

# EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH FRENCH MEDIA COLLECTIVE CERVEAUX NON DISPONIBLES – UNICORN RIOT

## TRANSCRIPT

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Cerveaux non Disponibles (Unavailable brains) at the beginning was a webpage that existed already before the Yellow Vests movement [2018].

It was born a few years earlier and it was a single person, whom I won't name because we're anonymous, who had decided to list the content of various alternative media in order to highlight them. And this page started to become quite important since the Yellow Vests movement.

The person who was managing this page on his own started to look for information on the side of autonomous circles. Circles linked to what some might call the ultra-left or anti-fascism. And in fact, there was almost nothing.

You have to know that we were a little bit alone. At that time I was not yet part of this page.

People were taking a position or had already a political line and judging, saying that it was a fascist movement. We heard that a lot.

People saw tricolor (French national) flags and they unconsciously thought that it was a fascist movement, also because the far-right mobilized.

It was an uprising of poor people who were tired of paying bills and didn't feel responsible for having to pay a tax in the name of ecology.

As a result, the page started to get a lot of views because it also gave advice on how to protest, how to defend yourself legally.

We already knew how to fight against repression. And then we said to ourselves that it was one of the most beautiful political movements we had seen, because there was no leader or structure, it took place on roundabouts, people did logistical blockades. And so, as time went on, several people joined this page. And it became a page that started to create content on its own, photos, videos to follow the demonstrations, editing articles, while encouraging people to participate.

People were sending us information or things they wanted to share and several times we did it.

We continue to keep this line. On the other hand, we were careful not to film the faces.

Generally, what brought us together was that as a team in Cerveaux non Disponibles, we joined this movement immediately.

Basically we did not pass a judgement on it, saying to ourselves sometimes, "we don't really know what we're going to find there, but it's people who are rebelling. We have to go and listen to what they have to say."

And then finally, the dynamic and the excitement that it created convinced us all to be part of it. We participated directly in this movement on the roundabouts. When we went there, we had heard a lot of preconceived ideas that these were racist people, because there were indeed a few incidents.

But in fact, what we saw were mainly people who were suffering, and that far-right demands had no place from the start of this movement. And as a result, we imposed a line which was very open and not condescending, not militant purism, etc.

Just a bit strict on the question of racism. That was still very important.

It means that our participation in this movement is in the context of class struggle, but it also has an anti-fascist connotation behind it.

There was indeed a huge social movement following the beating of a music producer called Michel Zecler, about two years ago. What happened is he goes out of the studio and he literally gets beaten up by the police with anti-Black and racist insults.

This happened in fact while they were passing a law called the Global Security Law, in which the article 24 forbid to film the police.

This global security law also included a lot of other things, namely the use of drones to record protesters and a whole bunch of liberticidal measures.

But the fact that this person got beaten up created an impressive spontaneous movement because in addition, we were coming straight out of the COVID crisis and we ended up with hundreds of thousands of people all over France, maybe even a million people in the streets.

It was very important.

At the moment we still have the right to film the police.

There's also an application that exists that was created by our friends from the Collectif Urgence Notre Police Assassine ("Emergency: the police murders") that allows you to list and record videos.

Because sometimes, when you film the police, you don't know what can happen. The policeman can take your phone and throw it away, but if you film it with this application, the video is sent directly. If you ever see cases of police violence or mishandling, you should really not hesitate to use it. Outside France or Belgium, I don't know if it works well.

So there have been cases in France, that are really terrifying: journalists who have been beaten up by the police during their work. It's getting harder and harder for journalists to do their job. Some are insulted.

This is also the case sometimes even for people who are part of the League of Human Rights.

So to say in France, we have reached such a situation that the medics who are already in a demonstration can be beaten, journalists can be beaten.

We've already seen lawyers who, when they were demonstrating, got arrested, got hit. I laugh about that, but it is not funny at all.

It shows that we don't question their rules. It can be difficult for journalists to do their job, especially when it comes to filming police at demonstrations.

Given that I think in Western Europe, we are one of the most repressive countries. This reality of the French police, we knew it before the demonstrations.

The inhabitants of working-class neighborhoods have always experienced it on a daily basis. This is also the case for supporters' clubs of football ultras and supporters' clubs in general.

But I think that the Yellow Vests made more visible what the French police really is. I say it because after the Charlie Hebdo attack, the police were automatically heroes, etc., and now, after 19 or 20 people lost their eyes, journalists got beaten up, medics were hit with grenades etc. people have started to realize what the reality of the French police is.

If you look at the mainstream media, it's very complicated. We now have channels that are directly owned by the far-right, including a billionaire called Vincent Bolloré, who is a neo-fascist and partly financed the campaign of Eric Zemmour, who is even more radical than Marine Le Pen. This person bought a group called Lagardère. He is now the owner of a very important media consortium, both in the written press, in publishing, in the editing of newspapers and various media, including the Canal+ group and part of Universal Music.

I think that this is something we will be confronted with more and more, that is to say that Bolloré is a bit like our Berlusconi.

And generally speaking, anyway, critique and opposition within the mainstream media are almost non-existent. There is some reporting that you can find in public TV, sometimes on Arte or on France Télévisions

Generally, it's very very difficult to make our voice heard on a news channel that is a bit less fascist but still not like the TV station BFM. Our spokesperson will be limited to maybe 30, 40 seconds or one minute.

Now concerning the social media of the movements. I think we have an intermediary media like in our case.

There are more and more that have emerged, especially with the Yellow Vests movement.

There are some that have been around historically, for much longer than us. For example, Contre-Attaque, which was called before Nantes Révoltée, which does a very, very, important job both in the creation of magazines, in the creation of stickers and media at a frequency that is extremely regular.

Other autonomous and independent media began to emerge in certain cities. There is another one that is rather linked to the party France Insoumise, which is called Le Média, which does interesting investigative work.

We are lucky to have Médiapart, I don't know if you've heard of it, which also does investigative work.

And a new media called Blast. These are all media that have many followers. In our case we are an autonomous media that assumes a line that is truly revolutionary. The media I mentioned before are controlled more or less by certain groups, or in any case have a line that is perhaps a little less radical than ours.

There are also a few who are specialized in ecology or anti-racism. It would take a long time to list them all.

Unfortunately, as we exist mainly on the Internet, we are dependent on GAFAM and their algorithms. And in our case, by taking a radical line, we are not immune to the fact that one day our page may be deleted.

We've already been shadow banned on Facebook several times, so our algorithm has literally gone down. It has also hit our Tik-Tok that is threatened with deletion.

And unfortunately, sooner or later, we're afraid that our Instagram account, which is probably our most followed page, is going to go down and we're not sure what to do about that.

Because even having an actual website or a Telegram group, it's unfortunately not enough at the moment.

So I think that our strong point, which is also maybe sometimes our weakness as Cerveaux non Disponibles, is the fact that we are all volunteers. We don't get any money for the content we produce, so we all have a life on the side. We all work, we remain anonymous.

In any case, on the field we have different people, who are close to us and know who we are. I have no doubt that the intelligence service and the police know very well our identities. But we avoid that because we assume that it's not very important to know who is behind this page. This anonymity also allows for active participation. So to say if a collective goes along with our line and maybe lacks visibility, we can give them a hand.

For example, in the case of police violence at certain local struggles, more particularly in the context of ecology, or even during certain strikes. I think the fact that we are not being directly controlled is a positive thing. Because of this we can keep our hard radical line.

On the contrary the media that I mentioned, they are more social democratic and may sometimes do investigative work and be more grassroots, but they can get more problems, they are more likely to get lawsuits, sometimes even pressure from some billionaires who want to silence them.

I would say that the independent press has a future, especially on the Internet, and that these are tools that are not sufficiently invested in. That is what interested me and made join CND. The fact that we can popularize our ideas outside of the left-wing circles.

Part of the audience that we will find on Facebook is more old Yellow Vests, or people who still claim to be Yellow Vests, who don't necessarily have the typical activist profile that you would expect.

On Instagram, our ideas reach both left wing people and a lot of young people.

And when I talk to people around me, I'm quite happy to see that we are followed by people who are not really militants and that militant people say "I follow you, but I'm more looking for something more concrete in our articles."

We also make articles on topics like geopolitics but I find it interesting to keep a balance.

Now on the question of the difficulties independent media can have, I'll just speak for us, I think that being dependent on GAFA, simply not having the same budget as our enemies to be able to broadcast our information is problematic.

And maybe we are maybe a little too alone in doing so. And I encourage people as much as possible to take this kind of initiative. Make Tik-Tok accounts, be as simple as possible.

But I think that the communication of information is really one of the keys of the war, if it doesn't prevent field work. Because this is perhaps also one of the weaknesses of independent media.

Even if they are more and more followed, it doesn't necessarily materialize in the street.

People don't necessarily go to the streets because they follow a certain media, or because a video is going to get 100,000 or 1 million views.

The problem is that we won't necessarily have the tens of thousands of people who watched these videos right away on the street.

So it's important to have media, but it should not stop you from doing fieldwork in parallel.

In addition, emotionally, sometimes it's difficult. You may have the same problem.

There are trolling attacks. In our case, it's the far-right, it's the police. It's fake profiles, bots that are programmed to respond on certain keywords and sometimes fake profiles first, which are much more easily identifiable. Now, on Facebook, you have to admit that it's very well done.

And obviously in certain subjects, such as in the question of migration or as soon as it touches the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, we will be attacked by dozens of trolls.

It's true that receiving threats or insults all day long can be very tiring and that's why we stay anonymous.

And I am not telling people to be anonymous. But if you're going to expose yourself as an individual or as a person by setting up a media outlet, be very careful, especially in these times.

**UNICORN  
RIOT**