

REVOLUTION WITHOUT WOMEN AIN'T HAPPENIN'!

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Free The Land! Free The Land! Free The Land!

We in the New Afrikan People's Organization say Free the Land because We recognize that you can't have freedom, you cannot have liberation, you cannot have independence unless you have a land base. So We talk about Free The Land. Because that's what We plan to do. We're struggling for a free, independent New Afrika. Where Black people are in control; where self-determination is practiced in it's highest form.

People know about Free The Land. People in Algeria certainly know about Free The Land, because they wanted to free **their land** from the French. And they were successful in freeing the land. The women participated on every level of struggle. And now Algeria is free; but it's women are not.

In Zimbabwe, they understood that land had to be free. Again the sisters were right there - every level of struggle. Zimbabwe is free; but it's women are still oppressed.

Even in Cuba, the progressive country of Cuba - they talked about Free The Land. And again, they were able to win freedom. The Cuban revolution was successful. But the women of Cuba **still** have to fight against sexist oppression.

Participating in struggle is not enough. Sisters, We will not be free if We don't also fight against sexist oppression every step of the way. Now, i don't know about you, but i love the Black man; but i don't love the Black man so much - and myself so little - that i'm willing to help him get his freedom at the expense of my own. i'm in this movement because i want to be free! i want my children to be free. My male child *and* my female child. And that's not going to happen unless We fight against sexist oppression. Unless We fight for revolution.

Now, revolution is a scary word to some people, but it simply means complete change. And all of us in this room should understand clearly that amerikkka has to be completely changed! We know that every time We see our people on the streets. We know that when We hear about our young men shooting each other down. We know it when We see our young women pregnant. We know it when We see our people addicted and hung up on crack and alcoholism. We know that when you get sick in amerikkka, the sicker you get, the more money you have to pay - what a sick country!

So, if you love your people - whether you be a revolutionary or a progressive - you have to talk about complete change. And complete change is revolution! And in the New Afrikan People's Organization that's the kind of change We're talkin' about. We're not talking about just land and independence. We're talkin' about a place where all people can live in freedom. Where the men and women of our nation, and the children can live in freedom. And in order to do this, We have to talk about sexist oppression. Or what We'll experience will be a political revolution. You see, a political revolution is when power changes hands. *But, nothing really changes for the people themselves.* No, We can't just have a political revolution; We must have a political revolution **and** a social revolution. You see, We're not just struggling for land and independence, We're also struggling for liberation! We're not gonna follow the same mistakes as Zimbabwe and Cuba and Algeria. Oh no! Our people are too precious to us for that. No, so We understand in the New Afrikan People's Organization that We have to fight against sexist oppression.

Well, what is sexist oppression? Well, the sisters in the New Afrikan Women's Task force define sexist oppression - as it is practiced currently (and has been practiced historically) - as the subjugation of women by men. It's male supremacy. It's the belief that men are superior to women physically, culturally, mentally, economically --- on every level. It's male patriarchy. It's the belief that men are inherently superior, based solely on biology. That they're the natural leaders. Well, certainly many people believe that. i mean,

the bible says "women be subservient to your husbands." The Q'uran says something similar. And how you gon' argue with God? How you gon' argue with Allah? This is sexist oppression.

You see, We have an intimate, **intimate** relationship with sexist oppression; because it is the first form of oppression We learn. We learn it from our mommas and daddys. We learn it at home. We learn it before We even find out about racism. We learn it before We even find out about classism. We learn that "the father is the head of the household," then come momma, then come the children. Some of you might be sayin' "huh, she's only talking about two-parent households." Even in a single parent household, you hear women talkin' 'bout, "You wait 'til i tell your Uncle Joe! You wait 'til i tell you grandfather - he's gonna deal with you!" You even hear sisters who are heading their households say to their male children, "You are the **man** of the house." Indicating that in some way, he is more special - more unique. And he is special and unique, **but so is his sister!**

We have an intimate relationship with sexist oppression. And because of that, it is difficult for us to get rid of it. Because it requires us to reject a part of our culture. But isn't that what We do? As revolutionaries? Isn't that why you're here today? Because you're trying to find out how you can promote the liberation of our people? Isn't that why many sisters stop pressing their hair? Isn't that why many of us drop 'Joy' and 'Van' and 'Bob', and take on 'Aminata' and 'Safiya' and 'Chokwe' and 'Akinyele'? Isn't that why We practice Kwanzaa? Because We're trying to rid ourselves of the negative aspects of our culture. As We struggle toward freedom. We're trying to develop a culture that's a liberating culture. A culture that will bring hope to the hopelessness. A culture that will push us forward. To Freedom! Not one that will maintain our oppression. That's what We're supposed to do - as revolutionaries.

Well, this requires a new perception of the world, doesn't it? Not the perception that you were taught, and i was taught in the amerikkkan system, but a new perception. One that's based on afrocentrism. One that's based on a history of resistance. One that's based on the fact that We are oppressed. You see, once you get this new perception, you start gettin' excited. Because then you can figure things out! You start beginning to realize that our people are not inherently ignorant. That our people are not inherently lazy. You're able to combat some of the discussions you hear in our community.

From my understanding, there's been a lot of talk about mass work - about dealing with the masses. When We talk to our people, what kinds of things do We hear? We hear things like, "Niggers ain't gon' ever do anything." We hear things like, "You know the Koreans can come over here, the Japanese can come over here, these other folks come over here and they develop their own businesses -- Black people ain't never gon' get it together! Why can't We do that?" But once you understand what your place is in the world, once you understand that you have been oppressed, and there is an oppressor; once you understand that you have been raped and We are trying to be healed of that victimization, then you start seeing things more clearly. And you understand that We have a self-hatred thing going on. The sister talked earlier about the competitiveness at the business place -- that ain't nothin' but self-hatred! When We talk about, "She's too light; She's too dark," that ain't nothin' but self-hatred.

We're able to identify those things, and you know - once you can identify a problem, then you can go about solving the problem. Our perception of the world has to be different - and with that difference, you study. With that difference, you continuously analyze your life - every aspect - from the way you worship God, to what you call yourself, to the way you dress.

Well, as nationalists, We've been pretty successful with that - oh yes. We're into studying; We are into analyzing; We're into re-evaluating our positions. And We've grown. We've grown tremendously. But when it comes to the area of sexist oppression, We've failed. We haven't studied that much. We just started having the kind of dialogue that you've experienced today on a serious level.

Well, why is that? Why is it that We've failed when it came to sexist oppression? Well, i believe that there are a couple of reasons, and of course i'm gonna share them with you. One is that We've been taught to think in terms of things as a *hierarchy*. This is a western way of thinking. We're taught to think in terms of things as "what comes first?, what comes second?, what comes third?" And then, We were taught (as young Black women growing up in the struggle) that the race, that "the nation must come first." Well see that's a joke, 'cause really what they talkin' about is the Black man, right? Because if you talkin' about the **nation**, then certainly it fits that We should fight against sexism, because We're half of the nation! We're more than half of the nation! But naw, We bought into that. We bought into supporting "the Black man"; to our own detriment, We bought into that.

i think another reason why We failed - in terms of really dealing with sexist oppression - is We were taught that "that was the white woman's thang; sistas don't deal with that. That's the white woman's thang!" And see, that was easy to buy into. Because white women *were* doing it (for white women!) they weren't doing it for us. Certainly We were turned off by white women, because they were middle class white women; struggling to be a part of our oppression. Struggling for "equal rights"; not struggling for a revolution, not struggling for a total difference in society. They were just struggling to put their foot on our necks too!

So, We couldn't deal with white women.

We also didn't trust white women because We know that they grew from our disasters. When the COINTELPRO was attacking us, when the government was attacking Black organizations, white women continued to grow. So We had a mistrust for them - a mistrust that was based in history. They have always been very clear: that Black people don't really mean anything to them. Unless it's to expedite their own cause. And We were clear about that.

The third reason why i think that We didn't deal with white women, or feminism at that particular time (and even now), is because many of them have an extreme dislike for men. And that turned us off - that they would actually resent men - at least that's what We were taught in the sixties.

And if none of that worked - if you didn't go for the hierarchy and you didn't go for the white woman's position (feminism) - well there was always name calling, wasn't there? There was always name calling, and that would get you, right? "You're a ballbreaker," "you a castrater," "you must be a lesbian." So, what did We do, sisters? What did We do? We kinda put our own needs to the side. **But the truth is (sister Efia mentioned it earlier) that white women don't have any hold on fighting against sexism!** Black women have been fighting against sexism for at least one hundred years (and that's just based on my narrow base of knowledge)! From my few studies, i know We've been practicing anti-sexism for at least one hundred years.

Sister Mary Chad, in 1880 organized the *Colored Women's Progressive Association*. Its job was not just to work for race; it's job was also to push forth women's issues. "Consistent with the Black women's concerns, the clubs were not organized for race work alone," Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin said, "But for work along the lines that make for women's progress." This was a hundred years ago! Sisters were talkin' about "We have to fight for our people, but We must also fight for our rights" - one hundred years ago.

i'm gonna tell you a little about how the clubs grew strong. Sister Ida B. Wells is partly responsible for that. You know, Ida B. Wells was a famous journalist during that time, and she did a lot of anti-lynching work. She would write down whenever people were lynched. Well, during this period in 1893, a brother named Henry Smith was accused of raping a five-year old little white girl. Well, as you can imagine, the white community was in a rage. So they decided to close the schools; and have a picnic. The men and women and children all came to see Henry Smith, first tortured with hot irons and then burned to death. And then, after the brother was burned, they scrambled to the site of the fire to pick his bones, his buttons, and his teeth off the ground - to take them home for souvenirs. Well, Great Britain heard about this incident, and they could not believe how inhumane it was. So, they asked Sister Ida B. Wells - this is a hundred years ago - to come to Great Britain, and talk about the tragedy. And Ida B. Wells did. And Great Britain couldn't believe it! They couldn't believe that kind of thing went on in the united states. So they said, "what about your liberal white people!?! What about people like Francis Willard?" You see, Francis Willard was supposed to be progressive - she was the president of the Women's Temperance Union (temperance means that she was fighting to stop alcohol). Ida B. Wells said, "Well, Francis has been kind of quiet on the issue. As a matter of fact, Francis has kind of added fuel to the fire. She's saying that 'Black people hang out at the bars all the time. Black men are getting plenty drunk; and white women and children are in danger!'" Well, Francis Willard just happened to be in England at the time. And was very upset that Ida B. Wells was saying these things; and basically called her out and said, "You lying on me Ida B. Wells!" And Ida B. Wells said, "Well, if i'm lying, name one Black woman that's in your organization of women!" Francis couldn't say a thing. So, what happened? Well, you know amerika was very concerned about how she looked to England. So Ida B. Wells was actually successful in stopping some of those lynchings - they didn't stop altogether - but they decreased *tremendously*.

Well, that pissed the press off. They wrote an open letter to the women of England. They said, "Look, now y'all are nice - you got a good heart - but you don't know the nigger woman. The nigger woman has no morality. She will lie. She will do whatever is necessary."

Well, that response pissed Sisters off! And they decided to have a woman's club here, and a women's club there - this wasn't enough. So they united and became one large national organization: The National Association of Colored Women (NACW). The president of that association was Mary Church Terrell. Now at this founding meeting many sisters were there, very impressive guests. You had Ida B. Wells, you had the daughter of Frederick Douglass, you had the daughter of Ellen Craft, you had Frances Ellen Harper; but the most impressive guest, a sister who is a **known freedom fighter**, a sister who risked her life over and over and over again for our people, and a sister who by her presence was obviously conscious of women's rights - Harriet Tubman attended this meeting. Oh, Sisters, white women ain't got nothin' on us! ***Fighting for our rights is a part of who We are!***

So, what happened?

We continued to work. We worked on every level. We were in SNCC; We were in SCLC; We were in the House of Umoja; We were in the A-APRP; We were in the Provisional Government-Republic of New Afrika. We're in NAPO now. We worked on every level, so what happened? If We didn't want to deal with white women, why didn't We come together and start fighting for our own issues? Because of the hierarchy. Because We deeply believed that, "We should struggle for the nation first." Because We were so afraid of homosexuality and homophobia - that someone would call us 'lesbian' and We'd run. I'll tell you one thing: i don't care what you call me, i'm fighting for my rights. i am fighting for my rights as a woman, and i am fighting for my rights as a New Afrikan. i will not struggle and dedicate my life to free only half of our nation --- it does not make sense. And i want you to know that i am pissed off today! And one of the reasons why i am pissed is because We remain invisible. And it makes me angry. We hear over and over again about how We have to focus on 'the Black male', 'the Black boy'. In the sixties, it was "the Black man" - "Sisters Support Your Black Man!" "Black Men Are In Danger!" And now in the nineties, it's the Black boys. "Black Boys Are Killing Themselves!" YES, the Black Man is in danger. YES, Black Boys are in danger. AND SO ARE BLACK GIRLS. AND SO ARE BLACK WOMEN. **OUR NATION IS IN DANGER. How Dare You Continue To Ignore Our Cry!**

We have to leave this meeting feeling empowered. We have to leave this meeting going out and speaking against sexist oppression. To the masses of our people. No, to them it may not matter whether We call it "womanism" or "feminism". To them it may not matter what We talk about in theoretical discussions. But We cannot disregard the necessity for intellectual debate; that's how We get our theory so We can move forward. If We were to discard that, We'd be discarding W.E.B. DuBois, Amilcar Cabral, Malcolm X - We cannot do that. We cannot afford to do that.

So, when you leave here and you go to the barbershop to get your haircut; and you go to the hairdresser and get your hair done; and you sit in your living room with your family; and you're sitting in your church prayer group, or your bible study - you must fight against sexist oppression. Not only because it will benefit our nation, but because it is your human right to be free. It is your God-given right to be free! Don't let anyone take it from us. Don't let anyone take it from my daughter and her daughter. Free The Land, Brothers and Sisters.