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BATTLE ACTS

"...no more traditions chains shall bind us..."



SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The Women's Liberation Movement of today differs profoundly from all previous ones. Even the name suggests a fundamental change in the character of the movement. The very word "liberation" introduces a qualitatively different concept of the struggle than did words like "suffrage" and "equal rights."

No longer is it just another phase in the slow, gradual, evolutionary process to merely enlarge the rights of women. No longer does it aim only to gain partial political, economic or social rights in one area or another.

The Women's Liberation Movement today seeks to strike at the very root of women's oppression. It calls for a total transformation of the subservient, secondary status of women in all phases of life.

This does not mean that many of the great women who waged such a stupendous battle in the last century for women's suffrage, as well as other political rights, didn't think in terms of changing the fundamental character of our entire role, status and position in society. Some actively fought for it all their lives, all the way back to the period of the French Revolution, when Mary Wollstonecraft wrote "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," which was not one iota less eloquent than Tom Paine's "Rights of Man."

But the historical context of these early struggles was entirely different than that of today. It was no accident that the struggle for women's suffrage took place in this country concomitantly with the rise and development of the capitalist system itself. It was also the period of struggle against chattel slavery. It was a period when it seemed to many that new laws could provide justice and solve all inequities.

Women fought passionately and energetically for a variety of laws to improve our condition in a great many areas. Full equality, they hoped, would flow from that.

But many "feminine" traits and "masculine" traits, rooted in social prejudice and male privilege, were accepted even by some leaders as nothing more than norms of proper behavior and were not seriously challenged by and large. Education and the vote appeared to be, in the minds of most women active in the struggle, the basic remedy which would ultimately abolish female servitude.

In sharp contrast today, every concept that perpetuates inequality of the sexes is exposed and resolutely fought as part of the overall struggle. Each passing day brings new evidence that the struggle is conducted on the broadest front and covers the most varied forms of all the institutionalized, built-in forms of male domination on every level of capitalist society.

The earlier struggles of the women's movement were viewed within the framework of the establishment. Countless women waged a heroic, uphill fight in the face of monumental opposition. They valiantly faced ridicule, intimidation, isolation, harassment, physical violence and jail. But difficult as it was, the solution appeared to be within the confines of the existing system—in the struggle for equal laws.

How vastly different today! It is undoubtedly true that the moderate current in the movement, as exemplified by NOW (National Organization of Women) and similar groupings, is still the predominant one. But that is not what has special significance. Virtually all the great movements since the dawn of capitalist society, like this one, have been led in the initial stage by the middle class.

What is particularly significant and extremely encouraging is that there is also another current—a genuine revolutionary tendency among women. We only need look at some of the prolific literature in this movement to verify this. Much of it comes from the young militant women.

Today there are few who really believe that mere legislation under the present system will really change the basic status of women. On many levels, women are groping, seeking a way to hammer out a sound theoretical foundation as well as a strategic and tactical approach for the struggle.

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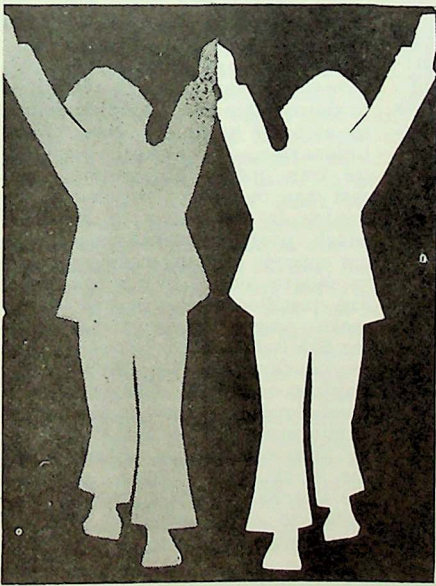


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As soon as the question is opened theoretically, the entire subject of the origin and development of the patriarchy is unavoidably and inevitably brought to the fore. This makes it necessary to open the books of Marx and Engels. Many women who have grappled with the question theoretically, beginning in 1945 with Simone de Beauvoir up to the present with Kate Millett, have been unable to avoid giving extensive attention to Frederick Engels' book, "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State." This book, although written over 85 years ago, remains the bedrock for any historical materialist understanding of the family, the patriarchy and women's oppression.

Like today, the nineteenth-century women's movement had its origins in the white middle class, but over a period of decades, it gradually moved further and further to the right. By 1920, when the amendment granting women the right to vote was finally passed, the women's movement virtually disintegrated.

The contemporary movement also has its origins in the middle class, but in contradistinction to the earlier movement, it has considerable and growing revolutionary currents moving to the left. These currents not only identify with working, poor and oppressed women, but see themselves as a world force, and many within it are allied with all the anti-imperialist forces of the world.

In still another way the present movement is profoundly different in character from the earlier movement in that it carries on a simultaneous struggle on all levels and against all forms of male domination.

There is scarcely a city of any size these days in which we do not have at least one of more than a hundred possible activities of the women's movement—be it a consciousness-raising session in Croton Falls, a women's karate class in Champaign, Illinois, the seizing of the Ladies Home Journal, interruption of a CBS meeting in Los Angeles, innumerable picket lines, demonstrations and protests against restaurants, clubs, bars, newspapers, magazines, supermarkets, business institutions of every variety, as well as struggles and experiments on day care, welfare, liberation schools, abortion and contraception, etc., ad infinitum, and this is happening not only in every part of the country, but within differing class stratifications.

This broad-based, wide-front participation is not the way it used to be in the older movement. True, the actual level of struggle is still in a very early stage, but the potential is enormous.

There are some in the progressive movement today who say, or imply, that the struggle for women's liberation, vital as it is, should be a second priority; that the struggle for a revolutionary transformation of society, the elimination of capitalism, is the first priority.

The fundamental error in this view is that such a transformation of society is impossible if our struggle is second priority. The women's struggle is an indispensable element in the very prosecution of every struggle for the transformation to socialism.

Not only must we ceaselessly conduct a struggle on the specific issues of women's oppression, and against male chauvinism, but we must apply it in the general struggle against capitalism and imperialism. Whether it be in the opposition to the wars, the struggle against racism, for self-determination, or in struggles for national liberation, for higher wages or union representation, wherever there is any kind of progressive struggle, there must be the struggle for women's liberation. One segment or another of the revolutionary current of women's liberation must struggle actively, energetically and deliberately intervene, making its presence felt. And woe unto any progressive movement that fails to take this into account!

Superficially, or initially, it seems that the movement for Women's Liberation disregards or denies the validity of the class struggle. But already, there is a class differentiation going on within the movement. We believe that the struggle for Women's Liberation must be deepened and developed as a necessary requisite for any successful transformation of society to socialism.

by Sue Davis

Angela Davis has become a prisoner of war, taken Tuesday, October 13, in a recent battle against Black America. Accused by the state of California, stalked and seized by the FBI and imprisoned by New York City, Angela Davis is held hostage by a coast-to-coast ruling class conspiracy. With no bail and facing extradition to California, Angela Davis is being charged there with the capital offenses of murder and kidnapping.

But why is Angela Davis being treated like that? Why is she the focal point of the ruling class's fury? What could she be or have done that could possibly warrant such actions?

Angela Davis grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, during the early years of the civil rights movement. An outstanding student, she received a scholarship to a private high school in New York City. From there, she went on to Brandeis, the Sorbonne in Paris, the University of Frankfurt in Germany, and in the face of such enormous obstacles as being Black and a woman, she won the highest academic honors to be awarded by the white, middle class world.

To achieve such academic distinction against overwhelming odds has caused less heroic individuals to surrender the struggle. The imperialist establishment maintains a large array of subtle blandishments to lure potential rebels—most particularly the educated and gifted ones in this country—away from the rebelling oppressed peoples. But Angela Davis not only resisted the reactionary ruling class, but in so doing captured the imagination and respect of students and oppressed, women and men, by her open stand against racism and all forms of oppression.

In September 1969 her right to teach at UCLA was denied by the California Board of Regents because of her membership in the Communist Party, which she did not deny. Instead she asserted: "Let there be no doubt—my stand is forthright. As a Black woman, my politics and political affiliation are bound up with and flow from participation in my people's struggle for liberation and with the fight of oppressed people all over the world against American imperialism." Although the ruling by the Board of Regents was overturned, she was

free
angela



not rehired after a year of exemplary teaching.

During that year, she became head of the defense committee for the Soledad Brothers (three Black prisoners accused of killing a white guard at Soledad Prison in Salinas, California). So, to talk about Angela Davis is to talk about the Soledad Brothers. Her fate and theirs remain inextricably intertwined.

In January 1970 in a special exercise yard in the Soledad prison, it is said that when eight white prisoners and seven Black prisoners got into a fight, a tower guard opened fire into the group, killing three Blacks and injuring one white. Survivors claim that the guard fired methodically at the Black prisoners without provocation and then let one of them bleed to death without medical attention.

Three days later a county grand jury made public its finding that the guard's action was "justifiable homicide." In less than half an hour after this was announced on the prison radio, a white guard (not the one who fired the shots) was found beaten to death.

Six days later three Black prisoners were accused of the murder: John Cluchette, Fleeta Drumgo and George Jackson, who have since be-

come known as the Soledad Brothers. Their attorneys claim they were accused, not on evidence, but because they were identified as Black militants.

On August 7, Jonathan Jackson, the 17-year-old brother of George Jackson, invaded the San Rafael Courthouse single-handed in the midst of a trial. From a satchel he produced guns to arm the defendant James McClain, a San Quentin prisoner accused of assaulting a guard, and two fellow prisoners who were to testify, Russell Magee and William Christmas.

The four Black men then took the judge, a district attorney and three jurors hostage. As he left, Jonathan shouted, "Free the Soledad Brothers by 12:30." As they started to drive off, San Quentin guards and Marin County police riddled the car with bullets, killing three of the Black men and Judge Haley as well.

From that day to this, the name Angela Davis has made headlines. The FBI placed her on the ten most-wanted list, with the ominous label of "possibly armed and dangerous." The way the case is being handled one would think that Angela Davis herself had pulled the trigger that killed Judge Haley — not to mention Jackson, Christmas and McClain. Actually the only alleged link between the San Rafael incident and Angela Davis is that the guns used by Jackson were supposedly registered in her name.

But the ruling class needs to blame someone for the historic events of San Rafael. It desperately needs to find someone responsible. It would never admit that it alone is responsible; that being so anxious to stop the audacious Black revolutionaries, it quickly sacrificed its own judge. The ruling class that has meted out decades of injustice in its courts to countless Black, poor, oppressed people cannot concede that any measures taken to secure justice by the oppressed are justified. So it has chosen to make Angela Davis a scapegoat for San Rafael by charging her under the obscure law that anyone in any way connected with a major crime is considered as guilty as the actual participants in that crime. As Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party, states in the October 17 Black Panther, "In order to draw attention from the responsible persons, Angela Davis

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by Tania Zivkovich

When Lucy Stone was born in 1818 on a New England farm, just the day-to-day struggle to live made women old by 35 and killed many not long after. It was a time when farm women like Lucy's mother rose before dawn to milk the cows, cooked huge breakfasts for their families and spent the day caring for their children, washing, cleaning, cooking, sewing and not too infrequently bearing more children. It was a time when birth control was unheard of for the poor, when girls, reaching womanhood, were expected to marry and become pregnant--again and again and again. It made no difference if a woman's body, after her seventh or eighth child, could take no more. She had no control over these things. Doctors, even if they knew or cared, were threatened with imprisonment for telling a woman whose next child would kill her how to prevent it. It was a time when after marriage, by custom and law, a husband had complete control over a wife, her children and her property. This was the way things were when Lucy Stone was a child, and she was determined not to accept this life when she became a woman. She didn't. After working for nine years as a school teacher at a dollar a week, she managed to save enough to enter college at the age of 25. It's very difficult to conceive today what it meant in Lucy Stone's time for a woman to get an education. At best it was considered totally unnecessary, if not downright immoral. Oberlin College in Ohio, which she attended, was the only coeducational college in America. Lucy's commitment to the struggle for women's rights grew while she was there. Since Oberlin was a station for the underground railroad, she also came into contact with the abolitionist movement and came to understand that the fight for the rights of Black people and those of women was intimately connected. She had first begun to understand this when at the World Anti-Slavery Convention a few years earlier, the great abolitionist Garrison had fought for the right of the women delegates to speak. She saw that while Black people were held in chattel slavery, with their rights and dignity stolen from them, white women were also enslaved. Neither had the right to hold property, to vote, to have custody of their own person; both were subject to having their children stolen from them, both had to do the most menial, backbreaking work without pay, and both had been taught that they were brainless, inferior beings. She became determined to fight for the rights of both. Her stay at Oberlin ended on a note of struggle. A few of the honor students were chosen to read their essays at the graduation exercises, but the Ladies Board ("guardians" of the

female students) decided such conduct would be outrageous for females. Instead, male students would read the women's essays for them. Lucy refused to write an essay and was joined in her boycott by the other women students and two of the men. After leaving school she decided to become an abolitionist speaker. But in her first speech, made from the pulpit of her

brother's church, the subject was women.

It was the first speech on women's rights ever made by an American woman. When

Lucy Stone stood up to speak that first time, there was no women's movement to back her up, there was no great sympathy among the people for her cause, there was only

Lucy, alone, speaking out against many centuries of oppression, ignorance and prejudice. But the birth and growth of the women's movement soon after showed that Lucy had been speaking for many women. She joined the abolition movement, and when the women's movement began, she devoted her life to it.

Everything Lucy did, even in her personal life, was devoted to freedom. After being in the struggle for 10 years, Lucy married

Henry Blackwell, and the couple opened their wedding ceremony by reading aloud a protest they had both written against the inequalities of the marriage law. And

Lucy kept her own name. To Lucy, a woman giving up her name and taking on her husbands, as slaves took on the last names of their masters, was a real symbol of the whole

oppression of women. Marriage didn't stop Lucy's activism. At the end of the Civil War both she and Henry devoted themselves to the struggle to give women and Black people the vote under the 15th amendment. When it became obvious that the amendment would not include women, she still fought for the passage to give Black men the vote. It took another 50 years of struggle for women to win that right too. It was during this period that Lucy was instrumental in organizing the American Woman Suffrage Association, which was aimed at continuing the fight for the vote and for women's rights in general. She also started publishing a paper, "The Woman's Journal," which she and her husband (later with help from their daughter) edited and managed alone for the duration of their lives. When Lucy Stone died at the age of 71, she left behind her a life of never-tiring struggle for the rights of women. It is because of her struggle and the struggle of countless others like her, of her generation and those that followed, that some women today have been lifted a few steps out of the misery of the women of her day. But the fight is far from over, and we as today's women owe it to Lucy Stone and all the others, but even more so to ourselves and to those women yet unborn, to carry that struggle onward until complete liberation for all women is won.



h o w

These are the functions and the number of women that we found necessary to carry off a street meeting, with sound equipment, at 14th Street in New York City. Sound equipment is not always necessary and, in fact, it is equally important to be able to hold a street meeting without the help of sound. If you don't have sound equipment, you don't need any permit from the pigs, at all. However, if you don't have sound, it is all the more important to bring an American flag, because that's the first thing the cops will hassle you about. (But keep the flag hidden until they ask for it!)

We have found that the most efficient means of working is in squads. Each squad is responsible for a specific function and for every member of the squad, making defense a much easier job.

TO ORGANIZE A STREET

M E E T I N G

Speakers Squad:

1. Chairwoman
2. Speakers -- 4-10 women

Defense Squad:

1. 4 women to handle hecklers
2. 4 women to defend the speaker and sound equipment
3. 3 women on a roving squad

Squad in Charge of Sound Equipment:

1. 1 woman to wear sound equipment belt
2. At least 2 women to rotate holding the sound equipment

Squad to Deal with the Pigs:

1. 1 woman to haggle with the cops
2. Another woman to take her place if the first is busted
3. 1 woman to hold the tape recorder
4. 1 woman to take pictures in case of busts

General Squad -- All the functions in the squad should be rotated:

1. 2 women to hold the banner
2. Make sure the ladder and American flag are brought
3. Leaflets -- one general and one to be handed out when the pigs come
4. New names
5. A second photographer for photographing the street meeting

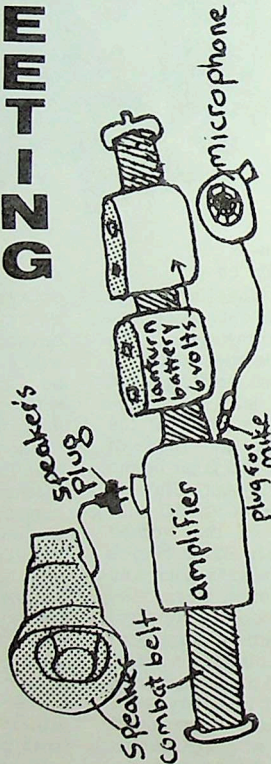
The next step is to secure a sound permit. This is the job of the chairwoman. We had our location selected on the basis of where on

a Saturday afternoon we could reach the largest number of people. A trip to the local pig station, \$5 and the names and addresses of three other women will get you a permit. Ours was denied because the pigs didn't want us using 14th Street. But we insisted on putting in the application -- that way we would get a receipt for the \$5 and proof that we had applied.

A focus for the meeting is required so that each woman can prepare beforehand a rap that she will give. Ours dealt with many of the aspects of the oppression of women. The job of the chairwoman is to introduce each speaker and provide continuity and control over the street meeting. A leaflet was prepared dealing with the subjects being discussed. Since 14th Street is a shopping district for many Puerto Rican workers, this leaflet was translated into Spanish. We found that even five reams of leaflets were not entirely sufficient for a four-hour street meeting.

We prepared a second leaflet in the event that the cops might try and bust up the meeting. Only two reams of this leaflet are necessary and need only be used when the cops appear on the scene. Our leaflet went into the reasons why the cops wouldn't want women on the street talking with other women. Two women have to be prepared to deal with the cops and should be prepared to take a bust. The tape recorder is used at this point for evidence in the event that there is a bust. One photographer should be stationed near the pigs, another in the crowd. While they are all keeping the pigs busy, the chairwoman takes over the meeting and begins agitating on why these pigs are trying to stop the street meeting. Well-worked out arguments should be prepared in advance as the chairwoman could be agitating for half an hour until the cops split or pull a bust. The cops are extremely hesitant about busting in a large, angry and informed crowd, especially one that is mostly women standing in front of wide store windows.

The women on the sound squad are responsible for keeping the sound system functioning. We use batteries and an amplifier hooked onto a combat belt, which one of the women wears. This allows mobility, if that becomes necessary, and it can easily be covered under a jacket. The speaker and mike are plugged into the belt.



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YAWF WOMEN

on the Street

Within sixty seconds of crossing 14th Street, a banner—"Equal Pay for Equal Work"—went up. The sound equipment was ready, leaflets in both English and Spanish were being distributed, and the chairwoman was standing on a ladder speaking about how the mass media distorts women's liberation. The rest of the women, including most of the defense guard, formed itself into a semi-circle as the street meeting began, and the passersby began filling in around them. On the face of it, the set-up looked smooth and simple to the people in the street. Well, that's how it should look—smooth!

Many of the people in this shopping district, mostly for the poor, stopped to look and listen, at first out of curiosity. The first speaker was a working mother of 2 children. She contrasted her homelife and work to that of the much-written-about bourgeois mothers like Joan Kennedy.

Soon, the curiosity changed to interest for passersby—particularly women. There were rarely less than 50 people listening and often there were more than 100. The few hecklers were quickly and efficiently taken care of by our defense guard or sometimes by the bystanders.

Since the audience at a street meeting is constantly in flux, there were a few points that we all felt should be repeated over and over. For example, whether the speaker's subject was working women, abortions, child care, welfare, schools, or wives of prisoners, she made it clear to those who may have doubted or misunderstood that women's liberation must be, most importantly, the fight against the exploitation and oppression of Black, Puerto Rican and poor white women.

Seven out of the eleven speakers had never spoken at a street meeting before, and some had never spoken publicly. Our convincing ourselves that we could get up and speak was just one aspect of overcoming the oppression we had experienced by being brought up as women in bourgeois society. The confidence that developed as we organized the street meeting, from trying to get



by Emily Hanlon

the sound permit (which the cops refused us), to preparing the defense guard, made us feel the strength that we had as women working together.

The enthusiastic response of the crowd was made clear when the cops came to break up the street meeting. A Third World woman was relating the needs of Black and Puerto Rican women to the women's liberation struggle, and when the cops came, she seized the opportunity to explain to the onlookers the role of the cops. "We know why the pigs are here. They always harass the people—especially Black and Puerto Rican people. Are they protecting you from us?" she asked the crowd.

"Let her speak! Let her speak!" was the response to the pigs' attempt to stop the meeting.

As she spoke, the crowd began to double and triple. We immediately handed out a leaflet which had been prepared for just such a situation, titled "The Cops Are Trying to Break-up This Meeting."

Then the chairwoman began to speak. "We won't let the pigs break up this street meeting," she said. "It's the working people who built the streets and we have every right to be here. The

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One defense squad is responsible for the protection of the sound system and banner, both obvious targets. Another defense squad is for hecklers. When hecklers try to disrupt, the women quietly try to dissuade them and move them away from the street meeting. The worst thing to do is to let the heckler draw his own crowd; then the street meeting is out of your control. The third defense squad is a roving one, which fills in wherever a problem develops.

Another squad of women is prepared with

pen and paper and additional literature and information for any woman who has stopped to listen. Take her name and address and give her yours so that you both have a means for further contact.

All the mothers were able to participate in the street meeting because we had an operating day care center.

ALL POWER TO THE WOMAN ON THE STREETS!!!

LAUNDRY SWEAT and PAIN



1910, New York City

Every minute of every hour for 40 hours a week, women, almost all Black, Haitian or Puerto Rican, stand in front of huge, consuming machines in commercial laundries, feeding them the sheets and pillow cases from fancy hotels. Ten women, in formation, bending down and then forward to keep pace with the hunger of this machine. And each time these women bend, more sweat gathers on their foreheads. The room's temperature never reaches under 100 degrees and the bands the women wear on their foreheads are soaked with the heat of their torturous labor.

The 10 women are packed together in front of this machine and movement is difficult. But their pay depends on how fast they move, how many sheets they can feed this machine. This drives them to fight among themselves for that little extra room to work faster for the 3/4 of 1¢ for every additional sheet they do after the first 400 in a day.

On the other side of the machine are women who receive and fold the hot, pressed sheets. They don't work on the incentive plan as do their sisters who feed the machine. But as part of the job, they must maintain the same pace. There are only 4 women to receive what 10 women have put through the machine, and they must work quickly. It doesn't take long for the hot sheets to burn through the toughness of their callouses.

The entire operation is coordinated by the boss to sweat out every available ounce of profit from the very bones of the workers. Their legs are streaked with varicose veins from standing; their arms are muscular from lifting the heavy bundles of wet sheets. These are the women and mothers of the barrios and ghettos.

The average woman in this laundry earns \$1.90 an hour plus "incentive" which she gets from doing piece work. She takes home on the average \$68.00 a week. Out of this she not only has to pay for rent, food and living expenses for her children and herself, but also for a babysitter if she's lucky enough to find one.

Unable to cope with the heat, sweat and terrible working conditions, some women are driven to drink.

They get cramping pains in their legs from stooping and pulling and in addition

suffer the terrible indignity of pressing sheets exactly right for the rich clientele of fancy hotels like the Waldorf Astoria. The women often say, "Here we are fixing their sheets real pretty but we'll never even be allowed to use the bathroom in the Waldorf."

In another area of the laundry, where the shirts and uniforms are done, the arrangement is different but the work is equally monstrous.

Here each woman works boxed in, surrounded by four presses. She must work in tune with every click of each machine. The click tells her when each side of a shirt is done and each click records her work. As she places the arm of one shirt on one machine, she must whip around to take out the collar of another shirt. All day for 8 hours she spins from one machine back to the next as the machine clicks her on.

Josephine has worked the same spinning job for 23 years. Each year she has slowed down just a little bit—her paycheck has shown that. Each year she and her four children have a little less to eat. Josephine is the sole support of her children and very often when the babysitter doesn't show up she has to bring them in with her. Now one daughter is grown and also works in the factory. Often her granddaughter comes and spends the day in the factory because their apartment doesn't get heat in the winter.

To get bread for her family, Josephine has spent her working life in the laundry. As a result the last two fingers of her left hand are soldered together, melted by the machine, skin and bone wetted and mauled. The machines lock down on any foreign object and a worker's hand is a foreign object. By the time any of her fellow workers were able to open the press, her hand was cooked. On her right hand the thumb is mangled, the skin discolored and overlapping, like melted saran wrap draped over a shriveled thumb shape. This is the most common type of accident in a laundry factory.

It is eloquent testimony to the all-time low that the union officialdom has sunk that they do not force these profit-hungry sweatshop owners to install safety devices to prevent loss of life or limbs of workers.

The accident rate in the press room has soared this year. The men upstairs who do

the washing have just been put on piece work to "increase their efficiency." In order for them to make enough on this system the men have been cutting on the drying time of shirts. There just aren't enough dryers for the amount of laundry that gets washed and the men get paid by how much dry laundry they produce.

But when the men cut down on the drying time, even though the shirts are dry enough to pass for them to get paid, they are not dry enough to stop from sticking on the presses. Wet shirts will stick to the metal part of the press and remain glued to it. The women must get it off before it burns, and that stuck shirt is hard to budge off. If the women pull quickly the shirt might tear and then they must pay for it out of their paycheck, and if the worker tries to do it carefully, nine out of ten times she'll get burned. In this way the company drives wedges, not only between men and women but between women and women, to increase production. To the workers in the plant there seems no way out.

The heat in the plant never goes below 100 degrees where the women work. Air conditioners that have been installed are worse than useless. What good is it to have half of you burning and the other half cooling? It's better to be hot than to be sick.

Forty years ago some of these women worked for 8¢ an hour on an 84-hour week. Today the wages are just as meager, the hours somewhat more human, but the dangers of the job are just as horrifying. The labor is still exhaustive and leads to an early death.

As Karl Marx eloquently said — over 100 years ago in *Capital* — about machines operated by workers under capitalism (we take poetic license and change the references from "him" to "her" and "man" to "woman"—Ed.):

"They mutilate the worker into a fragment of a woman, degrade her to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in her work and turn it into a hated toil."

Nothing less than a Marxist solution will provide liberation for the women laundry workers.

by Sue Steinman

Rape, Prostitution & Private Property

by Deirdre Griswold

Rape, we are told by such eminent authorities as Sigmund Freud and by such frauds as M-G-M, is one of man's oldest pastimes. In the movies, the caveman, having slain his enemies, grabs the female prize by the hair and drags her off to a fate worse than death. In Freud's version of the story, the primeval horde, made up of the cast-out sons of the apeman, return to kill their father and take possession of their sisters and mother.

There have been so many acts of rape in recorded history that it is not surprising these views are widely held. Many women have glumly accepted the idea that there is a beast lurking in all men, held back only by the restraints of social pressure, that threatens to break loose the moment the barriers are down. Many women have been forced into sexual relations with a man at some point in their lives, and the experience often poisons all subsequent relationships.

Domination a male trait?

But women are now in the process of defining what is essential, what is biological in male-female relationships, and what is the result of social factors. Is there an innate male drive to dominate and subdue women, or can changed social relations end exploitation, force and brutality in personal relations?

Human society is constantly evolving, producing new social relationships to fit new and higher forms of production. The earliest form of human social organization was one in which all members of the economic unit, the extended family, shared more or less equally in production and consumption. Engels called this "primitive communism," since it was a form of cooperation that sprang out of scarcity and need.

Brutal caveman a myth

There is no evidence to support the existence, in this state of primitive communism, of the brutal, wife-beating caveman or Freud's "primeval horde." On the contrary, anthropological observation of existing savage societies, plus deductions made from ancient societies that had passed this stage of history, show that early human relations were not based on subjection, dominance and brute force, but rather on cooperation. And women, instead of being the possessions of men to be taken sexually at their pleasure and treated as household slaves, were respected and powerful members of the community, free to choose

their lovers from an early age. In the anthropological literature describing these matrilinear societies, the subject of rape is virtually absent.

It is only as the acquisition of private property begins to be widespread, and the pursuits of men begin to yield a surplus that can be hoarded or exchanged, that the social positions of men and women diverge. The work of tending the household and the small children becomes secondary to animal husbandry and developed agriculture. The matrilinear family --where descent was traced through the mother --gives way to the patriarchy as men, in possession of more goods, need to devise a way to identify their heirs and keep their property intact.

From equal to "weaker sex"

The inevitable degradation and enslavement of women followed. Power in social life flowed from a person's relationship to production. Women, whose work lay largely outside of the direct production of material goods, became stripped of power, the "weaker sex." And they began to be treated as possessions themselves. It became a symbol of a man's power and wealth to have many wives. It was only a natural step from being considered a possession in the economic sense to being a possession in the sexual sense. When raids were made on other peoples to seize their hoarded food, their animals and their land, it became common to rape the women and carry them off with the other possessions.

Rape is first of all an act of possession, of taking another man's property by force. Relieving sexual tensions cannot be considered the basic social motive, although some acts of rape are committed by deranged individuals and the motives can only be unraveled by complicated psychological analysis. But these are certainly a small minority of the actual cases of rape. Much more common are the gang rapes of soldiers against the women of a conquered people, the master's rape of his slave, and that of the sultans and potentates who had their scouts scour the land for beautiful young virgins. Oppression breeds yet another form of rape, where an oppressed man rapes the women of his oppressor as an act of revenge against his master's property.

It goes without saying that a society that did away with war, poverty and oppression would also end the major causes of extreme sexual frustration. But it should be repeated that frustration is not the main cause of rape. It is the attitude towards women as property that makes men rape women rather than find



other ways of relieving tension. A society that ends rape must not only do away with standing armies, the segregation of adolescents and other institutions that build up frustration, but it must also completely change the position of women in society to free and independent producers.

Money replaces physical-force

Those who believe in the M-G-M caveman fantasy will also probably subscribe to the theory that prostitution is "the oldest profession." Yet obviously prostitution has the same social roots as rape--the degraded and oppressed position of women--and post-dates rape in that it is an organized, socially sanctioned form of rape where money, expressing the economic domination of the male, does the forcing rather than brute strength.

The houses of prostitution in the slums, where white Johns go to buy Black women's "favors," and the bordellos that spring up around every army base in Vietnam (at one, the opening ceremony was complete with a general cutting a red ribbon), are just the logical extension of the earlier brutal raping of black slaves by white masters and colonial women by conquering Western soldiers. It should be pointed out that revolutionary soldiers like the NLF and

North Vietnamese are rarely if ever accused of rape, and there are no "sin towns" on the edge of guerrilla camps. Yet these soldiers are men, many have not seen their families for years, they don't get "rest and recreation" every few months like the Americans, and they are undoubtedly under great sexual strain. But because they are fighting against oppression, not for it, and for a cooperative society, they relate to the Vietnamese women as comrades, not as prizes of war. Thus they are able to endure a harshly spartan existence.

Chauvinist culture degrades all women

Rape and prostitution have historically been visited on the most oppressed women--the chattel slave subject to her master's wish, the impoverished peasant girl of Cuba recruited for the Havana bordellos to "entertain" American tourists. But in the U.S, today women are made to feel that, symbolically at least, the barriers are going down and all women are fair game. With the degeneration of U.S. imperialist culture, the position of women in general has become more and more that of things, possessions, commodities. In nearly every ad, every movie, women are held up as sexual objects available for the right amount of money. And while most men don't go out and take a woman by force, this desire, stemming from social relations in general and inflamed by the daily diet of sexist advertising, finds its expression in a thousand different attitudes.

Women are reacting to this symbolic rape vehemently, and many men fail to understand why. They accuse women of not being for sex, being afraid of sex, etc. But they are totally missing the point.

The exploitation of the female body to sell a product is degrading and repulsive not because it has anything to do with sex, which should be a loving and a giving act, but because it stands for the complete and total, i.e., the bodily, possession of another human being. If a person's body can be entered and used by another because he is stronger or richer, then any kind of domination and use of the victim is possible.

There is a great and profound revolutionary struggle sweeping the world today that is directed at ending empires, ending class oppression, ending exploitation. At first glance, that struggle may seem irrelevant to many American women who feel their oppression as women but are not part of a super-oppressed nation or perhaps even of the working class. But they should take a second look at the ethics of the liberation armies. The Vietnamese, the Arab guerrillas--women and men--are fighting for women's liberation even while they carry out the task of freeing themselves from imperialism. There are many examples of this, but if the revolutionary world had done no more than outlaw rape, symbolic and actual, it would still be immeasurably superior to decadent imperialism.

the Baltimore Conference

At a meeting of women held in Baltimore over the weekend of October 24-25, three North American women who had just returned from a meeting in Budapest with Vietnamese women related some of the stories they were told about the suffering of our South Vietnamese sisters in the war: Women are continually raped and murdered by the U.S. occupation forces; they and their children are tortured in prison for the "crime" of fighting for independence of their country; and masses of women (400,000, that is, almost one to every GI) have been forced to become prostitutes.

To fight these war crimes an organization of women has been formed in Saigon to protect women against the war which is destroying their lives. It is called the Committee of Women's Action for the Right to Live. The name alone speaks volumes about Vietnamese women and the war. It really struck those of us at the meeting with its stark implication—in Vietnam women have to organize just to survive!

We were in Baltimore that weekend precisely because the women of Vietnam, North and South, have raised the great importance for American women to oppose the war as an organized force. Toward this end, three women from the Women's Liberation Movement had travelled to Budapest to meet the Vietnamese to talk about a projected series of three conferences, one in Quebec, Toronto and Vancouver, next March where American, Canadian and Quebecois women could meet delegations from South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to talk about what the war has done to women and how we can help to end U.S. aggression.

The women who attended the Baltimore meeting were gathered together in a hurried way by invitation from Washington Women's Liberation to women's organizations in different cities. Although there were women there from 15 cities including Buffalo, Boston, New York, New Haven, Chicago, Washington, Baltimore and Toronto, the last minute effort to inform women of the meeting, and the limitation of the delegations to two women from each city, obviously

left untouched scores of women's organizations and hundreds of unaffiliated women who might be interested in becoming involved in such a project. Represented there were women from Chicago Women's Liberation Union, the Anti-Imperialist women's group from Washington, Bread & Roses, the Leila Khaled Collective (Toronto), women from Youth Against War & Fascism and the Committee of Returned Volunteers.

Most unfortunate of all was the fact that the Baltimore meeting did not include any Third World women. This was a heavy handicap because the Vietnamese women in Budapest had expressed the hope that Third World women, particularly women from the Black Panther Party, would be at the March conferences. To remedy this serious lack, it was decided that a letter would be drafted that would be sent out as widely as possible to Black, Spanish, Asian and all other Third World organizations across the country to transmit the information from the Vietnamese women about the forthcoming conferences and to convey the deep desire of the Vietnamese to meet with Third World women.

The hope was expressed in Baltimore that no less than half of the delegation from the U.S. to the conferences in March would be Third World women who obviously suffer the greatest oppression of all.

In order to spread the word about the conferences more widely and to get women involved in anti-war activities, a series of actions are being planned as part of a whole anti-imperialist offensive of women. The first proposed action is to be held on December 20, the tenth anniversary of the NLF, as an act of solidarity with our Vietnamese sisters who are living under the gun.

In talking about the conferences in Quebec and Canada, everyone was aware of the fact that fascist rule has been imposed by the Canadian Government in an attempt to crush the liberation struggle of the Quebec people. This may make a Quebec conference impossible. However, the women decided to go ahead with the organizing anyway. We were told that the Quebecois women's organization (FLF) was very interested in the conference and hoped to participate.

We, YAWF women, believe that if this struggle includes opposition to all forms of imperialist aggression—whether it be against the Vietnamese people, the Palestinian people or the Black people right here at home—this coalition could have the potential of a genuine working alliance between Third World women and white women struggling for liberation.

It is difficult at this time to tell if it will be possible for such a coalition to really develop. But if it does work, it will not only be regarded by our Vietnamese sisters as an important demonstration of solidarity, it will also help us in our struggle here at home.

† For too long the Women's Liberation Movement has regarded the struggle of Vietnamese women to be unrelated to the fight for women's liberation. Yet the women who came back from Budapest were particularly struck by the high degree of women's consciousness that the Vietnamese women had. They made a healthy self-criticism of the Women's Move-

ment here for trying to judge other women solely in terms of the level of the struggle in the U.S. For example, attitudes towards children, the family and what forms of organization women relate to were found to be very different from the point of view of an oppressed colonial people. Nevertheless, it was clear to the three women that the Vietnamese women whom they met are consciously fighting for women within the whole context of the life and death struggle against U.S. imperialism.

In private conversation with one of the sisters in Baltimore I heard a story that was a remarkably touching proof of how very conscious the Vietnamese are of the oppression of women. This sister told me that before she was at all involved in the women's struggle, she had gotten a chance to go to North Vietnam in 1967 with a group of anti-war activists. Once in Vietnam their hosts kept asking the women in the group if they wouldn't like to meet separately with their sisters from North Vietnam. The American women could not understand the need for such a meeting and resisted the idea. When they finally gave in, they found that it was a tremendously inspiring

experience to meet, as women, with the Vietnamese to discuss the oppression that women suffer and how they were dealing with it.

It was the Vietnamese women who actually raised her woman's consciousness and recruited her to the cause of Women's Liberation!

The report about the meeting in Budapest gave the women in Baltimore a heightened sense of solidarity with oppressed women struggling in other parts of the world. And this sense adds a profound meaning to the struggle of women here against the male supremacist, capitalist system.

At the same time that we continue to fight against job discrimination, lack of child care, household drudgery and second rate status, among many other things that oppress us as women, we are seeing more and more the essential role we will have to play in any revolutionary upheaval and are moving, as women, on many different fronts to be part of the revolutionary reconstitution of society so that we, who are half of humanity, will be fully represented as an oppressed group fighting for liberation.

by Naomi Cohen



— LNS photo

DAY CARE

by Sharon Martin

This article is going to be run in two parts. The first part will paint a picture of the day care center as it is now. The second part will explain how we actually set up the day care facilities.

* * *

For quite a while now, we have felt that if we could organize a day care center on some kind of organized basis it would supply a real need for women and children both inside and outside our organization. It was decided by the Women's Caucus that the children would benefit most from a staff of men and women, parents and non-parents.

The staff arrives early with lunch, sweeps up, and sets up a large table with crayons, paper, blocks, and other toys so the children have something to do when they arrive. The staff greets the children and parents. Particular toys are out for the toddlers; one child runs for a doll carriage, another likes a rocking horse and a third a piano. These are the children most likely to fuss when the parents leave if they are not occupied. The older children like to color pictures or play musical chairs when they arrive. At first the bigger children wanted to run up and down the loft, but it was explained that they might trample the little ones. Initially they were resentful but after it was explained, they agreed to save the running for the park. We have easels and paints and this is a favorite activity. The children wear aprons for painting so they don't mess their clothes and make extra work for their parents. They also help clean up the mess after painting. Often the staff reads to the little ones; sometimes the older children offer to read to them. Simon (Huey) Says and Giant Steps are games they like. We had a birthday party one week and another week the children sewed headbands and pocket books.

Lunch time is a general activity. The children and adults work together. The children help make the sandwiches, pour the milk and juice, set the table and clean up later.

After lunch we usually take the children to the park. One week all the children were ready to go except one child who had lost her shoes. Several of the other children didn't want to go without her so we all looked for the shoes and no one went out till we found them. This kind of solidarity among the children we want to encourage. On the way to the



park the children were lining up like little robots (indoctrination in the schools), and when they were informed that this wasn't necessary, they were delighted. We allow them to run on the sidewalk but they have to wait at the corners and hold on to each other till the staff says they can cross the street.

In the park the children sometimes play ball, run around in groups or as individuals, play in the sand and on occasion have mini demonstrations. They know about the Vietnam war and the Black Panthers. They chant, "Big firms get rich--GIs die," and "Free the Panther 21—power to the people." We try to give all the children a lot of individual attention so those whose parents are not there don't feel left out. The babies in particular get a lot of loving care. When they are awake there is almost always someone (very often the men) holding or carrying them around.

When the children return from the park they help pick up the toys and say good-bye. When they leave there is usually some indication that they will be back the next Saturday.

To sum it all up: We are learning to relate to the children and they are learning to relate to a group of adults who are not their parents or teachers but their friends.

We are in the process of building shelves for toys and books, small tables and a six-foot divider with slots to interchange a blackboard, peg board, a puppet stage and a world map. We have pictures on the walls of revolutionary heroes and heroines. We are collecting books from China and other socialist countries to provide the children with an opportunity to read about people in other parts of the world.

We know that running a day care center is more than just a baby sitting service and is hard work. The staff has learned a great deal from the children. The project has not only freed many of the parents on a regular basis on Saturday afternoons, but the day care itself is providing an avenue for the children to develop a realistic understanding of the world around them.

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only permit we need is a permit from the people! The streets belong to the people!"

"Right on! Let her speak!" was the people's response.

"Women have been kept silent for thousands of years and the cops and their bosses are afraid to see women getting together and talking. They are afraid of the strength that women have as oppressed people. Well, we women aren't going to be quiet anymore!"

After about ten minutes of this verbal attack on the pigs and the clear solidarity between the women and the crowd, the cops demanded that we remove the sound equipment or face arrest. When we refused, they moved in and arrested a YAWF woman, Laurie Fierstein.

Despite the arrest we refused to move or put away the sound equipment.

The next speaker was Pam Meyers, whose husband Joel is serving three and a half years in prison for resisting the imperialist army. As Pam was telling what it is like when your husband is in prison, how she has to lie on her job and is degraded when she goes to visit him, a 300-pound, crew-cut, white man began to heckle. He got quite a surprise when three women from the defense guard pushed him out of the area.



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was hunted, captured, and accused of crimes which the American reactionary system is in fact guilty of." That is why Angela Davis faces the ruling class's wrath.

"Women have always been expected to be wives and mothers only. They are respected by the rest of the community for being good cooks, good housewives, good mothers, but never for being intelligent, strong, educated, or militant," says the Young Lords Party Position Paper on Women. Angela Davis is all that a woman is not supposed to be on all counts. She is smashing the ruling class stereotype of women, especially that of Black women, as she acts against the system itself. She is a living example and inspiration for all women who want to break the centuries' old chains that bind them. As a revolutionary sister, she has won the respect and love of all oppressed people for whom she fights.

Angela Davis spoke the following words some months ago in defense of the Soledad Brothers: "What we are saying is that our lives are no different from the lives of our brothers and sisters who have been

They were quickly joined by a sizable group from the audience who only became more threatening to the pig when he yelled, "Communists, Communists." When he finally realized that the entire crowd was hostile to him, he pulled out a badge and cried, "I'm a police officer!" This angered the crowd even more and shouts of "pig! pig!" greeted his retreat.

While a small portion of the crowd finished off this pig, the rest listened to a speaker from the Young Lords Party. When she spoke in Spanish, the crowd began to swell. She spoke of the women who have picked up the gun to liberate Puerto Rico and she spoke of women's liberation in terms of the Puerto Rican woman.

After this, two more women spoke: On the jail-like schools—one from the point of view as a teacher and the other as a woman high school student. The street meeting ended with shouts of "The Streets Belong to the People!" As the chanting died down, it was clear that the street meeting was not only a success for the women but also a victory in that we clearly reached out to the people and cut through the mass media lies about women's liberation. And perhaps even more importantly, it was a victory because we held 14th Street, sound equipment and all, until every woman had spoken.

shot down by the pigs, from Huey Newton who is in jail and the Soledad Brothers who are being railroaded to the gas chamber for murder they had nothing to do with, from Bobby Seale who's being railroaded to the electric chair. We cannot separate ourselves from what is happening to them . . ." Nor can we separate ourselves from what is

happening to Angela Davis. Today we who respect her with our minds and revere her in our hearts, we who feel her struggle as our struggle, we must free her.

FREE ANGELA DAVIS
SISTERS, UNITE WITH ALL
OPPRESSED PEOPLE TO FREE
ANGELA DAVIS NOW!

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EDITOR: LAURIE FIERSTEIN
TECHNICAL EDITOR: MEIRA POMERANTZ
STAFF: YAWF WOMEN


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YAWF WOMEN
58 west 25th st.
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SLAVERY

1970

by Sharon Chin

Some years ago, a picture hit the movie circuits in my neighborhood. It was billed as one of the great flicks of all time. I finally got around to seeing it a few years later. It was one of the most racist movies I've ever seen. It was made in the '30s (not so long ago) and glorified the slavery era of this sick society. It was called "Gone with the Wind."

In that flick, in all the media, in hundreds of flicks before and after, Blacks were depicted as being mindless subhumans who were happy-go-lucky and obedient. Black women especially were supposed to be typical Aunt Jemimas, i.e., fat, slovenly, dumb and docile.

Many years have passed since we were forced to work the field, be house maids, raise the master's kids and succumb to his lust, but things haven't changed very much. Technology has advanced a hundred fold, but if you look around you, into the ghettos, you'll see that many things of yesteryear still exist. We still live under horrible conditions in a society that we are locked out of and under an economic system which perpetuates our oppression. Indeed, life in America in 1970 is not the wonderful, beautiful thing that we have been told it is. Black children still starve, Black people still get lynched, Black women still get raped.

We are still slaves only in a slightly different and more subtle way. We may not have physical shackles on us, but those invisible chains of the ruling class are gripping us tighter than ever. The slavery that exists today is known as "wage-slavery!"

Most Black women today work, i.e., are wage-slaves. Even among those who are married and have children, statistics show that 55 per cent work as compared with 44 per cent of white women. The reason for this is because Black men have a hard time getting jobs which pay enough to sustain a family. Sometimes the woman is the sole provider for her family even if the husband is present. This is sometimes referred to as a "matriarchy" or family breakdown by the racist ruling class. I know a lot of families where they can only survive if the woman works or goes on welfare while the man works, because his income is so low. And of course, it is a fact that non-white males have the highest unemployment rate of any group. Non-white females don't have it too much better. There are many more of us unemployed than white women. In fact, 8.3 per cent of non-white working women are unemployed as compared with 4.3 per cent white women — nearly twice as many.

The time of being a field nigger or house-nigger is not so far away, for when we do get work, look at the types of work we do. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 49 per cent of all non-white working women do service work (i.e., maids, servants, cleaning women, etc.), 18 per cent

are blue collar workers (factory workers, sewing machine operators, etc.), 2 per cent are farm workers, and 31 per cent are white collar workers.

All together that means 69 per cent of non-white women workers do overtly slave-type jobs — menial, laborious and humiliating work, as compared to 41 per cent white women doing similar type jobs.

Of the 31 per cent of us that do so-called "white collar" jobs, this 31 per cent can be broken down into 1.5 per cent managers and officials, 10 per cent professional and technical, 17.4 per cent clerical and 2.1 per cent sales. It might seem that the white collar worker is something to be aspired to and that white collar workers have it good. However, in this racist system we can never have it good. Besides, as a white collar worker, I know that it is still hard to make a living. There is only room for so many of us and in order to be hired you have to act like some sort of super-nigger. Super-competent, super-neat and super-brain-washed. In most cases it is not a matter of whether we are qualified for a particular job or not, it's whether the pig bosses happen to need a Black woman to fill the bill — either because they've been vamped on for being a racist organization or because they might have a conscience. Sometime they just think we'll be dedicated little slaves.

Getting one of the better paying jobs is like prostituting because what's going to decide whether we get the job isn't whether we can do it. We have to sell ourselves. Look a certain way, act a certain way, talk a certain way. I was told before I went out on different job interviews everything from how to wear my hair, to being told to shorten my skirt, to how I should flirt with my prospective buyer. I

can imagine it was just like being on the slave block — only they didn't inspect my teeth. As women we have to contend with all the crap that comes from male chauvinism as well as racism.

Along the line of wages, here again we are messed over. White men make more than Black men who make more than white women who make more than us. We're at the bottom of the ladder and that's where it's at. The median income in 1966 for white women was \$4,152, while for non-white women it was \$2,949 (only 71 per cent of what they make). This difference is attributed to the high percentage of non-white women doing service jobs. But as I pointed out before, there's not much choice as to type of jobs — you are forced to work to survive and you've got to take what you're "qualified for." I can't, now, go into the reasons why we're not qualified and why we are not making it within this system. But what I can say is that the reasons the ruling class gives are just so much racist bullshit!

Sisters, when I think I once believed that we live in a democracy and that we are all free, I find my own naivete incredible. Indeed, we are not free, most of the people in this country are not free, and the only ones who dare to call themselves that are those greedy capitalist racist pigs that are in power. Slavery still exists today for all of us, Black and white, and it is in a form that makes it even more profitable than before. We must point our finger of hate, we must direct our cries of injustice, and in the last analysis, our bullets, to those who justly deserve it — those who make up the capitalist class of imperialist America. Self-determination for Blacks and all Third World peoples!

POWER TO ALL REVOLUTIONARIES!