

THE STRUGGLE TO SMASH SEXISM IS A STRUGGLE TO DEVELOP WOMEN
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SEXISM: The systematic exploitation and/or oppression of one group of people by another group of people based on the criterion of sex. In America today, sexism manifests itself as the male domination of women.

The struggle to eradicate sexism, develop women and establish progressive relationships between African-american women and men is, in our opinion, a key and critical aspect of our national liberation movement, a movement against capitalism, racism and sexism, and for African-american political self-determination and economic self-reliance.

This presentation will attempt to point out why eradicating sexism, developing women and building progressive relationships is important to the future of our people as a whole and also will suggest beginning steps toward accomplishing that purpose.

DEFINING FEMINISM AS AN INTEGRAL ASPECT OF OUR STRUGGLE

The battle against sexism is not a war of the sexes. It is not a battle of women against men. It is a battle against an exploitative social system, a political battle – political in the sense that it is about us as a people, and, in this case, specifically our women, gaining the power to self-determine, self-defend and self-respect ourselves as human beings.

Our national liberation work must have a feminist aspect as the dialectical complement of our anti-sexist position. From a political philosophical point of view, it is important for us to grasp that ultimately, the only effective “anti” position is a “pro” position. It is not enough to be against sexism, we must also be for feminism.

Feminism at root and in its most positive sense, is simply political and economic power for women. Feminism is an integral part of our national liberation struggle precisely because there is no such thing as partial freedom or freedom in the abstract. Either all of us must have access to political and economic power, or else we as a people are not free.

In our view feminism does not necessarily result in, nor does it require espousing as its main goal, the turning of women into “men,” or the development of an androgynous or uni-sex society. Some slick opponents of feminism make this claim in order to create erroneous and easily refuted “straw women.” Concretely, women are

not men, nor is it necessary for them to become men-like in order to self-determine, self-defend, and self-respect their own lives as women and to decisively and collectively contribute to the upliftment of our people.

Additionally, we assert that the contributions of women are unique contributions. The uniqueness of these contributions is precisely that they are reflective of and deeply rooted in the specific reality of what it means to be a woman in general, and also, what it specifically means to be an African-american woman in modern America.

Unlike those who, in a zeal to achieve social equality for women, put forward the concept that there is no essential difference between women and men, we believe that there are obvious and essential differences which concretely lead to a basis for women making distinctive inputs into the structuring and maintenance of society. However, it is imperative to simultaneously assert that these real differences in no way should be twisted or construed to be a basis for denying power to women, or for justifying that women are inferior, weaker, or less capable of thinking than men because of these differences.

Difference is not a measure of worth. Both the earth and the sun, which are undeniably different in essence and function, are necessary for life as we know and live it. In a similar fashion, in order to develop the liberated life we need and desire, and for the establishment of which we struggle against sometimes seemingly insurmountable odds, we need unfettered and mutually respecting women and men maximally contributing to society, each in their own unique and profoundly human ways.

In order to bring into being such women and men it will be necessary not to refute sexism, but also, we will need to establish meaningful feminism. The struggle to gain and maintain a meaningful feminism will produce women and men who are whole human beings.

Although there is some resistance on the part of many men and a significant element of our women, the facts are that there is a real basis, in both history and our present conditions, for the construction of feminism within the context of our culture and struggles. Our history and current conditions, both as Africans and African-americans, include women such as Nzinga and Harriet Tubman, or the militants of PAC, ANC, ZANU, ZAPU, SWAPU and other African liberation movement and the female cadre of various African-american liberation organizations. These women in the past voluntarily and valiantly went to war with our women, and in the present continue to confront our enemies. They have in the past and continue today to actively participate in and help lead wars of national liberation and resistance.

Also, presently there are literally millions of women who, due to force of exploitative and oppressive circumstance, have to fend for and feed self and dependents as single heads of households without spouses or with only minimal outside support in the thousands of ghettos which litter the American urbanscape and thousands of miles of Bantustans which pollute the South African countryside. Such women are the key to our struggle precisely because they are the most exploited and therefore are the most in conflict with the status quo. They comprise the single greatest pool of potential revolutionaries.

Another importance of such history and current conditions is that they offer concrete examples and base on which can be built a genuine, indigenous, and self-serving feminism which interacts as a vital part of our overall liberation struggle. If we would only but make a realistic assessment of our history and conditions, we would find that we have the basis for the development of a political and progressive feminism rather than a biological and reactionary feminism. As our history and current conditions make clear, feminism is not foreign to us. The only question is will we develop feminism as a specific aspect of our liberation struggle.

We must specify feminism as a component of our struggle rather than maintain, as we too often did in the past, that once we are free from white domination our women will be free. Just as we rightly argue that racism will not simply disappear with the destruction of capitalism, or that capitalism doesn't disappear simply because Blacks are put in control, in similar fashion, we should understand that sexism will not simply disappear with the eradication of white male domination.

Sexism is a philosophy and practice that has its own internal dynamics and existence. To root it out will require special attention or else we will find it with us long after the last shot is fired. Particular problems demand particular attention.

UNITY IN STRUGGLE

We must demonstrate in practice, through the establishment of specific and effective programs, that we are for the defense and development of African-american women, and also for the combatting of sexist ideas and behavior in our men. Some argue that such a course of action actually divides our people. But, for the following three reasons, we believe that the course of action we outline here unites rather than divides us both as a people and also as individual women and men

First, the internal struggle to defend and develop women and to raise men pass being macho machines is generally a non-antagonistic contradiction among our people. It is generally non-antagonistic because we will be or should be able to resolve the

majority of our internal differences without having to resort to killing each other. It is a contradiction because there are distinct and identifiable wrongs which must be eradicated and divergences which must be united.

However, because the internal struggle to defend and develop our women is generally non-antagonistic and among our people, it is therefore, a contradiction which can be solved through political action in the form of democratic discussion, ideological struggle, criticism and self-criticism, and the enactment of progressive programs.

In its external aspect, defending and developing women and raising men clearly falls into the context of an antagonistic contradiction between our people and our enemies and the struggle should be waged as such, i.e. using every resource at our command including warfare.

Second, we believe that the defense and development of women will raise our women, our organizations, and, ultimately, all of our people to a significantly higher level of social development. We will gain more revolutionaries, leaders, and workers in the vein of Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Mary McLeod Bethune.

Additionally, as many of our social scientists are quick to point out, there is a shortage of African-american men and a surplus of African-american women. Given that our women are a numerical majority and also face a triple oppression and exploitation, then certainly particular attention should be paid to encouraging their full participation in our people's national liberation struggle.

Third, as Dr. Karenga correctly points out, if we ignore the problems and potentials of African-american women, we will create confusions and antagonisms where none need exist. Failing to get attention through peaceful means, women will rightfully disrupt a sexist status quo. Should disruption fail, women will correctly define us as collaborators and traitors who are little better than our people's historic enemy.

The truth is that our failure to fight sexism, our failure to defend and develop our women, and our failure to raise the consciousness and behavior of our men will be the ultimate divider which will keep us from getting together. The status quo argues for a false unity based on the relegation of women to lower levels. But since when does unity mean one being on top the other?

Only those consciously or unconsciously in favor of present social constructs and sexist hierarchies would argue that struggling to smash sexism and develop women is unnecessary and/or disruptive. But those of us who want to make change, who want to see women active at a higher level of social life, who want to see true liberation, we

should understand that smashing sexism and developing women will bring women and men closer together as comrades, complements and lovers who work in principled and practical unity to build and defend a better and more beautiful world for ourselves, our people, and ultimately all peoples on the planet.

In order to effectively and efficiently accomplish our important task, it is crucial that we begin by grasping three key elements: (1.) put politics in the lead, (2.) develop organization, (3.) be scientific.

PUT POLITICS, AND NOT BIOLOGY, IN THE LEAD!

First, put politics, and not biology, in the lead. Among many other considerations, this vies unequivocally asserts the position that men can and should participate in this struggle. Those of us who consider ourselves progressive men should be in the forefront of not only support work but also in the forefront of actual front-line struggle against sexism and for the empowerment of women. Additionally, we should, in practical terms, work on the day to day improvement of our relationships with women.

Many of us men don't struggle in this way because we are, as a result of our american socialization, thoroughly indoctrinated with sexism. Those of us in this category see no need, nor have any desire, to struggle against sexism in ourselves, as well as in other men, and to struggle for the development of women. Others of us don't struggle because of our ideological errors and deficiencies, i.e. a shaky and/or incorrect analysis and understanding of what we are fighting against, what we are fighting for, and who will benefit from our struggles.

Also, many men react negatively and incorrectly to those women who attempt to exclude men from the feminist struggle based on a reduction of the feminist struggle to a biological factor, i.e. biological determinism or putting biology, rather than politics, in the lead.

It is wrong to believe that biology or physiological differences determine social relationships. Social relationships are determined by the ideas and actions of both women and men acting either as individuals or, as in the overwhelming majority of cases, as self-defined groups.

Because women, or anyone else in a given struggle, make the error of biological determinism or other errors, that does not mean that either the struggle itself or those individuals who make mistakes while struggling are of no or little value and can be dismissed.

Also, in order for men to make significant contributions to the struggle to defend and develop women, it is not necessary for men to be in every organization formed to achieve that goal.

There is nothing inherently wrong with all women caucuses and organizations established to fight sexism and develop women. In fact, tactically speaking, such a move will often be necessary in order to advance. But, on the other hand, there is something wrong with the outlook and behavior of women who do not struggle against sexist wrongs and for women's rights unless they have a say so in everything that women say and do. This is nothing but a continuance of male domination.

We not only affirm the right of women to meet and organize among themselves, but we also denounce the position which would lead us to believe that such actions are inherently incorrect. At the same time, however, we believe that it is both possible and important for women and men to live, struggle, work and create together as politically and economically equal parts of a larger society.

This is why our organization has both female and male cadre on an equal standing, and why we sponsor programs which speak directly to the defense and development of women, and why we include men in such programs. But, on the other hand, recognizing the importance and sensitivity of initial mobilization – gathering together people of common interest to confront a particular problem or make productive use of a particular potential – our organization continues to offer opportunities for women to get together, in the absence of men, in order to address questions of their choice. However, it is important to recognize that “female only” mobilization is only a secondary tactic, rather than a primary tactic, of our overall strategy for smashing sexism and developing women.

Furthermore, anti-sexism and feminism are, in our view, but one part of our greater national liberation struggle; an indispensable part, a part of high priority, but, nonetheless and in the final analysis, still a part and not a whole in and of itself.

We do not believe that the defense and development of women, nor men, can be realized separate from our overall national liberation. We believe that while there will be no true liberation without women's liberation, it is also true that women's liberation (or men's liberation) cannot be achieved and maintained separate from our overall liberation struggle. It is a serious error to believe and act otherwise.

However, it is also a serious error to spend valuable time attacking women who make mistakes in the process of waging struggle (which is qualitatively different from women or men who consciously side with, and thus, become agents of our enemy.

Initially, we will all make mistakes, for that is part of the necessary process of acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge and skills. Once we recognize the inevitability of mistakes, then we should also recognize the importance of compassion, understanding and assistance.

Men who are genuine in this struggle will make every effort to help rather than hurt, to rectify rather than simple refute, to defend rather than denounce women who are struggling to defend and develop themselves, particularly when they make mistakes. To persist in putting down women in the name of correction or criticizing their mistakes, rather than supporting and encouraging women who struggle, is a serious error.

These and other errors are, to a great extent, due to our lack of or deficiency in an ideology based on dialectical praxis, i.e., a development of theory and practice grounded in:

(1.) perception of concrete reality through observation/investigation, (2.) reflection or deductive: “thinking about” what we have perceived, (3.) conception of logical conclusions which flow out of our reflections and perceptions, (4.) formulation of specific hypotheses or ideas as guides for action, (5.) application in practice of the hypothesis, (6.) and evaluation of the results of our practice.

Instead of choosing this methodology, most of us think as we have been taught to think, i.e. metaphysically, fatalistically, and/or individually. As I have previously pointed out, If we weren't so metaphysical (attributing material and social development of unknown and/or incomprehensible nonmaterial, nonhuman forces) and fatalistic (believing that our future is predetermined and/or beyond the influence of our struggle to transform ourselves and the world) we would look beyond the image to the controllers of the image and the mechanisms of image making; we would look for the hidden hand of humans acting in their own interest rather than the invisible hand of “our God(s)” allegedly manipulating reality. Furthermore, what we “think” of “believe” about reality does not determine reality or necessarily aid us in confronting and changing it. We can create better and more beautiful lives only by critically and concretely investigating and transforming material and social reality.¹

Furthermore, because we have been taught to take an “individualistic” approach, many of us do not understand and/or accept that every so-called ‘personal’ issue is also inevitably and overwhelmingly a political issue. “Personal” problems are, at root, nothing more than particular examples of general social problems. These social problems are necessarily defined within a larger and specific social/political context. In

fact, our individual personalities are nothing more than the result of our socialization and the response of each of us to this socialization.

We are not saying that personal problems do not exist. But rather, we are saying that the existence of each and every personal problem has its origins and maintenance in our overall social conditions. Personal problems can be solved by either altering individual responses to social conditions and/or by altering social conditions which affect the individual. The former choice maintains the status quo, the latter choice changes the status quo. Obviously then, for those of us who are systematically exploited and oppressed within this social context, the most appropriate and effective choice, although certainly not the easiest choice to make or carry through to completion, is to challenge and change society.

In order to successfully challenge and change society, we as a people will have to obtain power, which we define as the capability (will and ability) to self-determine, self-defend and self-respect our lives. The struggle to control society and our lives which is also the essence of our national liberation struggle, is then what we must be about if we are to solve our so-called "personal problems."

Additionally, women and men who participate in this struggle, will find that active participation offers both an opportunity to work on these problems in meaningful manners, and also provides, in many cases, the opportunity to resolve or at least ameliorate the personal problems of those who are struggling for national liberation.

Although we do have an ultimate destination, an ideal social goal, the reality is that social upliftment is not deferred pending realization of "utopia," but rather, social upliftment is a dialectical and necessary outgrowth of the struggle to reach our goal, particularly when our goal is a better society, a qualitatively higher development of human life.

By putting politics rather than biology, in the lead we can break through the estrangement and alienation of women from men and vice versa; we can recognize that biological differences do not necessarily lead to political and economic differences; and we can understand that the political and economic differences that do exist between women and men in America are engineered by the architects of a profit-oriented, white supremacists, male chauvinist society which has intentionally built into the society, mechanisms of political/economic, racial and sexual division in order to ensure the maintenance of white, male, ruling class domination.

By putting politics in the lead we not only make ourselves conscious of the sources of division and the reasons for division, but more important, we also decisively contribute to our own transformation which gives us the revolutionary capacity to both

theoretically and practically confront our real enemies by uniting and fighting for a national liberation program of (1.) a political and economic sovereignty, (2.) international solidarity of peoples of African descent, and (3.) the institution of a controlled and collective, creative and productive social system.

DON'T PERSONALIZE, POLITICIZE – DON'T INDIVIDUALIZE, ORGANIZE!

Second in addition to putting politics in the lead, we must organize ourselves. The struggle against sexism and for power is not a struggle that any of us can take on single-handedly, although each of us will certainly have to make individual contributions. We must always remember that power comes from people organized and actively working to transform themselves and their material and social conditions. Those of us who recognize this usually concurrently recognize that, since power comes from the creative and productive work of people, only a people organized can defeat exploitation and oppression, only people organized can become self-determining and self-reliant.

Every organization, regardless of its collective character, individual constituents, or its purpose and programs, in the final analysis, is politically either progressive, regressive or status quo oriented. In order to be progressive, organizations will have to pay great attention to the social relationships active within the organization and between the organization and other organizations, individuals, institutions and issues.

Again, this is ultimately a political question. Even an all-female caucus or organization must make a decision about how it will relate to or not relate to progressive peoples and uses, almost all of whom will include men. An all women organization is no guarantee of progressiveness, just as an all Black, an all male or all anything organization cannot guarantee progressiveness. Progressiveness is determined by the philosophy and programs of an organization and the specific contributions of those who make up the organization.

So then we are saying that the struggle to smash sexism and gain power requires not only a different ideology, a different way of thinking and acting, but also requires that we either form distinct organizations to address these issues or else set up specific programs within existing organizations to take up the work of defending and developing women.

To the degree that we do not address the question of sexism within the organizations that we form, to that same degree our organizations will contain fatal flaws which will ultimately undermine and doom the organization to failure.

This task will not happen by accident. Our organizations must plan to pay attention to and solve the problems of women. We must consciously work at developing the potential of women. The issue cannot be put on a back burner. It must be a priority issue of organizational work if it is to be adequately addressed. This organizational priority must run the gamut of activities from childcare to political education; from organizational support in confronting, in both individual and collective instances,, the reluctance of both men and women to face up to and transform socially induced weaknesses, to the structuring of specific sessions and programs which address the issues and concerns of women within and without the organization.

IN ORDER TO OVERCOME, BE SCIENTIFIC!

Third, in addition to ideology and organization, we must be scientific in our methods of struggle. The dialectical method of investigation is the cornerstone of science. But, in relation to using the scientific method, the most important and underlying assumption is that we human beings can transform ourselves and our environment.

This belief in self is revolutionary optimism; revolutionary because we believe in our own ability to make decisive change and optimism because we are confident that Pamoja Tutashinda (Together WE WILL WIN)! Additionally, in order to be truly optimistic, we must be honest in our evaluation of ourselves, each other and our capabilities. So then, those who employ scientific methods are invariably optimistic in outlook and honest in their evaluations.

Optimism. For too long we as a people, and particularly those of us who are women, have not believed in our own collective and individual capacity to make change.

Women have suffered the stringent controls of a sexist society which, ideologically, political, economically and in countless other concrete ways, binds the feet of women.

This process of foot binding has been so horribly thorough that often women will bind the feet of both themselves as well as the feet of other women in an effort to conform to a detrimental and self-destructive image which they have been taught to believe is what women are supposed to be. Thus, society not only creates a dependency complex in both the minds and the lives of women, but also, society sometimes successfully uses women as agents to perpetuate this dependency complex.

We African-americans should not be surprised by the “victim-turned-oppressor” syndrome. We should be very familiar with this phenomenon. For just as America changed the African and created the self-destructive “negro,” so too, America has helped change women into “the American girl.” The only two distinctions being that (1.) whereas our indoctrination into “negroness” began with the slave trade, the sexist indoctrination of women preceded that time period, and (2.) Whereas we had our names changed to negroes, the sexist modification of women’s consciousness was accomplished without a name change, thus making it even more difficult to recognize. That is a major judge.

But whether or not we recognize or understand this terrible reality, women will not be able to walk on their own two legs until the theoretical and practical foot bindings of women are unraveled and discarded. Until women’s feet are free, regardless of how much they may want to walk unassisted, they will in reality remain physically, emotionally, and otherwise dependent on others for support.

The fact that some women have tried removing the bindings on their own, the fact that some have been partially successful at slipping out of the bindings but still have not as a whole been able to walk as whole human beings, all of this and more, as served to discourage women and men from struggling for the development of women.

Regrettably after falling once or twice, some of us have concluded that women will never walk upright, just as many of us believe that our people as a whole will never be liberated and self-reliant. Some of us are convinced that regardless of what we do we cannot win. Unfortunately, at this time, more than a few of us believe that we cannot significantly change our condition.

This lack of belief in ourselves when coupled with our reluctance to honestly and fearlessly, materially and socially, criticize each other and our collective situations has been a more effective fetter on our progress than any chain or physical force used by our enemy.

In order to be optimistic, it will be necessary to adopt an ideology, i.e. guiding principles and values, which is change (in a self-defined progressive and positive sense) oriented rather than status quo oriented. We need an ideology which is collective rather than individual in orientation and which affirms that conscious people can adequately defend themselves from physically more powerful people and can overcome past and current material deficiencies. This is important. If we lack a belief in our own ability to make change, we will certainly not be willing to go against the tide of the status quo, or in cases when we do go against the tide, we will allow small setbacks or the rigors and tests of protracted struggle to overwhelm and defeat us.

But in order for us to adopt such an outlook it will be necessary to strip ourselves of old indoctrinations, and it will be necessary, although certainly painful at times, to learn new ways of looking at and living in the world. This in turn will require a degree of honesty about ourselves that we previously have not yet achieved and, at simultaneous degree, of a hard and conscious Kazi (work) that we previously have avoided.

Honesty. The best honesty, in a collective setting, is serious criticism/self-criticism. Criticism, or a critique, is simply an accurate assessment of reality, a weighing. We should decide what is good, what is bad, what is real, what is abstract, why and when we do what we do and don't do.

Critiques should in no way imply condemnation. Most of us, as a result of our socialization within this society, take a dim view of criticism and self-criticism. We have been taught to think that not only are critiques unnecessary, unhealthy, and ultimately destructive, but also. We have been taught that critiques are personal attacks.

However, the important and indispensable purpose of principled political critiques is to reveal the reality of our everyday individual and collective lives, to expose the material and social forces at work, and to help us determine what course of action is best in order to achieve our own goals.

In developing the capacity to critique each other and our external reality, we will necessarily have to critique and confront both our external opposition and our internal weakness. Such critiques, particularly in the case of self-criticisms and criticisms of internal weaknesses shall come only as a result of conscious efforts and can be successful only within a context where it is clear that it is done out of concern from both the individual and the collective.

To tell the truth to each other is sometimes very difficult, but it can be done if we make one of our organizational priorities truth telling and the establishment of an atmosphere that promotes standing up for the truth with positive reinforcements.

Political critiques necessarily demand ideological study, demand the acquiring of skills not only of thinking but also acquiring a practical understanding of history and contemporary conditions, how the world and people within it have worked and how they work today.

There is no simple road to smashing sexism and to developing women and men into whole human beings. But we reiterate our firm conviction, based on history and our present practice, we can win this struggle. If Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass

could recognize, critique, fight against, and overcome the negative effects of their own sexist socializations in a slave society then we today can certainly also do at least the same based on building on their historical accomplishments, we should be able to do more.

Critiques are welcomed among those of us who are genuinely optimistic based on a belief in our own human capacity to transform self and society, a belief which is validated by both history and practice. We don't fear our weaknesses nor the "might" of those problems we must face precisely because we know that we can change for the better. We know that we can transform ourselves and our society.

Individually, whether male or especially, female we must dare greatness, go against the tide, and oppose the multitude who have been trained by society to protect and promote the status quo. This is especially important for females as this is the only way to develop.

In any and all human societies only those who materially and socially produce goods and services actually develop. The way to develop muscles is to exercise them. The way to improve ourselves as social beings is to struggle to change and control society in general, as well as struggle to change and control specific social relationships within society. Social development is no abstract concept, it is real and practical.

Our organizations, if nothing else, must be structures which facilitate social change both internally – among the members who make up the organization, and externally – in the society at large within which the organization exists.

The struggle to smash sexism must be viewed in a positive manner. It is not just a matter of convincing men not to be sexist. It is more importantly a matter of convincing women not to accept sexism, to fight against it and to defend and develop themselves as women in the process of fighting sexism.

Above all else the smashing of sexism is to develop women. Why? Because developed women cannot be contained by primitive or punitive sexist social systems. Developed women will transform themselves and the society within which they live, will determine their own lives. Developed women will fight back, will defend themselves. Developed women will put an end to degradation, will self-respect themselves.

Women must be armed with the theory necessary to refute the specious and sexist arguments of male chauvinism, especially when it is put forward by someone who is liberal or left, and particularly when the proponent of sexism is female. For finally, no soldier is a soldier unless they are able to fight, to shoot, to confront the enemy.

But again, there is much more to this than memorizing political formulas. Grasping ideology necessarily includes not only study but also struggle. But ideology, or politics, alone, although necessary, is not sufficient. Women must also develop their creative and productive capacities in order to make socially relevant and ultimately indispensable contributions to our overall struggle and future societies.

For too long we have overlooked the concrete task of supporting women acquiring knowledge and skills which will be useful both to them as women and to our people's collective national liberation struggle.

We must go all out to create more women who, in addition to being theoretically advanced, are also professionals in the sciences and skilled areas of productive labor. Women must be encouraged to enter the so-called "non-traditional jobs" not to be tokens for firsts but rather because these job areas are, in most cases, the productive backbones of this and any society.

Within our organizations we should emphasize the development of women, pay attention to issues such as childcare and birth control, communicative skills such as public speaking and writing, and self-defense. We must ensure women the opportunity to travel and to meet people of various backgrounds and areas of expertise.

Women must insist on these opportunities which are the basic steppingstones of development. Women must not be discouraged by failure upon first attempting to work in new areas, nor be discouraged by the misunderstandings and ill-feelings that will inevitably surround them, nor stop short of success because of the temporary alienation that may exist between the emergent new woman and old friends, family and acquaintances.

Regardless of what happens or how long it takes to happen, all of us must recognize and reaffirm that it is primarily the ways in which society is organized and the ways in which women and men have been socialized that accounts for the position and dispositions of women in today's society. It is important to realize that women were not born with their feet bound but rather their feet were bound by a society which wishes to hobble them. There is no fatal flaw in the nature of women, just as there is no fatal flaw in the nature of our people as a whole.

Ideology and organization without optimism and criticism will not work simply because we will not be able to maintain a commitment to and faith in social relationships and organizations which we do not understand and over which we have little control.

When “things fall apart” we must be able to discover the cause and we must have confidence that we can reverse a negative trend. Lacking this confidence, we will desert, will quit, will revert back to the ways in which we were reared. Without a knowledge of what is wrong and why, we will never be able to overcome the odds against us, we will never truly recognize reality. Instead we will fool ourselves and, under the influence of a pervasive, enemy-led, mass media, we will nickname the truth and pathetically try to find ways to coexist with rather than challenge and change an exploitative and oppressive status quo.

Optimism and criticism are a necessary connective which holds together our theoretical (ideology) and concrete (organizational) work in the face of inevitable material and social stresses and strains.

A COLLECTIVE AND SCIENTIFIC STRUGGLE OF CONSCIOUS COMRADES!

Ideology, organization, and a scientific methodology based on optimism and criticism are necessary prerequisites to any successful struggle to smash sexism (or capitalism and racism) because these are the basic building blocks of a social system. Furthermore, in our case, the social system which exploits and oppresses us will not be totally defeated until and unless it is replaced by a different social system.

Sexism will not be totally defeated until this society is replaced by a non-sexism society. But the process of replacement requires an effort which is conscious (ideology), collective (organization), and scientific (criticism/optimism).

In order to smash sexism, we must smash the weaknesses which provide fertile ground for sexism in ourselves, within our organizations, and within the society in which we live, struggle and die. In a similar fashion, we must work to develop women and also to raise the consciousness and behavior of men in order to establish positive social relationships between women and men. While at any given time any one of the three areas, (individual, organization, a society) may take a priority, generally the case is that work must occur in all three in order for any of the three to be thorough.

Those who would depreciate the need to work in these three areas; those who would have us believe that it is possible to make change without changing ourselves; those who deny, in either theory or practice, the need for organizational work; and those who suggest that we can forget about the larger society within which we exist and suggest that we isolate ourselves into some ideal utopian conclaves, these are people who are either ignorant of the lessons of history or agents of the status quo.

Beware of guides who claim that the road is smooth sailing. We who are active and aware know that the struggle to smash sexism is a difficult road, especially for women whose feet have been bound for centuries and especially also for men who have been blinded by sexism and who are too often reluctant to give up their position of 'lord and master' over women.

But, all of these problems considered, there is no cause for despair, for as we struggle to achieve ideological clarity, and individual as well as organizational higher levels of socially significant practice, it becomes clearer and clearer that we can make change, that we can create a better and more beautiful human being and world.

Based on the lessons of history, our practice of today and our vision of the future, there is no doubt but that we will win. We who are active and aware know that the struggle to smash sexism, the struggle to develop women, individually, organizationally and within society at large is a struggle which grows stronger every day and is a struggle which will both strengthen and institutionalize new interrelationships between women and men.

Those whose feet once were bound are now walking and running the way of the new world. Those whose minds once were bound up in sexist and other equally erroneous ways of thinking, are now taking a different view of themselves, each other, and the world. As the bindings are removed, as we stretch and struggle forward, success does not any longer seem so far away nor so inaccessible.

Politicized, organized and scientific about our struggle, most certainly we can all run on together and see what tomorrow brings!