**Konjuring Killjoy Ep 2: Klaiming Killjoy**

Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness – we hold these truths to be self-evident. [SFX under – patriotic music]

Or do we?

Surely, most white, cis, hetero, “normative” folks do. Under the spell of hegemonic social, political, and economic systems that were built for them, they proclaim that NOW is a great time to be Black or Brown, a woman in the US – racism and sexism are in our rearview so let’s live in the now! [SFX – record scratching]

* + Killjoy Truth: What is hardest for some does not exist for others (Ahmed, 2023, p. 241)
  + Killjoy Commitment: I am not willing to get over what is not over (Ahmed, 2023, p. 243)

Returning to the “self-evident” question:

“To live a feminist life is to make everything into something that is questionable” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 2).

Sara Ahmed spends a lot of time across her work focusing on “becoming feminist.” I love this because it feels so authentic. I don’t want to fall down the rabbit hole of debating whether it is “nature” or “nurture” when it comes to feminist identities – but I do need to point out all the institutions – family, school, government, entertainment – that actively nurture us all towards patriarchal values and socialization.

In Seven Necessary Sins for Women and Girls, Mona Eltahawy (2019) reminds us that “patriarchy is so universal and normalized,” teaching AFAB girls that they are weak and vulnerable, extinguishing what she refers to as the “pilot light of anger” they were born with. Eltahawy wants to “bottle feed rage to every” baby and asks – “What would a curriculum on ‘rage for [AFAB] girls’ look like?

That curriculum would necessarily include lessons on how to live a feminist life. Which brings us back to our original focus – Sara Ahmed and the figure of the feminist Killjoy.

[SFX interlude]

Step one in Living a Feminist Life = **NOTICING**

Killjoy Truth: You notice worlds when they are not built for you. (Ahmed, 2023, p. 241)

The logo on the restroom door – albeit slightly more involved than a rudimentary stick figure – is always wearing what is unmistakably a female gender appropriate skirt/dress. My stick figure does not resemble the rendering and in these moments includes a thought bubble with a big question mark…

“We are more likely to notice doors when we can’t open them” (Ahmed, 2023, p. 139). When we notice, we make things real (Ahmed, 2017, p. 32)

According to the Feminist Killjoy Handbook, Noticing is political labor

* + “you might notice how you are noticeable. And in noticing how you become noticeable, how you stand out, you come to see what you otherwise would not see…” (Ahmed, 2023, p. 125)

Step two in Living a Feminist Life = **BEING no longer willing to appear happy [or] to make others happy** (Ahmed, 2017, p. 58)

You experience a “snap,” a breaking point, or really “a starting point; transformation” (Ahmed, 2017, 188)

*Disorientation equals, failed orientations*

*It is the beginning of a story. Something is missing. You perceive something.*

*You are the stranger, the space invader – your arrival disturbs the whole picture.*

*A not – being not male, not white, not able bodied, not cis, hetero, etc… - can be the basis of a rebellion.*

*To be in question is to question being.*

*A sensationalist figure indeed, you Klaim yourself, Killjoy.*

Let me introduce you to them…

Sometimes dismissed as a hag, a nag, the Killjoy is known to inspire eye rolls across all institutions in which they operate.

They are a “willful subject” – not willing to participate in sexist, racist, classist, and other oppressive cultures; and an affect alien, one who is not made happy by the “right” things. The Killjoy’s questions are read as negative, being stuck in the past, but they remain relentless and refuse dismissal.

**Let me say it again…**

**KILLJOY COMMITMENT: I AM NOT WILLING TO GET OVER WHAT IS NOT OVER (Ahmed, 2023)**

Killjoys are **maladjusted.** They follow the Killjoy Maxim and “don’t adjust to injustice!” “When [things] are not funny, [they] do not laugh!” They become comfortable with causing discomfort.

**KILLJOY TRUTH: WHEN YOU HAVE TO FIGHT FOR EXISTENCE, FIGHTING CAN BECOME AN EXISTENCE**

Killjoy “is one by virtue of what she is doing. If to be a killjoy is to stand out, we bring to the front what is *not* perceived” (Ahmed, 2023, p. 126). In this way, Ahmed argues that the Killjoy is a feminist phenomenologist – with phenomenology being the study of what can be perceived, “bringing to the front of consciousness what usually recedes into the background.”

Conjuring Chappelle Roan, I would say that the killjoy is not only what we really need but also a FEMINOMENOLOGIST. A WHAT?? [SFX]

And so, we reach **step 3 in living a feminist life** – the DOING.

Ahmed encourages us to apply Killjoy as a “skill set”

* we react (say no, question, become indignant, front a refusal)
* and then we explain that reaction – we reveal the “background” or what has gone unnoticed within our social systems.

“We pull something apart so we can put it back together in another way” (Ahmed, 2023, p. 162)

Killing joy is a world-making project (Ahmed, 2023, p. 77) and we seek a world in which we can all flourish.

Most importantly, Killjoys are not satisfied with rhetoric but rather follow the Killjoy Maxim, Enact what we aim for; nothing less will do!

In addition to Killjoy, we can further get in the way, defy, disobey, and disrupt patriarchy by bringing Eltahawy’s (2019) seven necessary sins – anger, attention, profanity, ambition, power, violence, and lust – into our feminist lives.

If we follow the feminist killjoy handbook, and make these sins are own we will not only fulfill Ahmed’s maxim of “enacting what we aim for,” but also conjure a feminism that would make Eltahawy proud – a feminism so terrifying that it will make patriarchy shit its pants.

And on that note – keep an ear out for future episodes that will flesh out these approaches to feminism and follow my journey towards *Kamp Krystal Killjoy.*

References:

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