

when much wider, diverse groups of women began to think how they could combine changing their own lives with the transformation of society.

NOTES

1. Helke Sander, "Action Committee for the Liberation of Women," SDS Conference, Frankfurt, unpublished MS, 1968.
2. Valerie Walkerdine in Liz Heron, ed., *Truth, Dare or Promise: Girls Growing Up in the 50s* (London: Virago, 1985), 74, 75.
3. Sue O'Sullivan, "Capping the Cervix," *Spare Rib* 105 (April 1981).
4. *Come Together* 3, Gay Women's Liberation issue (1971).
5. Quoted in Sheila Rowbotham, "The Beginnings of Women's Liberation Britain" (1972), in Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreams and Dilemmas: Collected Writings* (London: Virago, 1983).
6. Quoted in Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 97.
7. Audrey Wise, "Equal Pay is Not Enough," *Black Dwarf* 10 (January 1969).
8. Rochelle Wortis, Women's Liberation Conference, Ruskin College, Oxford, 1970.

LISTEN UP, ANGLO SISTERS

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COLONIZED WOMEN: LA CHICANA

For the women of a colonized group, even the most politicized, their oppression as women is usually overshadowed by the common oppression of both male and female. Black and brown people in this country often see themselves as fighting for sheer survival against the physical genocide of racism, war, police brutality, hunger and deprivation, and against the cultural genocide of Anglo institutions and values. As a result, most colonized women will feel an impulse toward unity with, rather than enmity toward, their brothers. When the colonized group is in the minority, as in the United States, this becomes even more true.

The woman from a colonized people also recognizes that many times it has been easier for her economically than for the men of her group. Often she can get a job where a man cannot. She can see the damage done to the man as a result, and feels reluctant to risk threatening his self-respect ever further. This may be a short-range viewpoint, involving false definitions of manhood, but it is created by immediate realities whose force cannot merely be wished away. It is also a fact that in many Chicano families, the woman makes many of the important decisions—not just consumer decisions—though the importance of her role will be recognized only privately. This may seem hypocritical or demeaning, but the knowledge of having real influence affects how the Chicana feels.

The family is also seen differently by women from the colonial experience. It often serves as a fortress, a defense against the inimical forces of the dominant society, a source of strength for a people whose identity is constantly under attack. Within that fortress, the woman as mother remains central. She is the principle of life, of survival and endurance. The children survive through her willpower. So the family is a fortress in the face of genocidal forces, a major source of strength for a people whose identity is constantly being whittled away. For young, alienated Anglo women, on the other hand, the family—especially when nuclear—is often seen as an oppressive, patriarchal institution that limits

women to the roles of housewife and mother. Her attitude is almost the opposite of the Chicana's.

The family is but one example of how the culture or lifestyle of a colonized people becomes a weapon of self-defense in a hostile world—even when that culture or lifestyle might be oppressive to half of the people. To challenge such a lifestyle often means to risk being seen as adopting the enemy's position. "We don't want to become like the dominating Anglo women," you could hear Chicanas say in the 1960s and 1970s—and in later years as well. The comment shows a lack of understanding of the Anglo woman's struggle, but it also reveals how, for a colonized people, cultural integrity is deeply interwoven with survival. The middle-class Anglo woman must therefore beware of telling her sisters of color to throw off their chains without at least first understanding the origins and reasons for those "chains." She should also first ask herself: are there perhaps some aspects of these other lifestyles from which white women might still learn?

At the same time, we can hope that women from the colonized populations will listen with open minds to their Anglo sisters' ideas about women's liberation and then take another look at their own values. There is, for example, nothing worth preserving about the tradition of two young Chicano males fighting at a dance over some girl whom both hardly know, to prove their manhood. There is also much to be gained by considering the idea that male authoritarianism does not oppress women only, but also the masses—many being people of color. In other words, feminism must be antiracist (since vast numbers of women suffer racism) and antiracism must be feminist (since half of those suffering racism are women).

Such an open-minded exchange of ideas will often be difficult. But for those who seek to affirm a revolutionary vision and change the basic system under which we live, does any other real choice exist? How else can we create a society based on interdependency and balance instead of hierarchy?

Plagued by Western habits of either/or, dualistic thinking, we all may fail to understand that race, class, and gender interconnect to sustain a corporate ruling class. In the language of African-American essayist bell hooks, they are interlocking systems of oppression. Neither Latina nor Anglo women should yield to the temptation of making a hierarchy of oppressions where battles are fought over whether racism is "worse" than sexism: or class oppression is "deeper" than racism, and so on. Instead of hierarchies we need bridges—which, after all, exist to make two ends meet.

CARAMBA, OUR ANGLO SISTERS JUST DIDN'T GET IT

Today, when a strong defense of reproductive rights by women of all racial and ethnic origins is urgently needed, what do we find? Too often pro-choice Anglo women just don't... "get it." The historic April 5, 1992, march in Washington, D.C., to defend reproductive rights became another occasion when women of

color saw their demands for a front seat denied and their protests against such treatment drowned in a deluge of defensiveness. Once again they heard those familiar claims of good intentions. Once again they heard that patronizing line about how African-American and Latina women are just too busy fighting racism or too constrained by their religion to be concerned with choice.

One begins to wonder: maybe it's wrong to say they just don't get it. Maybe they do "get it" but don't want to yield any degree of control. In any case, the story needs to be told and lessons drawn.

A few days before the Washington march, an ad hoc coalition embracing six organizations of Asian/Pacific Island, Black, Latina and Native American women, together with the International Coalition of Women Physicians, spoke out about the National Organization for Women (NOW). In its public statement the ad hoc coalition—called the Women of Color Reproductive Rights Groups—listed criticisms of NOW actions related to the march. These included failing to contact organizations of women of color in time for them to participate in planning and strategizing for the march; failing to acknowledge the suggestion that a women-of-color delegation be prominently located in the march lineup; and failing to seek their input about rally speakers. Those criticisms reflected long experience of being invited to join an action after plans had been made (by Anglo women), of being relegated to the back of a march, and of being scheduled to speak late in the program when people would already be leaving. The coalition's statement spelled out the heart of the matter:

Historically, the relationship between women of color and the broader reproductive rights community has suffered due to the uneven power relationship between the long-established reproductive rights organizations and the newly established women of color reproductive rights organizations. In spite of our limited resources, [our activities] have been responsible for the increased awareness and for the educating, organizing, and mobilizing of our communities.... If NOW's leadership is serious about strengthening their relationship with women of color not only our right to reproductive freedom must be respected, but our right to decide who our representatives will be—the right to self-determination—must be respected.

One of the main organizers of this protest was Luz Alvarez Martínez, director of the Organización Nacional de La Salud de La Mujer Latina (National Latina Health Organization) in Oakland, California. According to Alvarez Martínez, NOW president Patricia Ireland originally said she wanted women-of-color organizations to feel included in the march—then failed to implement this beyond contacting three African-American groups in Washington, D.C. (but no other black groups and not any Latinas at first). In the days that followed, Alvarez Martínez said, national NOW leaders responded with inaction and excuses to women-of-color demands for a key role in planning, marching, and speaking.

The ad hoc coalition then urged women going to the march to wear green armbands as a sign of protest, to march together and to write letters of protest to NOW's board. NOW had asked Alvarez Martínez to be a speaker at the Washington rally, but, she said, "after getting no input whatsoever, we were not

about to be used as window dressing by speaking at the rally." As it turned out, five other Latinas did speak that day—all of them before the march, and none during the official rally program.

Throughout this struggle, the ad hoc coalition stressed that their protest aimed to strengthen the reproductive-rights movement. Coalition groups were committed to fight for the right "of all women—especially poor women and women of color—to safe, affordable, and quality reproductive services." The National Latina Health Organization and others urged members to march on April 5. But, as Alvarez Martínez told me, "NOW and others like them must change. That's our goal—to achieve real unity so we will be stronger."

"Some in the group would like to meet with NOW," Julia Scott of the National Black Women's Health Project in Washington, D.C., commented to me at the time, "but mostly the top priority is to develop and organize ourselves so that this problem never happens again. So that we come to the table as equal partners. They have to learn to operate differently with us." That is the heart of the matter, Scott said. "It's about doing things differently. Realizing that maybe your way isn't the best way. Right now, when faced with diversity, they resist changing." An urgent need to fight some appalling new piece of anti-choice legislation becomes the justification for not taking the time to resolve this issue. Scott saw a particular need to challenge NOW's rhetoric of inclusion.

The conduct of national NOW in the April 5 series of events was typical of the mainstream feminist movement. As Scott pointed out, "White feminism's biggest mistake was not working with poor, working-class women. The problem isn't just racism on their part, it's also a middle-class perspective. It includes a failure to study the lessons of history about white feminism's mistakes in relating to women of color."

The Conference on Population Control held in Cairo in 1994 showed that those lessons of history still needed to be learned, above all the lesson that issues of class and race can still divide the pro-choice movement if not recognized. According to Alvarez Martínez, the Cairo conference focused heavily on abortion rights, and the document coming out of it did not take seriously the needs of marginalized women and women in poor countries. Still, it was the first time women of color were included in an international conference on those reproductive-rights issues. By the time the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and the accompanying conference of non-governmental organizations took place in Beijing in 1995, the old ad hoc grouping had become the Coalition for Reproductive Health Rights. The voices of women of color could no longer be denied.

Back in Oakland, Alvarez Martínez not only criticizes Anglo sisters whose attitudes need to change; she also points to those who *have* grown, including NOW leaders. In San Francisco, women of color for reproductive rights experienced a local struggle similar to the one around the Washington, D.C., march. Out of the resulting dialogue came a good working relationship with NOW leader Elizabeth Toledo, Planned Parenthood, and other predominantly white

groups. "They don't always see what they do wrong, but when you tell them, they get it," Alvarez Martínez said after the dialogue. This experience suggests a model for joint pro-choice efforts around the country.

The problem has often been rooted in a racist arrogance underlying the attitude of many Anglo women toward Latina views on reproductive rights. In the guise of understanding our culture, or sympathizing with our daily survival needs, they have characterized Latina feminism as inherently more conservative than the Anglo variety. Much ignorance of Latina views and experience feeds that stereotype.

If we look more closely at Latina views, we find that reproductive freedom is a major concern of Latinas and not some taboo subject or minor matter. In 1977, when Congress ended federal funding of abortions, the first victim was a 27-year-old Chicana—Rosie Jiménez from McAllen, Texas, daughter of migrant workers—who died at the hands of an illegal abortionist after six days of suffering.

The Rosie Jiménez case was one reason for the formation in 1990 of an ad hoc coalition, Latinas pro Derechos Reproductivos (Latinas for Reproductive Choice), by Luz Alvarez Martínez and five other women. The appointment of David Souter to the U.S. Supreme Court, and the increasing likelihood of the court overthrowing *Roe v. Wade*, also spurred this action. It is a myth, the group maintains, that Latinas do not have abortions; they just don't talk about them. In fact, the Latina abortion rate in 1994 was 26.1 per thousand, compared with 26.6 per thousand for non-Latinas.¹

Today, Latina abortions constitute about 13 percent of the total in the United States, which is disproportionate to the Latina percentage of the population. According to a poll of women of color on reproductive-health issues that was conducted by the National Council of Negro Women and the Communications Consortium Media Center (both in Washington, D.C.), only 25 percent of Latinas are opposed to abortion in all circumstances.

It has never been easy for Latinas to advance abortion rights. A Latina in Corpus Christi, Texas, is believed to be the first U.S. Catholic excommunicated for pro-choice activism. In the face of such experiences, one of the goals of Latinas pro Derechos Reproductivos was to break the silence on reproductive-rights issues. At the same time, they considered abortion too narrow a focus. "We are redefining choice," Alvarez Martínez said; choice has to include having all the healthcare services and information that enable a woman to make her own decision freely.

Choice also has to include freedom from sterilization abuse—another form of reproductive oppression. For women of color this is a major concern. While a Medicaid-funded abortion may be hard or impossible to get in some states (it is still legal in California), sterilization services are provided by states under Medicaid, and the federal government reimburses states for 90 percent of those expenses. Some public hospitals have two films they show to women seeking contraceptive information: the English-language film emphasizes conventional

contraceptive methods, and the Spanish-language film stresses sterilization. Sometimes a woman must agree to sterilization to get an abortion. Sterilization rates run up to 65 percent for Latinas in some parts of the United States; in New York, for example, the Latina rate is seven times higher than that of white women. Yet too often pro-choice Anglo women ignore or downplay sterilization abuse. Even though there are now laws against it, such abuse continues. Choice also has to mean freedom from the abuse of birth-control methods like Norplant.

The word "choice" has no meaning if women don't first have access to quality healthcare. That means a national health plan, information and education on sexuality that is culturally relevant and in the necessary languages, and affordable birth control. It means adequate prenatal care so healthy babies can be born. It means access to fertility services, which are never considered an issue for poor women. All these needs point to the fact that class differences cut across the choice issue again and again.

In short, Latinas' views on reproductive rights are often more radical than Anglo women's views and not "conservative," as some say, because their definition of choice requires more profound social change than just abortion rights or preventing pregnancy. As Alvarez Martínez told me in early 1998:

We are for social change. Our focus is on Latinas and health, not just reproductive rights. We are trying to change the way funding is done. It shouldn't just be focused, for example, on preventing teenage pregnancy by preaching abstinence. It has to look at the entire social situation of the women.

There is still a need, she added, to push for more understanding in Anglo women concerned with reproductive rights. "Many are still not aware of Latina women as active in this field." Yet today we have not only the National Latina Health Organization but also the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, which in the 1990s came out of Catholics for Free Choice, based in the Washington, D.C. area and does regional organizing; the more grassroots Latina Roundtable on Health and Reproductive Rights, in New York (also founded in the 1990s); and the Mujeres Project in San Antonio, Texas, which focuses on reproductive health.

Differences with Anglo women in the struggle for reproductive rights reflect inter-feminist relations in many arenas. Problems explode periodically and demand constant discussion. Latina, Black, Asian/Pacific Island American, and Native American women are unlikely to unite with the war cry of "Abortion is liberation!" but they can and will work with Anglo women when respect and space are given.

Among women of color, increased communication and coordination are future goals. The coalition that opposed NOW policies in 1992 did not become permanent, as once hoped, for lack of funding, Alvarez Martínez said. Funders forced them to choose between support for their individual projects and for collaborative work; most had to choose the former. But the groups are still in touch and collaborate informally. They can all take the stand that as women of

color in the reproductive-freedom movement, "We will no longer be silent or invisible!"

AFTERWORD²

Making what we may call a revolution for the century-after-tomorrow demands that we build a unified and therefore powerful force for change. That cannot be done without overcoming racist divisions at the grassroots level.

To overcome those divisions requires white attitudes changing, and more than that. Our exclusively black-white model of racialism must be abandoned in favor of one that includes all peoples of color. We then have a foundation for potential alliances among people of color, which are more critical than ever given today's new divide-and-conquer tactics.

For those alliances to grow, Latinas and Latinos must understand the dangers of nationalism (or its younger brother, identity politics). Nationalism obscures issues of class, often benefits only our access-hungry careerists, and can prevent Raza along with other marginalized folk from uniting around class.

For those alliances to grow, Latinos need to practice a constant, profound honesty about ourselves and our weaknesses, especially racist attitudes within our own community toward other people of color. We also need to be self-critical about how we sometimes let power corrupt.

All this points to the great need for a radical force within each community of color to pursue liberating politics and combat conservative or reactionary tendencies within each community. The good news of 1998 was that the first national Black Radical Congress (with 2,000 people attending), the first Asian American Left Forum, and various meetings to build a New Raza Left all took place within the same six months. There's hope!

To build unity requires recognizing the central role of young activists. They are vigorously fighting the attack on this century's Reconstruction. Their anger at today's ugly society often translates into a passionate drive for unity across color lines.

And the best lesson of all: women are the world's most consistent alliance-builders. When women of color lead the way in a movement, it will almost always be stronger. When any women lead the way in uniting people, let tyrants beware.

All very nice, you say, but get practical. Where and when can alliances be built?

A common agenda for people of color should include, for starters, standing together against hate crimes. Against police abuse, which intensifies as poverty deepens today. Against the denial of adequate healthcare (walk into the emergency room of any big-city public hospital and who's waiting there along with poor whites?).

Surely we should all be able to unite for our children's well-being. Against the drug traffic, gang warfare, and the demonization of youth. Against neglected,

underfunded, inequitable education, beginning with the inner-city schools. We need one million parents and teachers of all colors to march on that too-White House calling for the nation to stop wasting millions of minds. We also need to see how dance, music, theater, art, poetry, are major arenas for alliance-building, especially among youth. Culture can usher in new visions.

Education without language rights is impossible. Sometimes bilingual programs have been made a divisive issue between black and brown. But recognition of "Black English" as a lingua franca, with its own structure and norms, can provide a bridge for appreciating why children should not be forced to forget their home language in order to learn English. Let them know both! The June 1997 vote to end bilingual education in California showed that division is not inevitable; a majority of African Americans opposed that measure along with the great majority of Latinos.

Of the many arenas for alliance-building, none is more fundamental than the workplace. In recent years, community organizing has unleashed new forces everywhere. Imagine if that were combined with creative, democratic union organizing that genuinely involves the rank and file. Imagine a new labor movement that incorporates millions of the unorganized—for example, day laborers and domestic workers.

The dream of social transformation from the bottom up then becomes less elusive. Can't you see the Rainbow Warriors smiling, when they win a victory here and there, knowing they fought the good fight? Yes, and they also know more good fights lie ahead.

NOTES

1. "Unintended Pregnancy in the U.S.," *Family Planning Perspectives* (Alan Guttmacher Institute, Washington, D.C., January 1998).
2. Written in 1998.

CAPITALISM AND HUMAN EMANCIPATION: RACE, GENDER, AND DEMOCRACY

ELLEN MEIKSINS WOOD

Speaking to American students at the height of student activism in the 1960s Isaac Deutscher delivered a not altogether welcome message: "You are effervescently active on the margin of social life, and the workers are passive right at the core of it. That is the tragedy of our society. If you do not deal with this contrast, you will be defeated."¹ That warning may be no less apposite today than it was then. There are strong and promising emancipatory impulses at work today, but they may not be active at the core of social life, in the heart of capitalist society.

It is no longer taken for granted on the left that the decisive battle for human emancipation will take place on the "economic" terrain, the home ground of class struggle. For a great many people the emphasis has shifted to struggles for what I shall call extra-economic goods—gender-emancipation, racial equality, peace, ecological health, democratic citizenship. Every socialist ought to be committed to these goals in themselves—in fact, the socialist project of class emancipation always has been, or should have been, a means to the larger end of human emancipation. But these commitments do not settle crucial questions about agencies and modalities of struggle, and they certainly do not settle the question of class politics.

A great deal still needs to be said about the conditions for the achievement of these extra-economic goods. In particular, if our starting point is capitalism, then we need to know exactly what kind of starting point this is. What limits are imposed, and what possibilities created, by the capitalist regime, by its material order and its configuration of social power? What kinds of oppression does capitalism require, and what kinds of emancipation can it tolerate? In particular, what use does capitalism have for extra-economic goods, what encouragement does it give them, and what resistance does it put up to their attainment? I want to make a start on answering these questions, and as the argument develops I shall try to throw them into relief by making some comparisons with precapitalist societies.