

Capitalism, Mushrooms, Magic and LAL

French historian Fernand Braudel in his trilogy *Civilization and Capitalism* (1955–79), contradicts both Lefty Karl Marx and Righty Adam Smith by showing that there is no such thing as "The Capitalist System." Braudels' key assertion is that it is not markets that cause so much pain in people's lives but rather, "antimarkets," oligopolies of a small number of huge firms that control the entire process of production - think of the automobile industry. Braudel contrasts these with mid to small sized firms that depend on others companies to collaborate on the the development and creation of their products, firms that cannot pack up and leave if they disagree with taxes or labour laws - responsible firms that treat their employees and collaborators ethically. There are capitalist companies, but no capitalist system, the world is much more complex than that and within this system there are plenty of business people who treat people and the earth with respect.

This way of seeing the world frees up some space, allowing those of us who care about justice to find some ribbons of hope in the seemingly monolithic world of environmentally and socially destructive consumerist insanity. Nestled amongst the big corporations are a multiplicity of small producers - I imagine clusters of beautiful mushrooms growing on piles of shit, their thread-like roots so very fine, but sometimes stretching unseen for miles, one in Oregon clocking in at 2,400 acres, thought to be the biggest organism in the world.

Formed in 1998 by the dynamic duo of poet, lyricist, activist, singer and tough-guy **Rosina Kazi** and her life partner: producer, sound designer, philosopher, aphorismist and king of chill, **Nicholas Murray** then joined later by bassist and walking guru **Ian De Souza**, **LAL** always proved hard to describe. That is, until you realize they're not a band, they're a music making magical mushroom, the visible flowering part of a much larger organism, connected with very fine but infinitely resilient roots.

We can talk about their music using words that eventually abandon us: *electronica, trip-hop (remember that?), electronic soul, jazz, pop, protest music, justice jams, downtempo beats, lounge, funk, world, multicult*, etc etc. Or we can talk about HOW they make music, How they live their lives, how they run their music-making firm and how the line we draw around **LAL**, delineating these three accomplished and passionate musicians is just not accurate. **LAL** is the flowering fruit of a complex network of microscopic filaments, these roots also belonging to other firms and organizations: incisive and relentless activist like No One is Illegal, ethical community based businesses like The Toronto Woman's Bookstore or my performance company Mammalian Diving Reflex. We are one, huge, justice-hungry organism, a world-wide team of individuals, groups, organizations, companies, firms, NGOs, businesses, researchers, activists, philosophers and artists.

LAL's music relentlessly cuts a deeper and deeper groove, solidify the same theme year after year after year after year: fairness will prevail. Rosina, as lyricist, recalls travelling to Bangladesh, her parent's birth place and experiencing the childhood trauma of seeing other children in destitute poverty. This vision was branded into her brain, the smoke issuing from the seared scar likely to haunt her and, in turn all of us, for the rest of our lives.

There is no capitalist system, the story is more complex and, those of us who are determined to give a shit, live our lives as if those few but powerful who tend to control most of the worlds resources are living on borrowed time and soon will be over-powered by the multitude of roots that connect us. If you have any doubts about this, please drop **LAL** a line and hang out with us; check out a party in our West End Toronto studio, search us out when we're performing in Saskatoon, Lahore, Berlin, or Scarborough and get to know our crew of passionate people; determined folk who easily create work that is deeply ethical: magic mushrooms, all of us, connected and resilient and waiting patiently for the word to spread: there is no capitalist system, there is just us.

Darren O'Donnell, Mammalian Diving Reflex