

## ***Third World Women's Alliance, Women in the Struggle (1971)***

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### **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 blackman. 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. Domesticworkers, 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 acceptablewhite 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 reflect this new awareness and composition of the group — **Third World Women's Alliance.**

### **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 small 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. There 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 women 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, un-available, 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.