

Women In the Struggle

By

THIRD WORLD WOMEN'S

ALLIANCE



SMASH!

CAPITALISM,
RACISM &
SEXISM

The Third World Women's Alliance was one of several organizations formed by women of color in the late 1960s and early 1970s as responses to the essentialist theories of the early feminist movement. These organizations paved the way for Chicana feminism, Womanism, and Black feminism, among other theoretical approaches to feminism.

TWWA broadened the scope of women's activism to address issues such as sterilization abuse, infant mortality, welfare rights, and low-wage work. Through its political activities, TWWA helped to create spaces in racial justice organizations for women's voices, issues and leadership. Although primarily an activist organization, concepts developed by TWWA's members in the course of political organization contributed much to feminist theory.

TWWA's ideas of "double jeopardy" and "triple jeopardy" which were elaborated on by scholars as "simultaneity of oppression" and "both/and", advanced the understanding of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in the women's movement. It also contributed to the experience of building "third world" and "black/brown" unity in opposing racism and sexism. The orientation of TWWA towards the "third world" brought the struggles, condition, and status of women in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to the forefront.

TWWA built relations with women's organizations in other countries, pioneering a form of feminism that focuses on the effect of U.S. foreign and military policy on women's lives worldwide, promoting the idea that U.S. women of color had a role to play in the "global sisterhood".

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Women In the Struggle

third world women's alliance

1971

The Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA) was a revolutionary socialist women of color organization active in the United States from 1968 to 1980 that aimed at ending capitalism, racism, imperialism, and sexism.

As one of the earliest groups advocating for an intersectional approach to women's oppression, members of the TWWA argued that women of color faced a "triple jeopardy" of race, gender, and class oppression. Though the organization's roots lay in the black civil rights movement, it soon broadened its focus to include women of color in the US and in developing nations.

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

As a socialist organization, the Third World Women's Alliance recognizes the fact that our primary fight at this stage is the overthrow of imperialism. Nevertheless, out of imperialism has grown two destructive forces which we, as third world women must contend with - racism and male chauvinism.

In this context, an alliance of third world women has a specific role to play. In order for any revolution to be successful, the total mobilization of the population is necessary. The involvement of women on all levels of struggle is of vital importance.

Women and our youth must become educated in revolutionary consciousness and practice. We believe that the political education, organization and defense of our people are clearly positions that women can be responsible for.

Therefore one function of the Third World Women's Alliance is to act as a vehicle for developing and training women. One of the problems of the struggle in the United States has been the lack of a theoretical framework within which to concretely analyze the situation of Third World people in this country. Many people, and especially women do not understand the importance of theory for revolutionary practice and join one organization after another or become involved in one social movement after the other.

They work diligently, but blindly without long range goals and objectives. As a result, they often become disillusioned and frustrated, never seeming to advance, but remaining forever stuck in the same old rut. Part of the development which we see for women, therefore, is a solid base in theory by means of an on-going program of political education.

Many different approaches can be used effectively to accomplish the task of running a political education program - general discussions, film, reading and analyzing newspaper articles, etc. However, if we are going to build a house that will continue to stand in all kinds of

weather, we must be sure that the bricks we use are solid and durable.

We must begin to study revolutionary theory and we must begin to study other successful revolutions to discover the general truths which we can apply to our struggle here in the United States against imperialism, against racism and against chauvinism. China, Vietnam, Cuba, Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, North Korea and the Soviet Union have had - or are in the midst of having successful revolutions where colonial and/or class exploitation and oppression have been eliminated. If you look closely at these countries, you will notice an interesting fact: each has used Socialist ideology and tactics to wage successful liberation struggles.

Another interesting fact about the above mentioned countries is that the status of women has been elevated as a result of the introduction of socialism. Although there is still much to be done in reference to women, the economic foundation for the oppression of women has been eliminated and the doors have been opened. It is now possible for women in these countries to unite and struggle to defend their rights as citizens, mothers and workers. The emancipation of women is a necessity for the successful functioning of a socialist country; the oppression of women in both the home and society is a necessity for the successful functioning of a capitalist country. The choice is clear.

We must begin to study revolutionary thinkers, including Marx and Lenin, rejecting the position that we can learn nothing from someone because they are white. If we took sick, we would not say, don't take me to the hospital in an ambulance because a white man discovered how to make it, and if we got to the hospital, we wouldn't say, don't take out my ruptured appendix because a white man discovered the medical techniques. Of course not!

Science does not belong to one class or race or sex or nationality. Scientific discoveries belong to humanity and we build upon scientific knowledge and use it when it is applicable and when it is to our benefit. The same is true of revolutionary theory ie. socialist

theory. There is a science and art to making a successful revolution. And we must learn this art. And we shall use what others have already learned and add to it what we know from our particular experiences and history in this country.

As women, it is important for us to study in order to understand how the role of Third World women in the home and in society fits into the general picture of Third World people in this country and to fully understand how our struggle as Third World women fits into the struggle against exploitation and oppression of the peoples of our various communities.

But even more important, it is essential for women to take part in changing the reality of their lives. Theory alone doesn't do anything to change our daily existence. The test of any theory is how it works out in practice.

The truth of any theory is determined by objective results when put into practice. All of us have had the experience of sitting in classrooms learning various things, like a foreign language, for example. We all know that it was once we were out of the classroom and actually using what we had been taught (like going to the country where the language is spoken) that we actually learned.

The same holds true in terms of revolutionary theory. If we really want to understand the theory and methods of revolution, we must take part in revolution. Some theories are erroneous and it is through the test of practice that the errors are corrected. No matter how good something looks on paper, if it doesn't work out in practice there must be something wrong with the theory, and it should be altered to fit the reality. As Chairman Mao has stated: "Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and develop the truth."

It is no accident that the greatest theoreticians were actively involved in the social movements of their time. Marx and Engels in the Workingmen's Association in the 19th Century; Lenin and Stalin in the Bolshevik revolution in Russia; Mao in the anti-imperialist

struggles against Japan, and later against the Kuomintang; Nkrumah in the national independence Movement in Ghana; and Frederick Douglass in the anti-slavery struggle in this country.

As Third World women we must be engaged in the mass struggles going on in this country against war, racism and repression. At the same time we must study revolutionary theory and tactics to provide ourselves with a tool which will be a guide to our actions for changing the conditions of our lives, our children and our loved ones.

The task before us is to develop a sisterhood of third world Women which stretches across all countries – A Sisterhood that finds within itself the resolve and strength to actively participate in all phases of the liberation struggles, while at the same time, making sure that the role of women in the new society will be one which will not be oppressive and will not be a continuation of the same kinds of stunting attitudes which are still in mode today, among even the most revolutionary of men.

We are women, determined to reap the fruits of our labor. The history of our people in this country portrays clearly the prominent role that the Third World woman has played in the ongoing struggle against racism and exploitation. As mother, wife, and worker she has witnessed the frustration and anguish of the men, women and children living in her community. As revolutionary, she will take an active part in changing this reality.

A HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION

The foundation of our present organization was laid in December, 1968. Within SNCC, a black women's caucus was formed to begin to address itself to the problems that the women of SNCC encountered within the organization.

Women were generally confined to secretarial and/or supportive roles and no matter what a woman's capabilities were, never seemed to be able to rise above this situation. The women in SNCC who had been meeting over a period of several months decided that the organization should be expanded beyond the confines of SNCC and that we should be drawing in women from other organizations, welfare mothers, community workers and campus radicals.

An attempt was made to reach out to these women and the name of the organization was changed to the Black Women's Alliance. As of now, the organization is independent of SNCC and at the same time, SNCC has decided to retain its women's caucus.

We decided to form a black women's organization for many reasons. One was and still is the widespread myth and concept in the black community of the matriarchy.

We stated that the concept of the matriarchy was myth and that it has never existed in the United States. A matriarchy denotes a society where the economic power of a group rests in the hands of the women and we all know where the economic power of this nation rests. Our position would be to expose this myth.

There was also the widespread concept that by some miracle, the oppression of slavery for the black woman was not as degrading, not as horrifying, not as barbaric as it had been for the black man. However, we state that in any society where men are not yet free, women are less free because we are further enslaved by our sex.

Now we noticed another interesting thing. And that is, that with the rise of black nationalism and the rejection of white middle class norms and values, that this rejection of whiteness—white culture, white norms and values — took a different turn when it came to the black woman.

That is, black men began defining the role of black women in the movement. They stated that our role was a supportive one, others stated that we must become breeders and provide an army; still others stated that we had kotex or pussy power. We opposed these concepts stating that a true revolutionary movement must enhance the status of women.

Further discussion and study began to point out to us the intimate connection between the oppression of women and the form of government which was in control. We began to see the economic basis of our oppression and we became convinced that capitalism and imperialism were our main enemies. It is economically profitable to exploit and oppress third world women. We represent a surplus labor supply, a cheap labor supply, a free labor supply (in our homes).

The development of an anti-imperialist ideology led us to recognize the need for Third World solidarity. Although Asian, Black, Chicana, Native American and Puerto Rican sisters have certain differences, we began to see that we were all affected by the same general oppressions. Industries Employing mainly third world women are among the most exploitive in the country. Domestic workers, hospital workers, factory workers and farm laborers are prime objects of this exploitation, as are the garment workers.

Stereotypes which are forced upon our peoples and which try to mold them with the acceptable white values, large use of drugs and alcoholism in our respective communities used as escape from the daily oppression suffered by our peoples and other problems mentioned above gave us the realization that our similarities transcended our differences.

We realized that we would be much more effective and unified by becoming a third world women's organization. So our group was expanded to include all third world sisters since our oppression is basically caused by the same factors and our enemy is the same. The name of the organization was changed to

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IS A THIRD WORLD WOMEN'S GROUP DIVISIVE TO THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE?

The third world woman must always be fighting against and exposing her triple exploitation in this society. A third world women's group can potentially be one of the most revolutionary forces confronting the U.S. ruling class.

The third world woman consciously aware of the depth of her oppression and willingness to fight against it will never give up until all forms of racist, sexist, and economic exploitation is eliminated.

An independent third world women's organization, rather than divide the national liberation struggle would actually enhance that struggle. The rulers of this society would like to keep us thinking that the problem is only one of racism or that men are inherently the enemy, thus diverting our attention from the economic basis of our oppression.

Thus our brothers who tell us not to get involved in women's liberation fail to realize that this idea, if carried out, would tend to contain rather than expand the revolutionary fervor of third world women and would harm the liberation struggle as a whole.

An independent third world women's organization gives us the opportunity to reach women who might not ordinarily be reached by male-female organizations and thus heighten the political consciousness of third world women.

An independent third world women's group creates an atmosphere whereby women who are overly shy about speaking in a mixed group about "women's problems" would not have that same hesitation in an all women's group. We can train third world women for leadership roles and help them gain confidence in their own abilities and help to eliminate the concept of what is "feminine" and "masculine."

It must be understood that we are not just for civil rights for women or civil rights for third world people, but for the elimination of all forms of sexist and racist oppression — liberation for women and the third world. We understand that national liberation can come about under an atmosphere of economic equality and economic equality cannot be achieved under this system.

We understand that the elimination of our oppression as women can only be achieved from a revolutionary government that understands with the help of women the need for women to be liberated.

It is the position of the Third World Women's Alliance that the struggle against racism and imperialism must be waged simultaneously with the struggle for women's liberation, and only strong independent socialist women's groups can ensure that this will come about.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our purpose is to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to the Third World community by working for the elimination of the oppression and exploitation from which we suffer. We further intend to take an active part in creating a socialist society where we can live as decent human beings, free from the pressures of racism, economic exploitation, and sexual oppression:

1. To create a sisterhood of women devoted to the task of developing solidarity among the peoples of the Third World, based on a socialist ideology of struggling for the complete elimination of any and all forms of oppression and exploitation based upon race, economic status, or sex and to use whatever means are necessary to accomplish this task.
2. To promote unity among Third World people within the United States in matters affecting the educational, economic, social and political life of our peoples.

3. To collect, interpret, and distribute information about the Third World, both at home and abroad, and particularly information affecting its women.

4. To establish an education fund to be used to promote educational projects, to publish articles, and to employ such other media as is necessary to carry out such educational projects.

5. To recreate and build solid relationships with our men, destroying myths that have been created by our oppressor to divide us from each other, and to work together to appreciate human love and respect.

IDEOLOGICAL PLATFORM

We recognize the right of all people to be free. As women, we recognize that our struggle is against an imperialist, sexist system that oppresses all minority peoples as well as exploiting the majority. The United States is ruled by a small ruling class clique who use the concepts of racism and chauvinism to divide, control and oppress the masses of people for economic gain and profit.

We want equal status in a society that does not exploit and murder other people and smaller nations. We will fight for a socialist system that guarantees full, creative, non exploitive lives for all human beings, fully aware that we will never be free until all oppressed people are free.

FAMILY

WHEREAS in a capitalist culture, the institution of the family has been used as an economic and psychological tool, not serving the needs of people, we declare that we will not relate to the private ownership of any person by another. We encourage and support the continued growth of communal households and the idea of the extended family.

We encourage alternative forms to the patriarchal family and call for the sharing of all work (including housework and child care) by men and women.

Women must have the right to decide if and when they want to have children. There is no such thing as an illegitimate child. They should be free and SAFE family planning methods available to all women, including abortions if necessary.

There should be no forced sterilization or mandatory birth control programs which are presently used as genocide against third world woman and against other poor people.

EMPLOYMENT

WHEREAS third world women in a class society have been continuously exploited through their work, both in the home and on the job, we call for:

1. Guaranteed full, equal and non exploitative employment, controlled collectively by the workers who produce the wealth of this society.
2. Guaranteed adequate income for all. This would entail the sharing of non-creative tasks and the maximum utilization of revolutionary technology to eliminate these tasks.
3. An end to the racism and sexism which forces third world women into the lowest paying service jobs and which ensures that we will be the lowest paid of all.
4. The establishment of free day care centers available to all, including facilities for preschool and older children.

SEX ROLES

WHEREAS behavior patterns based on rigid sex roles are oppressive to both men and women, role integration should be attempted.

The true revolutionary should be concerned with human beings and not limit themselves to people as sex objects. Furthermore, whether homosexuality is societal or genetic in origin, it exists in the third world community.

The oppression and dehumanizing ostracism that homosexuals face must be rejected and their right to exist as dignified human beings must be defended.

EDUCATION

WHEREAS women historically have been deprived of education, or only partially educated and miseducated in those areas deemed appropriate for them by those ruling powers who benefit from this ignorance, we call for:

1. The right to determine our own goals and ambitions.
2. An end of sex roles regarding training and skills.
3. Self-Knowledge—the history of third world women and their contributions to the liberation struggle, their relation to society and the knowledge of their bodies

SERVICES

WHEREAS the services provided for the masses of third world people have been inadequate, unavailable, or too expensive, administered in a racist, sexist manner, we demand that all services necessary to human survival — healthcare, housing, food, clothing, transportation and education — should be free and controlled and administered by the people who use them.

OUR OWN RIGHT

WHEREAS we do not believe that any person is the property of any other and whereas all people must share equally in the decisions which affect them, we hereby demand:

1. That third world women have the right to determine their own lives, not lives determined by their fathers, brothers, or husbands.
2. That all organizations and institutions (including all so-called radical, militant and/or so-called revolutionary groups) deal with third world women in their own right as

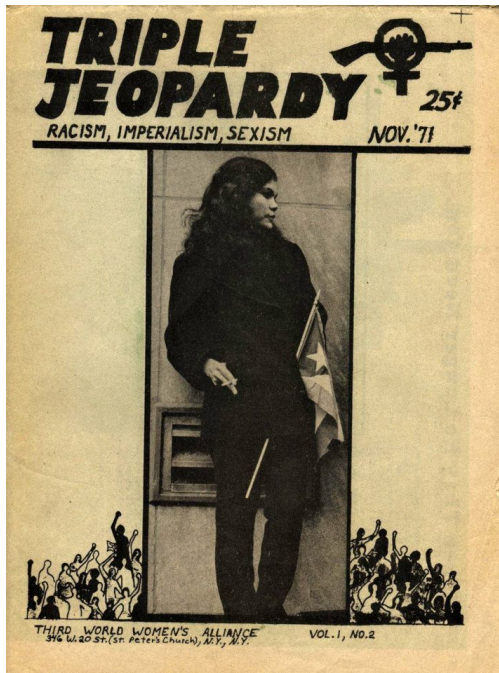
human beings and individuals, not as property of men and only valued in relationship to their association or connection with some man.

3. That third world women be full participants on all levels of the struggle for national liberation, i.e. administrative, political and military.

SELF-DEFENSE

WHEREAS the struggle for liberation must be borne equally by all members of an oppressed people, we declare that third world women have the right and responsibility to bear arms.

Women should be fully trained and educated in the martial arts as well as in the political arena. Furthermore, we recognize that it is our duty to defend all oppressed peoples.





BLACK WOMAN'S MANIFESTO

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Black Woman's Manifesto - 50¢

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Gold Necklace \$2.50

WHAT IS THE THIRD WORLD?

WHAT IS THE THIRD WORLD?

The term "third world" is a relatively new word and many people do not understand what this concept means. We, therefore, offer the following brief explanation of its derivation and meaning.

The first world consists of the capitalist-imperialist nations, including the chief oppressor of humanity, the United States, as well as the much weaker European nations of England, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, etc. and more recently, Israel.

The second world is composed of the socialist nations led by the USSR and includes Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Bulgaria and other white socialist nations of Eastern Europe. These nations have broken the bondage of capitalism and are working to create socialist societies.

The Third World consists of the colonized or formerly colonized countries of the world. These include the nations and peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They have the unique distinction of having been oppressed and pillaged by the first world, i.e. by the colonialist European and American powers.

The advent of western industrialization brought with it imperialist expansion and oppression of the nations and peoples of the Third World. However, this industrialization also perfected communication and transportation systems which had the effect of exposing the international nature of the oppressor.

Through the process of slavery Africans from the world, all victims of systematic exploitation by the Western powers. The Asian peoples likewise found their lands invaded and their cultures and religions trampled upon and repressed. The original inhabitants of Latin America had the unfortunate experience of having been "discovered" by Europe, and as a result were colonized and their population completely decimated. After throwing off the chains of European feudalism, the Latin American population - made up of people of Spanish-Indian-African ancestry, were immediately re-colonized by their northern neighbor, the United States, and the familiar process of rape, murder and exploitation was continued.

Within the confines of the United States, the third world consists of the descendants of people from Asia, Africa or Latin America. This community is made up of Afro-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Latinos, Asian-Americans, Native Americans and Eskimos. We have all suffered from the same kind of exploitation and colonial repression as our brothers and sisters in our homelands. To combat an international enemy, an international resistance is needed.

The concept of Third World unity encompasses the struggles for liberation in the Americas, the Caribbean and in the continents of Africa and Asia. It is our belief that a socialist is committed to the liberation struggles of African, Asian and Latin peoples wherever they may be. These struggles must be interlocked with one another in order to obtain the most effective results. It is clear, therefore, that mass migration back to our respective homelands is not necessary for Black and other Third World peoples to achieve freedom.

We must likewise be concerned with the long range results of our struggles. Since we have a common oppressor, we must also have the same goals. We must try to achieve a society which is free from racism and the exploitation of man by his fellow man, nation by nation, or woman by man. All third world people have suffered under the yoke of white racism and economic pillage by the white imperialist powers.

Our international struggles are our struggle to eradicate these evils. We occupy a unique place at a critical time in history. We are located in the belly of the monster. China has cut off a tentacle. Cuba has cut off a tentacle. Vietnam has cut off a tentacle. Guevara-Brisson and the Palestinian guerrilla struggles are in the process of cutting off yet another tentacle. But these very important events have only weakened this octopus. It is up to the Third World peoples living in the belly of the beast to display his ability to reproduce, so that he can't kill it.

Third World people of the United States, IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE OF THE THIRD WORLD, IN THE SAKE OF HUMANITY IS IN OUR HANDS.



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Imperialism

Racism

Sexism



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