



## YOUNG LORDS PARTY POSITION PAPER ON WOMEN

---

adults, diseased old people, and the violence of poverty and profit. We have asked, petitioned, gone to courts, demonstrated peacefully, and voted for politicians full of empty promises. But we still ain't free. The time has come to defend the lives of our people against repression and for revolutionary war against the businessman, politician, and police. When a government oppresses a people, we have the right to abolish it and create a new one.

Boricua is awake! All pigs beware!

13 • *We want a socialist society.*

We want liberation, clothing, free food, education, health care, transportation, utilities, and employment for all. We want a society where the needs of our people come first, and where we give solidarity and aid to the peoples of the world, not oppression and racism.

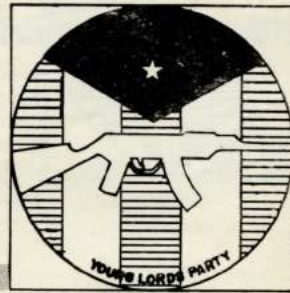
Hasta la victoria siempre!



**P**UERTO Rican, black, and other Third World (colonized) women are becoming more aware of their oppression in the past and today. They are suffering three different types of oppression under capitalism. First, they are oppressed as Puerto Ricans or blacks. Second, they are oppressed as women. Third, they are oppressed by their own men. The Third World woman becomes the most oppressed person in the world today.

Economically, Third World women have always been used as a cheap source of labor and as sexual objects. Puerto Rican and black women are used to fill working class positions in factories, mass assembly lines, hos-





pitals and all other institutions. Puerto Rican and black women are paid lower wages than whites and kept in the lowest paid positions within the society. At the same time, giving Puerto Rican and black women jobs means the Puerto Rican and black man is kept from gaining economic independence, and the family unit is broken down. Capitalism defines manhood according to money and status; the Puerto Rican and black man's manhood is taken away by making the Puerto Rican and black woman the breadwinner.

This situation keeps the Third World man divided from his woman. The Puerto Rican and black man either leaves the household or he stays and becomes economically dependent on the woman, undergoing psychological damage. He takes out all of his frustration on his wife, beating her, repressing and limiting her freedom. Because this society produces these conditions, our major enemy is capitalism rather than our own oppressed men.

Third World women have an integral role to play in the liberation of all oppressed people as well as in the struggle for the liberation of women.

Puerto Rican and black women make up over half of the revolutionary army, and in the struggle for national liberation they must press for the equality of women; the women's struggle is the revolution within the revolution. Puerto Rican women will be neither behind nor in front of their brothers but always alongside them in mutual respect and love.

In the past, women were oppressed by several institutions, one of which was marriage. When a woman married a man she became his property and lost her last name. The man could have different wives to prove he was a man and to establish his position in the society.

In Latin America and Puerto Rico, the man had a wife and another woman. This condition still exists today. The wife was there to be a homemaker, to have children, and to maintain the family name and honor. The wife had to have children in order to enhance the man's concept of virility and his position within the Puerto Rican society. The other woman became his sexual instrument. The man could set her up in another household, pay her

rent, buy her food, and pay her bills. He could have children with this woman, but they would be treated as products of a sexual relationship. Both women would have to be loyal to the man. Both sets of children would grow up very confused and insecure and develop negative attitudes about the roles of both parents.

Women have always been expected to be wives and mothers only. They are respected by the rest of the community for being good cooks, good housewives, good mothers, but never for being intelligent, strong, educated, or militant. In the past, women were not educated, only the sons got an education, and mothers were respected for the number of sons they had, not daughters. Daughters were worthless and the only thing they could do was marry early to get away from home. At home the role of the daughter was to be a nursemaid for the other children and kitchen help for her mother.

The daughter was guarded like a hawk by her father, brothers, and uncles to keep her a virgin. In Latin America, the people used *dueñas* or

old lady watchdogs to guard the purity of the daughters. The husband must be sure that his new wife had never been touched by another man because that would ruin the "merchandise." When he marries her, her purpose is to have sons and keep his home but not to be a sexual partner.

Sex was a subject that was never discussed, and women were brainwashed into believing that the sex act was dirty and immoral and its only function was for the making of children.

**C**APITALISM sets up standards that are applied differently to Puerto Rican and black men from the way they are applied to Puerto Rican and black women. These standards are also applied differently to Third World peoples than they are applied to whites. These standards must be understood since they are created to divide oppressed people in order to maintain an economic system that is racist and oppressive.

Puerto Rican and black men are looked upon as rough, athletic and sexual but not as intellectuals. Puerto



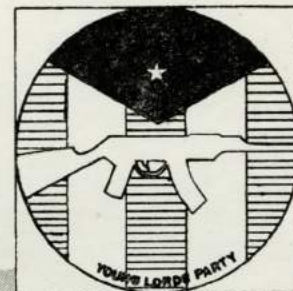
Rican women are not expected to know anything except about the home, kitchen, and bedroom. All that they are expected to do is look pretty and add a little humor. The Puerto Rican man sees himself as superior to his woman, and his superiority, he feels, gives him license to do many things — curse, drink, use drugs, beat women, and run around with many women. As a matter of fact these things are considered natural for a man to do, and he must do them to be considered a man. A woman who drinks, curses, and runs around with a lot of men is considered a dirty scum, crazy, and a whore.

Today Puerto Rican men are involved in a political movement. Yet the majority of their women are home taking care of the children. The Puerto Rican sister that involves herself is considered aggressive, castrating, hard and unwomanly. She is viewed by the brothers as sexually accessible because what else is she doing outside the home? The Puerto Rican men try to limit the woman's role because they feel the double standard is threatened; they also feel insecure without it as a crutch.

*Machismo* has always been a very basic part of Latin-American and Puerto Rican culture. *Machismo* is male chauvinism and more. *Machismo* means *mucho macho* of a man who puts himself selfishly at the head of everything without considering the woman. He can do whatever he wants because his woman is an object with certain already defined roles — wife, mother, and good woman.

All the anger and violence of centuries of oppression which should be directed against the oppressor is directed at the Puerto Rican woman. The aggression is also directed at daughters. The daughters hear their fathers saying "the only way a woman is going to do anything or listen is by hitting her." The father applies this to the daughter, beating her so that she can learn *respeto*. The daughters grow up with confused attitudes about their role as women and about manhood. They grow up to expect that men will always beat them.

**U**NDER capitalism, Third World women are forced to compromise themselves because of their economic



situation. The fact that her man cannot get a job and that the family is dependent on her for support means she hustles money by any means necessary. Black and Puerto Rican sisters are put into a situation where jobs are scarce or nonexistent and are forced to compromise body, mind, and soul; they are then called whores or prostitutes.

Because this society controls and determines the economic situation of Puerto Rican and black women, they find themselves forced to take jobs at the lowest wages; at the same time take insults and other indignities in order to keep the job. In factories, our men are worked like animals and cannot complain because they will lose their jobs — their labor is considered abundant and cheap. In hospitals, our women comprise the majority of the nurse's aides, kitchen workers, and clerks. These jobs are unskilled, the pay is low, and there is no chance for advancement. In offices, our positions are usually as clerks, typists and no promotion jobs. In all of these jobs, our sisters are subjected to racial slurs, jokes, and other indignities such as

being leered at, manhandled, propositioned, and assaulted. Our sisters are expected to prostitute themselves and take abuse of any kind or lose these subsistence jobs.

**W**E have no control over our bodies, because capitalism finds it necessary to control the woman's body to control the size of the population. The choice of motherhood is being taken out of the mother's hands. She is sterilized to prevent her from having children, or she has to have a child because she cannot get an abortion.

Third World sisters are caught up in a complex situation. On one hand, we feel that genocide is being committed against our people. We know that Puerto Ricans will not be around on the face of the earth very long if Puerto Rican women are sterilized at the rate they are being sterilized now. The practice of sterilization in Puerto Rico goes back to the 1930s when doctors pushed it as the only means of contraception. In 1947-48, 7% of the women were sterilized, between 1953-54 four out of every 25; and



by 1965, the number had increased to about one out of every three women.

Abortions in hospitals that are butcher shops are little better than the illegal abortions our women used to get. The first abortion death in New York City under the new abortion law was Carmen Rodríguez, a Puerto Rican sister who died in Lincoln Hospital. Her abortion was legal, but the conditions in the hospital were deadly.

On the other hand, we believe that abortions should be legal if they are community controlled, if they are safe, if our people are educated about the risks and if doctors do not sterilize our sisters while performing abortions. We realize that under capitalism our sisters and brothers cannot support large families and the more children we have the harder it is to support them. We say, change the system so that women can freely be allowed to have as many children as they want without suffering any consequences.

One of the main reasons why many sisters are tied to the home and cannot work or become revolutionaries is the shortage of day-care centers for chil-

dren. The centers that already exist are overcrowded, expensive, and are only super-baby-sitting centers. Day-care centers should be free, should be open 24 hours a day, and should be centers where children are taught their revolutionary history and culture.

Many sisters leave their children with a neighbor, or the oldest child is left to take care of the younger ones. Sometimes they are left alone, and all of us have read the tragic results in the newspapers of what happens to children left alone — they are burned to death in fires, or they swallow poison or fall out of windows to their death.

**T**HROUGHOUT history, the woman has participated and has been involved in liberation struggles. But historians have never completely acknowledged the role of the revolutionary woman. In the hour of armed struggle for national liberation, women have shown themselves to be revolutionaries.

Lolita Lebrón, together with three other patriots, set fire to the House of Representatives in an armed attack in

1954, attracting world attention to Puerto Rico's colonial status. She emptied a 45 automatic from the balcony of Congress on the colonial legislators. Then she unfurled the Puerto Rican flag and cried "Viva Puerto Rico libre." The result was five legislators wounded, one critically. She is still in jail for this heroic act of nationalism.

Recently a 19-year-old student, Antonia Martínez, was assassinated in Puerto Rico in a demonstration against the presence of recruitment centers for the US Army.

In other parts of the world, women are fighting against imperialism and foreign invasion. Our sisters in Viet Nam have been battling at the side of their brothers for 25 years, first against the Japanese invaders, and now against the Amerikkkan aggression. Their military capacity and efficiency has been demonstrated on so many occasions that a women's brigade was formed within

the National Liberation Front of the North Vietnamese army.

The Central Committee of the Young Lords Party has issued this position paper to explain and to educate our brothers and sisters about the role of sisters in the past and how we see sisters in the struggle now and in the future. We criticize those brothers who are *machos* and who continue to treat our sisters as less than equals. We criticize sisters who remain passive, who do not join in the struggle against our oppression.

We are fighting every day within our party against male chauvinism because we want to make a revolution of brothers and sisters — together — in love and respect for each other.

Forward sisters in the struggle!

All Power to the People!

Central Committee.

Young Lords Party