

# Capitalism Is Rape



Rape is a brutal crime against women that must be stopped. Rape is a social crime because one out of four women in Kansas City is assaulted. This crime is a hidden crime because only a small percentage of rapes are reported. This act of violence is one form of oppression that keeps women down. Rape and sexual assault are merely the tip of the iceberg. Rape is not an isolated event, nor the act of a few individuals, rather rape is tied to a political, economic and social system that benefits from inequality and exploitation of women. This system, capitalism, creates the conditions, and rape is a consequence of those oppressive conditions. This pamphlet will explore these questions in further detail.

# Conditions That Create The Climate For Rape

We would say that very specific conditions create the climate for rape, especially in the following four areas. The first is the degradation of people into commodities possessing economic value, to be bought and sold; for women this takes special significance. The second area is the economic exploitation of women in our society that promotes inequality and serves to maintain the oppression of women. The third area is that system of ideas and practices that rationalize and cover the oppression, namely male supremacy. And the fourth area is the violence and brutality that is promoted in our society, which again serves to maintain the inequality and oppression of women.

1. Rape is directly tied to the degrading and demeaning process in capitalism where every human is reduced to an economic value, a commodity, where power and profit are the "important" factors, not human value. This is demonstrated when we are bought and sold on the labor market. This takes a more degrading form when women are reduced to superficial characteristics by "adult" bookstores and magazines, where the humanity of women is completely robbed by this sexual exploitation. Objectification is a process that degrades women to something less than human (such as describing women as chicks or broads). The objectification of women also takes form when women are thought of and treated as possessions or things to be owned and controlled, again robbing women of their humanity. The degradation of women to something less than human sets the first condition for rape.

2. Women are oppressed in our society. The reason is that it is profitable to promote and maintain inequality. The major example of this is the economic exploitation of women, where women are excluded from whole sectors of the economy; where women only earn 60% of what men earn; as well as perform unpaid labor at home as housecleaners and cooks where she maintains and reproduces the work force. Because profit is more important than human needs, the legal, educational, and cultural institutions of our society are biased against women and thereby encourage inequality. This economic exploitation sets another condition for rape.

3. Male supremacy is that system of ideas and practices that "rationalizes", excuses and covers the oppression of women. It is one of the most divisive ideologies as it provides the "answer" of why women make less than men, why women are excluded from control of their own lives, why women are only seen a sexual objects or property, why women do not have equality. This sexist ideology is produced and reproduced in the cultural and educational institutions

of capitalism where men are taught to be aggressive and the women to be passive, the men stronger and the women weaker ("the weaker sex"), the men dominant and the women submissive (men as the "king" of the house). This destructive ideology serves to keep women down, and provides the domination of men in all sectors of society, economic, political, cultural and social. Thus, male supremacy is part of the fabric that sets the conditions for rape.

4. The fourth area that sets the conditions for rape is the violence that is promoted in society. The brutality of rape is a consequence of a decadent capitalist society that is obsessed with violence. This is demonstrated by the motivation of capitalism to make money, even at the expense of human life. Concretely this means the practice of cutting down on safety procedures, increasing harmful pollution and radiation, or ordering work speed-ups at the expense of human health and well-being. Workers, as a class of producers and servers, also face the violence of unemployment, low pay, inadequate housing or inadequate medical care. In order to justify the violence against the workers, the ruling class makes violence more explicit, more degrading, more demeaning than the violence that working people experience every day. Therefore the capitalist media attempts to promote the idea that violence is the accepted way of life. This takes a more hideous form in that women are the principal targets of this violence. This is illustrated by the movies "Snuff" and "Chain Saw Murers", and the album cover of the Rolling Stones "Black and Blue" which showed a bound and tortured woman. All respect for human life and dignity is sold for profit. The violence of this dying society is not a random act. Violence, tied to the other elements of the objectification of women, inequality and male supremacy, complete the web that serves to keep women down. Therefore, the violence promoted in capitalism, acts as another condition for the assault and violence against women.

## Capitalism

To understand the oppression and exploitation of women it is first necessary to examine the type of society that we live in, capitalism. Our society is divided into two major classes, on the one side are those who produce goods and provide services (the working class) and on the other side are those (the bourgeoisie) who appropriate (rob, steal, take) the wealth from those who produce and serve. Today, in the U.S.A., the bourgeoisie are not only the exploiting class, but they are also the ruling class. They control both the means of our survival (where we work) and the institutions that attempt to mold and control our lives (media, political, educational, and legal institutions).

To maintain the rule of the exploiting class, the bourgeoisie need to keep us, the producers and servers, divided. Therefore, they promote the ideologies of racism and sexism to encourage divisions where none should exist. Specifically, the bourgeoisie have two reasons for promoting and encouraging sexist ideology. The first is to maintain and promote the extra exploitation of women at work and the unpaid labor in the home. The second is to use that system of sexist ideas and practices to cover and to provide "reasons" for this extra exploitation. Not only does the government take an active role in promoting sexist ideas, it also actively intervenes in maintaining inequality. This is illustrated by laws that are biased against women from educational opportunities, exempt women from minimum wage (food service and domestic help), and fight the economic independence of women. The gains that have been won have not been because of the "goodness" of the ruling class, but rather because of the struggle of the women's movement in demanding equality. The important thing to remember is that capitalism, as an economic, political, and social system, benefits from the exploitation of women and the maintenance of inequality.

## **World System of Exploitation – Imperialism**

The struggle against exploitation is not limited to the people in the U.S. because exploitation and the push for profit is not limited to national borders. We call this system imperialism, which has entangled the majority of the people of the world. There are cracks in this system and people around the world are rising up in revolt, demonstrating that imperialism can be overthrown. We share with the majority of the people of the world the struggle against a common enemy, the imperialist system of exploitation and profit.

Today our economy, our government, our complete social structure is controlled and dominated by huge monolithic multinational corporations. Gone are the days of the small businesses, work shops and factories. Instead we are forced to bow to the demands of the monopolies, such as EXXON, GM, Nestle, ITT, and others. Today we are in the stage of monopoly capitalism, the system of imperialism. The capitalists have grown to the point that there is no more "virgin" territory to rape, to make profits off of, so they turn around and exploit us even more. And to ensure that they keep their profit, power, and privileges, the capitalists mount a campaign of violence (increased police state), inflation, lower wages, and the increased division between working people (especially racism and sexism).

When the profit hungry beasts no longer can satisfy their greed within their own hunting grounds, they go ravaging in other coun-

tries. A prime example of this is the Nestle Corporation, a huge Swiss based multinational. This company has been mounting an all out campaign to force their artificial milk on third world women. In some health clinics, Nestles finances free or cheap prenatal care in exchange for the power to "educate" the expectant mothers that their own milk is not "good" for the baby and to keep the mothers from breast feeding in the hospitals. Upon leaving the hospitals a free supply of formula is given to the mothers for a period long enough for the mother's milk to dry up. Also, most of these women don't have refrigeration to store the milk or hot water to clean the bottles. The "milk" soon spoils and becomes contaminated. The milk is expensive and is often watered down and lacks the nutrients of breast milk as well as lacking the natural antibodies needed to combat disease. Result: tens of thousands of third world babies die yearly of needless malnutrition. A dramatic example of monopoly capitalism's concern for profit at the expense of human need.

There are other examples of the exploitation of women by imperialism. We shall list a few here: forced sterilization to "control" population, forced migration to look for work, and using women as guinea pigs for untested drugs.

One of the most brutal examples of imperialist exploitation of women was the Vietnamese War where millions of women were gunned down, poisoned, burned, assaulted, and murdered as the result of imperialism. But in response to that violence, women took up the fight for their liberation. As the slogan went, "In Vietnam, women carry guns." And women are carrying guns the world over, freeing themselves from imperialism and the sexual subjugation that it brings.

## **The Capitalist Legal System – Whose Laws?**

Our daily experiences of life in America prove that we cannot rely on this society's police and courts for protection. Indeed, it was the L.A. police who gunned down and killed Eula Love (a Black woman) when they came to her home to collect her \$22 utility bill. It was a Houston judge who fined the two Houston cops \$1 each for their brutal murder of Jose Torres (a Chicano). Joanne Little (a Black woman) was brought to trial for defending herself against her attacker, an attack which took place in the jail in which she was held. Yvonne Wanrow (an American Indian) was denied police protection when she was threatened by a known rapist, had no choice but to defend herself and her children with her own gun. After seven long years of courtroom trials Yvonne Wanrow was finally placed on "probation" for "manslaughter".

The courts and the police serve only to perpetuate this racist, sexist, capitalist system. While this country's hell hole prisons are full of third world people convicted by white male courts and serve life sentences, the mass butchers of My Lai, killers of women and children, like Lt. Calley and his superiors run free. A generation ago it took a world wide movement of millions to save the lives of the 13 young Black Scottsboro men convicted of rape and sentenced to death by a racist all white Alabama court. Even today we have examples like the Madison, Wisconsin judge who says women "ask to be raped" because they hitch-hike, stay out late alone and in general don't act and dress like nuns.

The "justice" system defends the law alright--capitalist law. Jim Crow laws, the "law of supply and demand", the draft laws. The courts defend these laws, not the lives and rights of the masses of people. The actual practice of the capitalist legal system is to protect capitalism and it's "right" to buy and sell human beings, the "right" to promote sexist ideas, the "right" to deny women equal pay, the "right" to promote violence. Because the capitalist legal system protects inequality and exploitation, it stands on the other side of the fight against rape.

Our only protection is our own strength. We uphold the right to armed self-defense and support those who have been forced to defend themselves against attack...Joanne Little, Yvonne Wanrow, and others. Actions taken by the state against them places the state fully on the side of the rapist. We oppose all efforts by the state to further restrict our ability to defend ourselves. The current K.C. city council attempt to make carrying a gun punishable by a mandatory 6 month jail sentence is the most recent attempt.

## **The Solution – Organize and Fight!**

The solutions to the cause of rape are not simple because the causes and conditions are so intertwined with capitalism. Rape will not be eliminated until we eliminate: the practice of buying and selling humans in the "labor" market; the practice of promoting women as sex objects; the ideas and practices of male supremacy; the inequality on the job or in the home; the system of ideas and practices that promote the artificial division between men and women. Therefore we say the solution to rape is impossible under capitalism.

Organizations and associations of women, formed on a neighborhood and national level, have the ability to take up the demands and needs of women, and have the ability to struggle for equality in society and in the home. That struggle means education and organization so that we can effectively fight for equality and human dignity. The mass struggles before us (civil rights, women's liberation, and anti-war) demonstrate that effective advances can be made

by the organization of large numbers of people. The mass organizations of women can be an effective method of attacking sexism in our society whether in the form of ideological struggle or political struggle.

But the struggle for equality is not just a women's struggle because the oppression of women is not separate from the exploitation and oppression that is promoted by capitalism. This means very clearly that the lines are drawn, on the one side you have those that are exploited and on the other side you have those who benefit from that exploitation. Concretely, this means that we must unite with those who are oppressed in the fight against the exploiters. It is very clear that the exploiters form a very distinct class who benefit from exploitation. And on the other side are the vast number of workers (the producers and servers) who stand to gain the most in the fight against sexism, and other divisive practices, such as racism. That is why we promote the organization of large numbers of people and the unity of these organizations and struggles. We have a common enemy, the class of exploiters who benefit from exploitation, and who therefore promote the conditions that maintain exploitation.

Since the problem is a social problem, that means very clearly that the solution is social. Rape is not just an isolated event, not the activities of a few individuals. Rather, rape is a consequence of the conditions created by capitalism, specifically inequality and exploitation. It is clear that we must develop a new society based on equality, cooperation and respect for human life. We say socialism is the beginning step to that solution.

## **Socialism**

The end to rape and sexual oppression is linked to the struggle for socialism. It is only through socialism that the conditions for eliminating inequality can be developed. While we continually struggle to bring about changes to promote equality under capitalism, there are definite limitations to what can be accomplished as capitalism, in its essence, thrives on inequality. Under socialism, changes will not occur overnight. But it is only under socialism that we can begin, in earnest, the struggle to eliminate all forms of inequality. The goal of socialism is the absolute equality of all persons. The struggle to eliminate the exploitation of the working class and to eliminate sexual and racial oppression can result in victory only when the conditions of equality exist.

Under capitalism, divisions based upon a person's sex, age, or color of skin, are needed to extract their profits. Under socialism, these divisions are fought to bring equality to all. Socialism sets the conditions in which equality will be promoted and

where the conditions that promote male supremacy will be fought. Rape and other forms of violence which have been used to keep women in "their place" will not be tolerated and the conditions which have created them will cease to exist. When capitalism is abolished, inequality will begin to disappear. It is only then that human beings will be valued above profit. Equality eliminates the need for the divisions which create oppression and violence.

The march of ~~WOMEN TAKE BACK THE NIGHT~~ is one of the first steps in mobilizing people to stop the attacks against women. A militant and united people can only ensure the right of all women to self-defense and to eliminate the conditions for rape. The struggles of the anti-war movement, the civil rights movement, and the women's movement of the recent past demonstrates that progress can be made, and that the struggle for equality continues. The struggle to end exploitation and oppression is directly tied to the destruction of the profit system (capitalism) and the struggle to build a society based on equality (socialism) where human values are promoted.



We invite your comments, suggestions and criticisms of this leaflet. Please write to us at the following address.

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