

WE MUST PAY GREAT ATTENTION TO THE  
PARTICULAR PROBLEMS OF BLACK WOMEN!

Position Paper

By

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The smashing of sexism and the development of Black women is an important and indivisible aspect of our National Liberation struggle – the struggle of over thirty million Afrikan-Americans for political self-determination and economic self-reliance. For too long, the particular problems of Black women have been either outright ignored or else postponed pending full liberation. But freedom for a people, for a potential nation, is not divisible, either we are all liberated from oppression and exploitation or else we, as a people, remain twentieth century slaves. Our purpose here is to specify what we are fighting against, what we are fighting for, and to suggest strategies and tactics for winning.

**STRUGGLE TO SMASH SEXISM.** What is sexism? Sexism is the systematic repression and exploitation of one group of people by another group of people based only on the criterion of sex. Sexism, as institutionalized in America today, is the social and material male domination of women.

Sexism interrelates with the two other great evils of modern America, namely racism and capitalism, and triply oppresses Black women. It is important to understand however, that sexism as a social disease predates both capitalism and the racism in America. (See Chiek A. Diop, “Cultural Unity of Black Africa”.) Thus, even those who have been at the theoretical and practical fronts of the fights against racism and capitalism have often overlooked the necessary struggle against sexism. But this is no surprise. Who thus far has been the primary and secondary leadership? In the main it has been men, men who were unconsciously, or in some cases consciously, infected with the social disease of sexism.

We must understand that the struggle to smash sexism is not a struggle of women against men, is not a struggle of a woman trying to get into a leadership position or secure a particular job. The struggle to smash sexism is above all a struggle to eradicate a social system, a culture, a so-called “modern way” of life. Social systems consist of ideas, institutions and individuals.

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Therefore, to concentrate only on individuals is insufficient. The propagation of sexist ideas through social institutions is what makes individuals sexual chauvinists.

This is not the battle of the sexes, this is a battle of social systems. The important thing is to be clear on the target before we shoot the bullet.

DEVELOP BLACK WOMEN. Our ultimate goal is to institute a better and more beautiful way of life, to build a social system within which everyone who is able has both the opportunity and obligation to do productive labor, labor that enhances both society as a whole and the individual worker. But to be able to build this type of society we must first eradicate the domination of the present society. This is social warfare and we will need an army of trained, skilled and committed soldiers.

Regardless of the number of Black men enlisted, our army will be incomplete and inadequate until we have recruited and deployed the masses of Black women. Black women must become both foot soldiers, fighting the enemy toe to toe in the trenches, and generals, developing master campaigns and victoriously leading our troops forward. Black women must become physically capable of wielding weapons and mentally capable of grasping the theory of warfare. In short, we must develop Black women.

But the development of Black women will not be a gift from any god or man. The development of Black women will come about as the result of the revolutionary practice of Black women to grasp their own individual and collective self-determination and self-reliance.

The only thing that is given to Black women is the opportunity to fight back, and even this opportunity must be seized. Only the doers can make real decisions and only the producers actually develop. The important thing is to become active in the struggle; struggle, and only struggle, makes us strong.

DEVELOP THE THEORY AND PERFECT THE PRACTICE. The winning strategy for smashing sexism, as well as racism and capitalism, will be (1) to grasp theory, (2) to be productive, (3) to consolidate militants, (4) to unite allies, and (5) to hit the enemy at every opportunity.

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(1) Grasp theory: be good at investigation, study and summing up. (See Mao Tsetung “On Practice” and “Where Do Correct Ideas Come From”.) We must begin full scale investigations into the day to day lives of Black women, where and how Black women live; then, utilizing this empirical base of knowledge, we must study the results of our investigation. We should piece separate parts into a whole. We should read what others have to say about the matters we have investigated. We should study facts and figures that put our investigations into an overall perspective. We should also study similar problems of other women in the world in order to gain a fuller understanding. Finally, we should sum up our investigation and study and come to conclusions. These conclusions will form our tentative theories. This is the first step to grasping theory.

The second step to grasping theory, after summing up, is to test the correctness of our tentative theories by putting them into practice. What is correct, based on our social and material practice, we should keep and put forward as progressive revolutionary theory. What is incorrect we should discard. What is insufficient we should alter and augment. This is how we grasp theory.

(2) Be Productive: the goal is to get good results from our work. In order to get good results, we must pay attentions to the details of our work. Ideas, no matter how good in the abstract, will not yield results until put into practice.

(3) Consolidate militants: if our forces are scattered and disarrayed, we can not expect to win any battles. Meetings must be called, conferences and strategy sessions should be held. All of those who want to fight should be encouraged to do so as part of an organized force. We must make every effort to bring together those who are ready to take up the struggle.

But it is not enough to call a meeting. We must have an agenda and we must have a political line. The agenda will help us determine specifically what we are to do. The political line will be our guide. Before we move forward all of our forces should be

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clear on where we stand and where we are going and why. Consolidation calls for both coming together and coming to consensus or agreement.

- (4) Unite allies: everywhere we can win someone over, we should try to do so. We must pay attention to the great numbers of people who are not either actively for or against us and the social system we wish to institutionalize. We must cultivate allies in our struggle or else we will become isolated. Besides if we do not cultivate allies, our enemies will cultivate them. We must not be afraid to interrelate with other peoples.
- (5) Hit the enemy at every opportunity: let us choose our battles and avoid being forced to fight when we are not ready to do so.

Firstly, we must propagate propaganda that explains what we are trying to do and explains why our fight is important. We should also explain the evils of the system we attack.

Secondly, we should organize popular support for our programs and opposition to the programs of racism, capitalism and sexism. We must always remember that people are our most important support. Money and material come from the labor of people. If we win the hearts and minds of people, then the material support will follow.

Hitting the enemy means more than fighting in the streets. In fact, armed struggle is the culmination, the last stage of overcoming the enemy. The success of struggle depends, to a great extent, on the degree of preparation.

Hitting the enemy at every opportunity requires preparation.

CONCLUSION. Perhaps, some people may question what does all of that have to do with smashing sexism? Smashing sexism is not simply an emotional issue. It is a fight and all fights require an understanding of warfare in order to be successful.

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This general sketch, and its only a very loose outline, is intended to help clarify the way ahead. We hope that the foregoing will be useful.

In conclusion, we close with two quotes:

“Our role as Black women is to develop ourselves to our fullest potential. To develop ourselves we must gain, maintain and use power. This power cannot be given to Black women; it must be ORGANIZATIONALLY and SYSTEMATICALLY TAKEN!”

- Nilima Zamani Mwendu

Sister Nilima has correctly pointed out that power is not given but rather is taken and that the only way to take power is through organized and systematic activity.

Black women must organize, both among themselves and with Black men and other forces who are ready to help smash sexism. Those of us who are engaged in our National Liberation struggle should encourage Black women to do this. Forces must be specifically organized to secure the rights of Black women and this must be a priority of our liberation work.

The underdevelopment of Black women is one of the main brakes on our liberation work. Those who complain about women being weak, or “dumb”, or disinterested or antagonistic, if they have not investigated the problems of women and are not working to eradicate the social and material forces that oppress and exploit Black women, then those people have no right to speak! Rights are based on responsibility. If something is wrong and a person is not willing to fight to make it right, then in effect, that person, no matter how much he or she denounces that which is wrong, in the final analysis, that person is helping to maintain the wrong.

The development of Black women requires people who are willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with and to follow the lead of Black women in the struggle to smash sexism. The development of Black women will require that we sacrifice personal and individual comfort in order to speed up the all-around improvement of the condition of Black women. We can not struggle in the abstract. In practice, in an organized and structured manner, we must actively address the question of developing Black women. If we are not willing to participate in this

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struggle, then we have no right to decision making, we can not tell Black women what or what not to do or be.

This brings us to our closing quote:

In America today women are what men force females to be. In the social order that we are struggling to build, women will make women. Women will be whatever females decide they need to be in order to rise to their fullest potential as conscious human beings able to transform the environment within which they live, work, struggle and die through their own productive labor. Womanhood will be what liberated women decide best suits the female in her pursuit for new life.

In short, and in final analyses, womanhood will be what our sisters become in the course of our liberation struggle.

- Kalamu ya Salaam  
REVOLUTIONARY LOVE

We will be free when we can seize the future and make it and ourselves into what we need and want to be. Black women unite and fight! Smash sexism, develop the new Black woman!