders of the subreddit had been banned and the community was taken over by opportunist power mods.

While the buildup to the takeover did not occur overnight, the takeover itself can be near instantaneous when the chance for opportunists to intervene arises. Leftist communities that are attempting to organize online **MUST** exercise extreme caution to vet their moderators and ensure the community is protected from similar takeovers. Moderators need to be carefully and strategically selected and people should generally be given the minimum necessary permissions to do the job they are brought onto the team to do. Reddit moderators must pay special care to the ordering of the moderators, as if the top mod leaves ownership of the sub falls to the next moderator in line, a power mod in this case. This is effectively what gave the power mods and opportunists access to the Anti-work subreddit.

Additionally, the online profiles of people applying to moderate online leftist communities should be vetted with extreme care. EphraelStern (ES), the user who effectively took over the Anti-work subreddit, had numerous public tweets and statements, which appear under her twitter accounts BimboPolitics or hypnotransgirl, that should have indicated they were a bad fit to moderate any anti-work space, much less the Anti-Work subreddit with roughly 1.7 million subscribers at the time. She had made tweets suggesting that anyone identifying as anti-work was an “unserious” person who deserved to be mocked for their views. And yet she was allowed to not only join the moderation team, but to take a position of power on the team. They became the face of the moderation team on the subreddit and took over as the owner of the Discord server.

Consolidation of power

Upon securing power in the community for herself, EphraelStern set about cementing herself as the leading authority in the community. What happened next should have immediately raised additional concerns from the rest of the moderation team. The moderators of the Discord server, many of whom had been moderating the server for a long time and who had weathered the storm of trolls, brigading, and harassment following the Fox News interviews, were quickly and summarily banned from the server. EphraelStern claimed they were conspiracy theorists, infiltrators, and trolls who had fooled the community by masquerading as anarchists, but who were really working on undermining the community. Any backlash against these heavy handed reactions were met with bans for “conspiracy thinking.” EphraelStern took to twitter, calling anyone complaining about her methods “terminally online dipshits” who needed to “touch grass.” She also suggested that criticisms directed at her moderation were actually a mixture of racism and transphobia. She claimed that anyone complaining about power mods did so because they secretly wanted to be allowed to say the n-word and “get away with it.” The claims of racism are particularly confusing, given ES presents as a white woman. Once she felt the space had been adequately purged of “extremists,” she went on several rants to her now-captive audience detailing the conspiracy thinking, infiltration, and failures of the old moderation team that she, and she alone, could “fix.” She insisted that the drama had occurred due to a lack of skills and education that she could teach the new moderation team to ensure such drama was never repeated.

When the ousted mods created a new server in order to stay in touch with friends they had made during their time in the Anti-work community, EphraelStern had one of her friends infiltrate the server and banned anyone who remained in both servers, claiming they were “conspiring against the server.” EphraelStern joked about “tear gassing” the server and banned someone who reacted with a pig

emoji to that statement. Later, she offered to rescind the bans should members of the other community renounce their association with the former mods, stop speaking out against her moderation tactics going forward, and ask her personally for forgiveness. The demand was, essentially, a gag order hoping to split up the new server.

Concerns with EphraelStern were presented to members of the subreddit's moderation team, ultimately resulting in a vote to remove her from the subreddit's mod team. [This link can be followed to the screenshots that were presented to the moderation team](#). A majority voted in favor of removal. The top mod, a power mod named u/TeiaRabishu, was fond of ES and instead banned anyone who had voted in favor of removal from the mod team. ES made posts suggesting that the dissenting moderators had been removed due to irreconcilable differences in opinion, but said she could not say more without "humiliating" the former moderators. Some of the dissenting moderators were quietly added back to the moderation team later so long as they agreed to follow the lead set by TeiaRabishu and EphraelStern. During their temporary ban, multiple new mods were added to the mod team. Prior to the vote to remove ES, one of the voices calling for her removal was second in the moderation line. When the dissenting moderators were added to the mod team again, they found themselves at the very end of the line. The ones carrying out the infiltration of Anti-Work were far more successful at managing the mod list than the previous leadership had been and the results of this were visible almost immediately after the takeover.

It was later revealed that sometime during the drama unfolding across the anti-work communities, EphraelStern had approached the moderators of the community and simply asked to be made a moderator to help "fix" the community. She called herself a subject matter expert in preventing right-wing infiltration of online communities, citing her experience moderating r/rape and r/contrapoints. It is unclear how much vetting was done, but she was approved. She consolidated power by quickly banning anyone who expressed concern about her addition to the moderation team. People who sought to bring awareness to her past social media posts indicating she should not be moderating the anti-work community were met with bans and accusations of harassment. Ephrael continued to infantilize the former moderation team, accusing them of harassing the administration, being infiltrators and bad actors, and banning anyone who pushed back on her narrative until the community was essentially sterilized. If people continued to argue, she would make references to her belief that political power must be gained through appeals to political centrists, suggesting that anarchists would never achieve their goals without the moderating effects of people like her on their discourse. Continued pushback would get the person labeled an accelerationist and banned. She made repeated references to the new direction of anti-work as a "big tent" movement and insisted that only

discussions of change that could be achieved through democratic methods would be tolerated.

Despite claiming to be an anarchist of over 20 years, most of her politics seemed unabashedly anti-anarchist. She made references to the horseshoe model of politics, which suggests that some people go “so far left” they essentially become right wingers and vice versa. It is a centrist position that allows the person making the argument to insist that left wing extremists and right wing extremists are essentially the same and not an argument you would expect to hear from someone who had been involved in the anarchist community for as long as ES was claiming to have been. She continued to decry any form of revolutionary thinking, suggesting that it was akin to terrorism or Nazism. As part of her fight against what she called extremism, she made repeated appeals to the authority of her “extremist researcher friends,” who consult with the Polarization and Extremism Research Innovation Lab (PERIL) at American University in Washington DC. Their mission statement reads: “PERIL brings the resources and expertise of the university sector to bear on the pressing problem of growing youth polarization and extremist radicalization.” They have a research study in which they claim to be testing whether videos can effectively reduce radicalization in certain populations, but nothing has been published. She suggested on several occasions that her extremist researcher friends had been “sounding the alarm” on the anti-work community for some time. This was further justification to ban anyone she felt was an extremist, no matter their actual beliefs.

Once she felt confident that she had rooted out her opposition, she began posting on her social media accounts inviting her followers to join the anti-work discord, which she called her own. She recruited moderators from other Discord communities dedicated to streamers, youtubers, or other people she was interested in and felt represented her political views. Over several weeks, the population of the Discord server and subreddit both stabilized at somewhat-lower levels of activity. EphraelStern continued to be the most visible member of the Reddit moderation team and occasionally discussed various topics in the Anti-work discord. The drama seemed to be in the past.

Spaces that wish to remain leftist and avoid co-option by centrists should be wary of people like EphraelStern, who will join an online community, declare it too radical, and insist that if anything is to be accomplished, it must be done by having centrists embrace your movement and support its legislative agenda. This route of achieving change is problematic for several reasons. It is entirely reliant on the existing establishment to produce change. It allows opportunist centrists, such as EphraelStern, to insist that communities *need* people like them and that they should be platformed to *fix* the community. They claim these steps are

necessary for change to occur. Centrists will deny that violence or the threat of violence is effective, ignoring history. Many successful social movements, such as the civil rights movement that brought an end to Jim Crow had both the civil disobedience elements of leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and the militant approach of groups like the Black Panthers. The status quo at the time could be challenged both by peaceful resistance and boycotts AND by social support programs and radical, militant groups who were willing to defend themselves against establishment police forces. Concessions were made only when both elements of the protestors had gained significant sway in national politics. Leftist spaces should not allow themselves to be infiltrated and overwhelmed by people claiming that the only way a movement can be successful is to appeal to political centrists and convert their political opponents. While such conversation is not inherently bad, when the people expressing those viewpoints are allowed to take positions of power in the community, the original leftist intent of the group is irreparably watered down and lost. The group cannot be effective, although the effectiveness of groups organized through Reddit and Discord should be called into question in general.

EphraelStern and Laurelai Bailey

The drama, however, was not yet over. Users on Twitter and other platforms had been hard at work connecting the dots, ultimately resulting in suspicion being cast that EphraelStern's accounts were simply alts for Laurelai Bailey - an infamous leftist who has been in the spotlight as an accused rapist and snitch. On March 1, 2022, a transwoman on Twitter posted a thread saying:

"I've been sitting on this for a while, but I'm 99% certain that BimboPolitic/hypnotransgirl[1] is Laurelai Bailey. There's way too many similarities for it to be a coincidence. This person has a large following and she's infamous in trans circles under her real name for being a literal rapist but no one seems to have put two and two together before??? We either have two trans women who are in their late 30s, have both had an association with the Coffins in the past, have served in the US military, are both really into The Dictator's Handbook, have kinks for bimbofication and hypnosis, have a strong attachment to Shinigami Eyes, have done something in the past that angered the trans community quite a bit, and live in Texas or it's the same person having done a rebrand to escape the fact that SHE'S A RAPIST."

The person who posted the thread also included similar imagery of Inanna and religious symbolism that were shared across both accounts as well as other evidence. Both EphraelStern and Laurelai Bailey (LB) had made posts about accidentally reblogging hypno-smut on their SFW Tumblr pages, made Patreon accounts offering similar services, had similar typing styles through IMs/Discord, used the word “unhinged” liberally, and shared a handful of identities, such as being transwomen in Texas who had served in the military and shared mental health diagnosis. Both were vocally in favor of nuclear power and wrote extensively about the degrowth movement and how it was genocidal. When articles or statements written by each person on their beliefs about the formation of gender were run through a comparison tool designed to see how similar two writings were, they scored a 1.0, the most similar possible.

Comments from 3 years ago in EphraelStern’s reddit history showed her defending Laurelai, suggesting that she was the victim of a “deranged cancel cult on the left” and attempted to discredit those who accused Laurelai of rape. The EphraelStern account would defend Laurelai while implying she was not personally known by ES, with statements such as: “Say this Laurelai person is as bad as everyone says, and eats kittens to boot...” Statements like these serve both to distance the self from the account in question while also making anyone attacking the rapist, in this case LB, appear ridiculous. Later, once the initial connection between the two had been made, Ephrael changed stories and said:

“Im am not going to go into my traumas around that woman. Shes a fucking mimic. This is what she does is she takes parts from other people to wear them. I don’t think she has any original parts. We dated a long time ago, I really didn’t want to get into it. If you all want to go after her then go after her leave me out of it.”

Statements like this are problematic. Primarily, what incentive does ES have to go to bat for a rapist and smear the victim unless ES is close to the perpetrator in some way? Then, ES claims to have dated Laurelai, meaning either ES lied about not knowing or being Laurelai in order to smear a victim and cast doubt on the accusations or ES met Laurelai at some point after learning about the accusations and still chose to enter a romantic relationship.

In other DMs that were revealed, however, she claims that people are trying to dox her individually and that she could not possibly fight the accusations. Through the remaining admins of the Discord server, we learned that her last message to them indicates that someone had successfully doxed her “very quickly” and that she was deleting her accounts in response.

Some time after the connection between the two accounts was established, another user submitted an image in which a user refers to ES as “Laurelai” in what we are told is ES’s private Discord server. So now, in addition to shared experiences, shared diagnosis, shared military experience, shared knowledge of niche religious/spiritual symbolism, and shared language, we have a user referring to ES directly as Laurelai.

As the evidence continued to pile up, EphraelStern turned one of her twitter accounts private and seems to have been largely away from the Anti-work communities for nearly a full day. Early in the morning of March 3rd, she deleted her twitter and reddit accounts, left the Anti-work discord, and made numerous other accounts private. Known Laurelai Bailey accounts that were mentioned by name, but not tagged, went private shortly after being named in twitter threads.

The connection to Laurelai Bailey is incredibly concerning. LB was interrogated by the FBI and asked to become an informant in an anarchist activist group, to which she responded that the group hated her and would never allow her to join. [However, her cooperation seems to have sent several activists to prison and is likely why no charges were brought against her individually.](#) She [has been accused by several individuals of rape.](#) With the evidence compiled, it is likely that EphraelStern/BimboPolitics/hypnotransgirl and Laurelai Bailey are the same person. It is also possible that they are simply connected in some other way, but given the heap of evidence gathered, it seems most likely that EphraelStern is simply an alt account for Laurelai. EphraelStern’s Reddit account was around 9 years old, during which time they had risen to moderate a handful of communities, one of which was r/rape. The possibility that r/rape had been infiltrated by the alt account of someone with well known rape accusations is chilling. Also of concern is the fact that a possible alt-account of a known “snitch” who had sent anarchists to prison successfully assumed power of what had originally been an anarchist space.

Conclusion

There are several reasons to be concerned, even though EphraelStern has left the moderation team of both the subreddit and Discord spaces. The power structures that enabled her to gain control in both spaces are entirely untouched. Assuming that EphraelStern is an alt account for Laurelie Bailey, it is likely that she will, eventually, reinvent herself and start this process over again. The power structures that enabled this to happen in the first place must not be allowed to remain untouched and allow it to happen again.

The existing moderation team, now made up primarily of power mods on the subreddit side and EphraelStern’s friends and defenders in Discord, remain

untouched aside from losing ES. In response to her departure, they have once again lashed out at the former moderators who felt it necessary to create their own space. In fact, they have blamed them for the doxing attempts, despite the fact that they clearly originated from other Twitter users or right wing spaces, such as Kiwi Farms that are not associated with the former moderators or their new server. They continue to decry any attempts at calling out the infiltration and heavy handed moderation as transphobia, despite the fact that a significant portion of the criticisms and the efforts to make them public have been led by people who are trans that are beloved members of their communities. Our sources indicate that the remaining moderators of the subreddit would rather simply make no comment. They believe the subreddit has already experienced too much drama and that this must go unacknowledged to prevent further chaos. The moderators of the Discord server are taking a similar approach, passing the ownership of the server to another administrator who appears to have wanted more control over the Discord community since the initial drama began. In both instances, the people who are most responsible for allowing ES to join the moderation team and rise to become the face of moderation efforts will face absolutely no meaningful consequences for their choices, which lead to someone who is possibly dangerous both to individuals and the community as a whole rise to the very top of the moderation tree. The structures that allowed ES to infiltrate communities that she should have been denied entry to persist, meaning they are still open to threats from similar bad actors and would rather sit on their hands than address their vulnerabilities.

Additionally, leftist spaces should be aware that they are susceptible both to gradual co-option by centrists and to rapid infiltration from opportunists and bad actors alike. The structure of sites like Discord and Reddit, which by nature give tremendous power to a few moderators who can largely remain behind the scenes, should never be fully trusted. Leftists using online spaces to form communities should be keenly aware of this and must take action to secure their communities, ensuring that the moderators remain believers in the original message of the community, especially those who will be next in line should something happen to the ranking member of the community's moderation team.

In times of drama, the community is likely to fracture and the moderation team is likely to be placed under tremendous pressure and face immense criticism, no matter what course of action they choose. In these moments, it is especially important that new members of the team are carefully vetted. Opportunists thrive on taking advantage of openings created by drama. They will appear friendly, helpful, and experienced. All of these will be leveraged to get themselves into a position of power, which will be used to water down the original moderation team with people who are more similar to themselves, ultimately resulting in a takeover by opportunist infiltrators. New moderators should be carefully vetted, especially

when it is easy to link their accounts across multiple social media platforms. They **must** be carefully examined to ensure the community will be moderated by people who will generally believe in the community's ideals and represent not only its current membership, but the intent of the community. Had the moderation team of r/antiwork been more careful in their vetting of EphraelStern, it is entirely possible this calamity could have been averted, at least in part. But because the barriers in place failed, a potentially dangerous person was allowed to heavily influence the community.

Additionally, members of various online communities should know about how someone like Laurelai Bailey could possibly reinvent themselves through alt-accounts and infiltrate spaces such as Anti-Work. It is clear that these people thrive on online interactions. While EphraelStern was calling members of the anti-work community she did not like "terminally online dipshits," she passed time moderating several online communities and admitted on several occasions that she was probably online too much. Both LB and ES moderated several communities on Reddit and other forums, using their power and influence to lash out against those they did not like and spin the narratives to benefit themselves to those who remained in the communities they moderated. EphraelStern's account on Reddit was created around the same time LB fell from prominence. There are significant overlaps and similarities between their social media and usage of sites like Patreon. If one assumes they are the same person, it shows how someone who is infamous in leftist circles could reinvent themselves and, with a little more caution, grow to prominence again in several circles. *If* they are the same person, it is likely that this will happen again. Someone going to these lengths to maintain a prominent online presence does not simply disappear from the internet for good. They will be back under new alternate accounts and with similar, but slightly different, talking points and they will engage in prominent leftist spaces. They will build an audience, which they will use to continue climbing the ladder into other prominent spaces.

The moderators of online leftist communities bear the responsibility to ensure that their communities are safe from people like LB and possible ES, who would work against the intention of the group and who may expose members to law enforcement willingly. They **MUST** remain on constant lookout for bad actors and harmful people. Moderators must be wary of people who join and seek to consolidate power. ES frequently claimed that moderators seeking community input, allowing for moderator elections, or other methods of decentralizing control over the space would be harmful to the community. She needed to have absolute power over the group and spun a web of lies and misinformation to achieve her goal. Moderators **MUST** be on the lookout for this type of behavior in their own spaces. The ease with which ES built a following and gained control of several

subreddits is troubling and care must be taken in the future to ensure something like this does not happen again.

It is also worth noting that bad actors will use online spaces to infiltrate and act as informants of leftist spaces. Anything that is going to be done that may have legal or real world ramifications for those involved should only be organized in spaces of total trust and with minimal risk for exposure online. Reddit and Discord ARE NOT suitable for these types of things and should not be trusted for any organizing, much less organizing that may result in prison sentences or other consequences. Organizers looking to use Reddit or Discord should simply agitate online users who join their communities and direct them to good local organizations they can become involved with.

Leftists (anarchists especially) must create tools that serve our communities first. Platforms run by technocratic corporations in the pocket of the state will never truly be free or secure. Although their mainstream adoption allows for further outreach, we need more than outreach. We need the freedom to speak, grow, organize, and protect ourselves from the predators and opportunists that exploit the hierarchical nature of Discord and Reddit to infiltrate and decimate our spaces. The responsibility and potential to develop a truly free and secure platform lies with us, not a corporation.

Finally, we must continue to use our voices and collective power to speak up and identify abusers within our communities. If not for the efforts of these communities, from the ousted members of the antiwork discord, the dissenting mods on the antiwork subreddit, and those who were familiar with Laurelai Bailey coming forward on twitter, a rapist would still be moderating r/rape today. An FBI informant would still be moderating r/antiwork. Vulnerable people would still be at risk to her manipulation and ill intent.

Still, our work is not done. The power moderators that failed to vet ES/LB or hear the concerns of their community still control these spaces and are spinning their own narratives. The potential of r/antiwork and its discord have likely been lost. But now we know better. We know these people can't be trusted. We know we must protect each other.

[1] BimboPolitic, sapphicmindbreak, and hypnotransgirl are known accounts associated with the user EphraelStern. They are the names of her Twitter and other accounts, such as Patreon and SoundCloud.