a workshop
denver/boulder men against sexism
red fags
international women's day
march 7, 1981
The following is a series of short talks given by members of the Denver/Boulder Men Against Sexism (D/BMAS) and Red Fags at the International Women's Day conference on March 7, 1981. It was part of a workshop for men entitled "Men Against Sexism."

This pamphlet does not represent a "position paper" by D/BMAS or Red Fags. Since we oriented the presentation to a specific audience, the mentioned personal experiences are about others. However, the pamphlet does represent a general framework and many commons ideas we have developed together through years of challenge, support, and struggle.

Denver/Boulder Men Against Sexism is an organization of white straight and gay men that formed in September 1977. Since then, we have held numerous consciousness raising meetings to help us change our sexism, heterosexism and racism. Our major project has been the formation of the Denver/Boulder Men's Childcare Network, which provides free childcare for ten to fifteen events per month for feminists, Third World, and lesbian and gay men's organizations. D/BMAS has written skits about rape, childcare, sex roles, and women's and lesbian/gay men's oppression, and put on over thirty performances in Denver and Boulder high schools. Our other outreach activities have included teaching classes at Denver Free University, showing slides, giving forums and classes, and networking with other men nationally doing similar work.

Red Fags is an organization of white gay men in struggle against the system of white male rule over Third World people (inside and outside of current U.S. borders), women, lesbians and gay men. Although we recognize this system as an intertwining of patriarchy, imperialism and capitalism, the fundamental contradiction is between white people and Third World people in the form of U.S. imperialism, which creates suffering, poverty and repression around the globe.

90% of the world's lesbians and gay men are members of Third World nations, both within the U.S. and abroad. Individually they confront daily survival needs and collectively they struggle for self determination as a people.

Thus, liberation for all gays and lesbians can only emerge after U.S. imperialism is destroyed. This process will destroy the material base of patriarchy and create the foundation of our liberation as gay men. Organizing is essential in this worldwide anti-imperialist struggle in order to strategically carry out feminist/lesbian/gay revolution. The members of Red Fags put the majority of their energy into building material and political support for the Chicano Movimiento Nacional movement.

The workshop was prepared and presented by the following members of D/BMAS and Red Fags:

- Jim Denison
- Tom Karier
- Eric Rehm
- Bill Rubin
- Mike Suemey
- Chris Taaffe
- Ken Yale

We welcome feedback, criticism, and most of all new people with lots of energy. Please contact:

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1981-1983

Men's Responses to Feminism

by Bill Rubin

I'm here to talk about men's reactions to women's liberation. But before I begin, I would like to express how this viewpoint is shaped by my experiences. First, I grew up in a white middle class Jewish family, and secondly, I am heterosexual, and therefore look at the world from a straight perspective. This background deeply affects my perceptions and feelings.

When I confront the issue of male reactions to feminism, I respond to it from both a personal perspective as well as a collective, societal one. I would like to begin by expressing my personal responses because it may spark some thought in everyone about their own experiences.

Feminism initially triggers defensive behavior in me. This defensiveness is personal in nature and arises out of criticisms I have received from feminist women in response to something I have done or said. For instance, I'll make a sexist comment, then I'll get criticized for it. "I'm not sexist, I'm not that way," I'll say.

Another response to criticism is guilt. This usually happens to men who are sympathetic to women's liberation but, nevertheless, are still stuck in sexist ways. Guilt involves feeling guilty about oneself for a situation of interaction that has happened but which you wish hadn't happened. Some sort of criticism, either self-criticism or criticism from another, triggers this response. The point, though, is to dispense with the defensiveness and guilt trips and open ourselves up by acknowledging our sexism and working on it as a step toward personal change.

Finally, there is the resistance to feminism with ridicule. Quite often things that are threatening or incomprehensible to me lead to my ridiculing the ideas and actions of people involved. This is the primary cause of women's oppression. White women are saying that male domination (patriarchy) is not only the primary cause of women's oppression. White men have a tendency to be overly rational and theoretical. A good example is the reaction to the term "male supremacy." It's difficult to say "I am against male supremacy" and then to change the aspects of my own behavior which are male supremacist. Some criticisms that I have received from women are:

1. not listening
2. assuming that I have not done anything important, the most advanced, etc.
3. assuming that I am weak, inept, or unable to accomplish a task or understand an idea.
4. talking down to women, being condescending and patronizing. Comments like, "And now do any women have something to add?" exemplify this response. These behaviors have been characterized by the white feminist movement as "male energy." This term has been thrown at me a few times and usually results in my defensive energy. This term has been thrown at me a few times and usually results in my defensive energy. It has been an increase in the use of sex and violence against women in the media. It is my belief that this has happened in part as response to the feminist movement. 

Ridicule. It has been a common response of men to feminism. Not taking women seriously, joking about issues of importance to women, misogynist jokes, are all common. Subtle put-downs like calling feminists "women's libbers" happen frequently.

Fear. Deep down, we are fearful of the women's liberation movement because it requires that we change our behavior. This can be very threatening to someone who is used to being dominating and patronizing. Comments like, "Are you taking seriously the concerns of your women friends?" exemplify this response. This has taken many forms. Activities range from street harassment to rape and murder. At the same time, we have seen an increase in the use of sex and violence against women in the media. It is my belief that this has happened in part as response to the feminist movement. 

Personal experience for me (as I stated earlier), defensiveness as a collective response of men as well as a personal experience for me (as I stated earlier), defensiveness as a collective response of men as well. 

Men's Liberation. This response usually concentrates only on the negative aspects of the manly role, an approach which emphasizes the "oppressed" rather than oppressor qualities of being a man." (Jon Snodgrass, For Men Against Sexism) 

Men's Anti-Sexist Work. Men's work in support of the women's liberation movement has taken many forms. Activites range from: 

1. men's center; consciousness raising groups and other programs, 
2. men's newspapers, theaters, childcare networks, and counseling groupings and rape, battering of women, etc.

These groups make a conscious effort to support women's struggles, as well as the struggles of third world peoples for liberation, inside and outside of current U.S. borders. Anti-sexist practice emphasizes not just support, but also challenge of our sexist practices and our male privilege. 

In conclusion, I feel it imperative for all of us as men to begin dealing with our sexism. This involves supporting each other in the struggle to change our society as well as supporting women and the women's movements in its various forms. 

Additional areas of interest: 

1. responses of the white male leftist to feminism 
2. responses of third world communities to feminism, especially third world men 

These topics are intimately tied in with this paper, but cannot be dealt with adequately here. It is imperative that we make connections between the struggles of all oppressed peoples and understand the different viewpoints that come from these struggles. 

Patriarchy, Power, and Male Privilege 

by Eric Rehm 

I would like to present a brief analysis of sexism that our group has developed. Sexism is an important issue for men to consider, both in themselves and society. We need to analyze and understand sexism in order to battle against it in ourselves and society. We must learn what it is, where it exists, how it operates, and what the effects are. Our practice to end sexism will reflect the degree to which we understand its institutionalized form—patriarchy. My analysis necessarily comes from my experience in white European culture. Conditions of Third World women and men, who comprise 90% of the world's population, are much different than white people in America. The third thing I would like to discuss what kind of power and privilege men have in society. Finally, I will discuss our definition of patriarchy: the underlying structure of male power and privilege.

In order to understand women's oppression we must look at the patterns of our individual relationships with women as well as the structure of power on a societal level. In our individual relationships with women, we can uncover many patterns of inequality: dominating conversations, viewing our ideas and projects as more important, lack of participation in childcare, chores, and emotional expression, conscious staring at women's bodies, etc. As a straight man, I need only look at my initial response (flirtation on some level) to pornography or my fear of doing things that might lead people to think I am gay.

On a societal level, we see economic and political power in the hands of a few white men. The exploitation of women is important to the maintenance of that power, in such forms as unpaid domestic labor, emotional relationships which exploit women, cheap labor, violence against women and controlling the reproductive rights of women.

Sexism is systematic. It is not simply individual instances or attitudes which happen to be repeated. Sexism is a collection of privileges and power that runs as a thread throughout society. Under the present sexist, racist conditions, basic rights are privileges available to white men and denied to women and Third World people. The other side of these "privileges" is the oppression of women and Third World people endure from these power relationships which define their existence. To give you a feeling for the systematic nature of sexism, I would like to discuss a list of power and privileges available to white men and denied to women and Third World people.
leges men, in particular, straight white men have. I must point out, before reading this list, that there are many instances where white men and women have power and privilege over Third World people. For example, straight white men have the privilege of easier access to economic credit than white women, while the access to credit for most Third World people is non-existent. Power and privilege for a black Azanian (south african) or a Salvadoran male is different than that of a white south african or any white middle class man or female. Third World men are sterilized without consent by governments which rule to support white multinational interests. The boards of directors of these multinational include white men and white women. The class and racial position of white men put them in a position of power and privilege over Third World men. We can see that racism is used like sexism to teach a hatred of a people to dominate and control them. Likewise, heterosexism teaches us to fear and hate gay men and lesbians and to oppress them. Examples of straight, white male privilege are:

1. Women are generally responsible for child care while men can determine their level of commitment.
2. Economic control of the market: men are the owners, managers, etc.
3. Men can feel secure when alone, in house, walking down the street, etc, day or night.
4. Christian religion offers the ideology of male supremacy, for example the story of Adam and Eve, the marriage relationship setting up women to serve men, and men are the priests and theologians.
5. Decisions on reproductive rights (abortion, birth control, sterilization) are controlled by clergymen, doctors, and government officials—historically all men.
6. Men live in a male-controlled culture which reinforces men and men values, while punishing women and their values.
7. Men's opinions are highly valued, listened to, respected—confidence is encouraged for men.
8. Higher education is more open to men.

I'd like to use the term "patriarchy" to describe the institutionalized power in society of men over women, and straight people over gays and lesbians. I believe patriarchy and male rule preceded capitalism through the existence of the sexual ordering of society. Men have chosen to interpret and politically use the fact that women are the reproducers of humanity. In fact, we have evidence that patriarchal cultures have risen over matrilineal cultures, where women and women energies were valued. There was also a better balance of male and female energy in both women and men. To say that we live in a patriarchal doesn’t mean that every individual relationship between a man and woman is on the man’s terms. But the patriarchy is the setting in which all of our individual interactions happen, and it greatly influences the way we relate to each other. I see capitalism and patriarchy as mutually dependent, or more precisely, that capitalism is a current expression of patriarchal rule. We can see that sexism has a particular use under capitalism as a tool of patriarchy. As I mentioned, women provide unpaid labor in the home. Women, under capitalism, are responsible for caring for the poor. Women are a pool of workers having to work at lower pay and more menial jobs than men. Women and sexuality are commodified, to be bought and sold for a profit, especially through the media and pornography. Capitalism and patriarchy exist together in a web. The overthrow of capitalism does not necessarily mean the destruction of patriarchal institutions either, although it will provide the necessary conditions for destruction of the patriarchy. However, patriarchy will never be destroyed under capitalism. Sexual division of labor still exists in the Soviet Union, Cuba, China. Hence, we can see that patriarchy is cross-cultural.

Likewise, U.S. economic expansion and control of third world people and their lands (imperialism) is another setting for which our male-ruled society is responsible. The base for this rule is racism. Racism is a dehumanizing reality for Blacks, Chicano/Mexicanos, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans on a daily basis.

Sexism and racism also function as tools. Patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism are the settings. In moving to destroy the settings, we need to understand the tools and how they exist and function inside us. We must understand our power and privileges as white men as basic to the repression of all rights. Survival is a privilege denied to most third world people. Committing ourselves, as straight white men, to the struggle of peoples around the world in their fight for survival and self-determination is the starting point for us to regain the woman/nature/harmony energy in us.

Violence Against Women
by Tom Karier

Violence in our society is directed primarily towards women, poor people, Third World people, lesbians, gay men, children and elderly. I believe that the origins of violence are related for all these people. I hope my discussion of violence against women will expose some of these similar roots and suggest ways to oppose them.

First of all violence against women has become a regular occurrence even if measured by only the number of reports in the mainstream press. These sources can be relied upon to provide only a sampling of the vast number of unreported cases occurring every day. It’s likely that this violence has increased in recent years against single and divorced women but it’s difficult to say this is an overall trend. Feminists have pointed out that several million women were slaughtered during the witch hunts in Europe. Susan Brownmiller finds that the rape of women has been prevalent in every culture and reaches epidemic levels during periods of war. In 1971 as many as 300,000 Bengali women were raped by the invading West Pakistani army. Southern slave holders in the U.S. were known to advertise the breeding potential of their female slaves whom they raped at will. Unfortunately, an entire history of domestic violence may remain unrecorded because what went on in "a man’s home" was often considered his concern. These examples are used to show that violence against women predates "modern society" and occurs on a scale that can be seen only as the systematic destruction of women.

Why are violent assaults on women so prevalent and why isn’t there a massive response to stop it? I think the reason is violence against women reflects the contempt for women which is fostered by our sexist society. Women are constantly reminded of their lower status when men refer to them as "hags", "chicks", "foxes", "bitches", "pussy", or "cunt". Forcing women to suffer economic deprivation because of sexual discrimination or live with the ever present fear of being assaulted should be understood as displays of male power and dominance. Wife-beating and the expectation of women to provide free household services are two sides of the same coin. The point is that without the contempt and hatred of women fundamental to sexism...
society wouldn't even be able to imagine the massacre of several million "witches", the rape of thousands of women every year or the rape of a 30 month old baby. How else can we explain the popularity of pornography in which women are sliced up or why fraternity "men" in Boulder would scream "more rape" at a procession of women during a "Take Back the Night March" protesting violence against women.

One might wonder that they have any desire to dominate or hurt a woman. In fact many would claim that they feel a responsibility to protect women. This is also sexist because women are treated as a form of property to be fought over by good guys and bad guys. Women get to hope to attain any real equality as long as they are the prize of a male joust. The myth of the male protector loses all credibility when one realizes that one-third of all female homicide victims are murdered by their husbands or lovers. The man who sincerely wants to see an end to violence against women must be willing to challenge the roots of this violence, the sexism in society and in himself.

In the process of personally exploring sexism and violence against women I've found it is impossible to totally dissociate myself from sexism. With my level of education, I have access to high paying jobs, general acceptance by men in positions of power and the ability to travel without fear of sexual assault which are not available to most women. And these advantages reflect themselves in my personal relationships with women. Whether I'm escorting a woman home or deciding to make a stronger commitment in a relationship. In these situations I have for men. Men cannot only establish themselves in positions of power but they can do it nearly all straight men are sexually stimulated if he knew what the woman "really" wanted. This idea that no matter how much women may resist rape, deep down they really enjoy it is crucial to rape. Recently a Wisconsin judge threw out a rape case because he said the women's allegedly provocative dress was reason enough for rape as if he knew what the woman "really" wanted. Another judge in the Denver area (Judge Kane) candidly revealed his own fantasies when he claimed to enjoy hearing a "garden variety rape case". This powerful judge sits at the front of the courtroom, not to ascertain guilt or innocence, but to fantasize that he is the one overpowering and raping women. These examples are examples because I would expect better of a judge but because they reveal how easily men can ignore the seriousness of rape when they believe that women really want it. The widely acclaimed movie "Dressed to Kill" plays on this myth in the opening scene where a woman is sexually aroused by her fantasies of being raped and mutilated. This movie is not about women's fantasies but it is about the fantasies of most men.

Another myth is that women are really "asking for it". The idea is that no matter how much women may resist rape, deep down they really enjoy it and desire it. Recently a Wisconsin judge threw out a rape case because he said the woman's allegedly provocative dress was reason enough for rape as if he knew what the woman "really" wanted. Another judge in the Denver area (Judge Kane) candidly revealed his own fantasies when he claimed to enjoy hearing a "garden variety rape case". This powerful judge sits at the front of the courtroom, not to ascertain guilt or innocence, but to fantasize that he is the one overpowering and raping women. These examples are examples because I would expect better of a judge but because they reveal how easily men can ignore the seriousness of rape when they believe that women really want it. The widely acclaimed movie "Dressed to Kill" plays on this myth in the opening scene where a woman is sexually aroused by her fantasies of being raped and mutilated. This movie is not about women's fantasies but it is about the fantasies of most men.

Modern society has created new methods of physically destroying women in addition to rape, murder and mutilation. The sterilization of Black and Native American women in the U.S. and Puerto Rican women has been well documented and demonstrates how Third World women face particularly high levels of violence. Estimates claim that as many as 25 percent of Native American women and 33 percent of Puerto Rican women have been sterilized. There is a connection between Third World报业 banned in the U.S., and that Rely tampons remain stored in warehouses, prove that these lethal violations were not simple mistakes.

The destruction of Third World people by the U.S. government in the interest of multinational corporations is directly analogous to the crimes against women being in the interest of men. Only by defeating the democratic movements in Chile, El Salvador or Puerto Rico for example can the U.S. government hope to maintain its economic and political domination. The violence against women in the U.S. serves a similar purpose in continuing the subjugation of women. Third World women are often the most serious victims of racism and imperialism as well as sexism.

The connections between sexism, capitalism and violence become obvious when we consider the role of pornography. Businessmen find it extremely profitable ($4 billion a year) to sell pornography ranging from soft-porn to vivid displays of sexual mutilation. All pornography reaffirms the sexist attitudes and contempt for women which makes violence against women more likely. According to some physicians, pornography also provides the models acted out by 57% of all rapists, 77% of child molesters with male victims and 87% of child molesters with female victims. The fact that nearly all straight men are sexually stimulated by pornography makes this issue even more important for men to explore. As a straight man it has been important for me to understand why I respond to pornography even though I do not respond to nudity in social situations. Although any hint of violence nauseates me, I find that most soft porn portrays women in varying degrees of willingness and vulnerability. The message is always the same, "this beautiful woman looks like she really wants me". Unfortunately for my ego, the message doesn't come from the woman but from the Playboy photographer who knows these fantasies of straight males all too well. It has been very useful for me to understand how related my sexual fantasies are to fantasies of power in order to understand how pornography contributes to sexism and violence.

I believe that living in a sexist, capitalistic society has strongly influenced me. These traits are often painful to identify and challenge, but nevertheless important if I am to struggle against sexism politically and personally. We must be willing to be critical of ourselves as well as society if we are to ever successfully overcome sexism, capitalism and imperialism.
2. Gay Male Oppression

Fear of physical violence is a daily preoccupation. We face harassment on the street, in bars, or whenever. Verbal abuse is also frequent. Whether I'm going to be attacked because I'm gay or because I'm not straight is always on my mind.

Another aspect of gay oppression is constantly having to deal with the decision of whether to come out or not in any particular situation. I always have to weigh whether other people are at the center of my actions. As a result, I sometimes find myself in a corner. I find this incredibly angering.

Along with the guilt comes self-hatred. We are constantly being bought into the idea of not being straight and not being normal. This resulted in a low self-image of myself as a gay male.

Third World gay males face a different form of oppression, which is not in a position to adequately address. Besides dealing with heterosexism, they have to deal with the oppression of racism/imperialism. Heterosexism may also be influenced by cultural dynamics, for Black gay males may be in one form from the Black community and for Chicano Mexicanos in another form. A Chico Mexican once told me that "being Third World and gay I face a combination of oppressions from this majority community and the Chicano Mexican community. But for me, my people's struggle is primary and our enemy is U.S. imperialism, not my straight brothers."

3. Gay Self-Oppression

A lot of gay self-oppression comes in the form of heavy guilt because we aren't straight. Along with the guilt comes self-hatiion. We buy into the images that a homophobic patriarchal society has created us. Growing up we were constantly bombar ded with messages that gay males are sick, disgusting, or perverted. When we hear that all our lives and then realize we are one of them, it's hard not to begin to think of ourselves in those terms.

Another aspect of homosexual privilege is economic privilege. If I'm out about the fact that I'm gay, I'mIData possibilities diminish. On the same token, it's harder to find an apartment if I'm gay, job possibilities diminish. On the societal level.

4. Gay/Strait Relationship

Another product of white gay males being straight is that they are confronted with the decision of whether to come out or not in any particular situation. I always have to weigh whether other people are at the center of my actions. As a result, I sometimes find myself in a corner. I find this incredibly angering.

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There are a wide range of personal issues around race and class. I'm going to leave most of these for small group discussion, and just give a few examples here for thought.

Personal issues include our images, assumptions, stereotypes, interactions, and relationships with Third World and poor people. For example, what are our sexual images? Many of us think of Third World women as promiscuous or as prostitutes, or Third World men as "super studs" having almost an animal sexuality. When I have seen a black man and white woman together, I have tended to assume that it's a heavy sexual relationship, not looking at the other qualities that attract people to each other.

I'd like to talk now about racism and classism as a systematic level. Racism and classism relate to imperialism in a similar way that sexism and heterosexism relate to patriarchy. Sexism is not just an individual attitude. It has a systematic and historical form as patriarchy which results in the domination and exploitation of women for the benefit of men, and lesbians and gay men for the benefit of straights. In a similar way, racism and classism are not just individual attitudes. They have systematic forms: capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism. Racism and classism are tools of the systems, which result in the exploitation of Third World and poor people for the benefit of mostly white corporate class.

Patriarchy and imperialism are not really separate; they are related and overlapping systems. That connection is too complex to deal with adequately in this brief presentation.

I believe that U.S. imperialism has caused enormous amounts of death and suffering, and that it is essential for us to work to destroy it. By imperialism, I refer to a worldwide economic system and its resulting social and political structures built foremost on the quest for profits. This creates the need for cheap labor and raw materials, and constant new markets and sources for investment. In this quest for profits, internally the U.S. has committed genocide against Native Americans and stolen their lands; seized the northern half of Mexico and murdered many of its people; enslaved 100 million Africans to build the wealth of this country; instituted a class society with power in the hands of a wealthy few; subjected Third World people within the U.S. to colonized conditions, from poverty to police terror; and devastated the environment.

Worldwide, the U.S. has armed and financed brutal dictatorships willing to protect U.S. business interests as in Chile and South Africa; established direct colonies as in Puerto Rico; and directly invaded and colonized countries as in Vietnam and the current plans for El Salvador.

Race, class and imperialism affect our perspectives and work around feminism. For example, on the issues of rape and violence against women, it is important to remember that:

- Rape has been used systematically by the colonizer against Third World people, such as under slavery in the U.S. and by soldiers in Vietnam.
- The false accusation of rape has been a racist excuse used to infect Third World men.
- Courts are racist in applying the rape laws: 405 of the 455 executions for rape have been of Third World men. White men are rarely convicted for raping Third World women.

- There is a racist mythology that Third World men are rapists, and that Third World men rape white women, when in fact most rapes occur within the same race.
- The whole issue of violence against women for Third World women means not only wife battering or rape, but includes forms of colonial violence like police terror and oppressive living conditions.

In the area of jobs, Ms. magazine talks of "women's liberation" as women getting out of the home and into a career. But Third World and poor women were forced out of the home for a long time to get a job to survive. And if they were fortunate enough to find one, it was usually menial, unsafe, or degrading work rather than a career.

Around the issue of the family, feminism has made an important critique of the nuclear family as an oppressive institution. This is especially true in white culture, where the family is strongest in enforcing sex roles and the concepts of women as property and men as lesser beings. But it is important to understand that imperialism has tried to destroy Third World families through a policy of genocide, systematically attempting to wipe out whole peoples and cultures. South African apartheid rule and U.S. slavery forcibly separated men, women and children. Forced sterilization of Third World people has been another aspect of these policies.

There are many issues of racism around language. For example, "macho" is a racist term in that it lays the stereotype for sexist attitudes most heavily on Latino men. But sexism is a thing of power, not just an individual's attitude. And on a societal level, it is clearly not Latino men who have the power or who are most responsible for the oppression of women. Who makes the heterosexist laws, who are the corporate managers, the judges, the clergy, etc?

Finally, I'd like to offer several practical ways we can deal with racism, classism and imperialism.

1) It's important to develop personal sensitivities to our own fears, attitudes, and assumptions about Third World and poor people through personal discussions or consciousness raising groups.

2) We should try to be aware of the ways a feminist issue might affect Third World people differently than whites. This includes also making sure that our "solutions" don't end up making things worse for Third World people. For example, some organizations in the U.S. have called for increased police presence to "protect" women. But this ignores the fact that in the last five years alone, police agencies have killed over 5,000 Third World people in the U.S. This type of "solution" clearly invites increased repression of Third World people.

3) When working on feminist issues, we can try to choose ones that most affect Third World and poor people. It is important also not to separate survival issues (decent food, shelter, etc.) or issues around class, race and imperialism from what women's or gay liberation are about. We in the Denver/Boulder Men Against Sexism have often done this in the past, and we are now trying to find ways to better integrate our anti-imperialist and anti-patriarchal politics.
4) Perhaps most importantly, we can attend the events and programs and support the movements of Third World people, especially national liberation movements here and abroad. This is important not only because we have much to learn from them and that their cause is just. It is also because there can be no basis for overturning patriarchy nor liberation for most of the world’s women, lesbians and gay men under U.S. imperialism’s rule—perhaps even little chance for many of us to survive in the long run.

This is not to say that the success of national liberation movements automatically guarantees the end of sexism, heterosexism, and patriarchy. And there have clearly been setbacks and failures in socialist countries so far in this regard. However, I believe that socialism has already made some important changes in the traditional roles of women in many countries, and has enormously improved living conditions for hundreds of millions of people in terms of providing the basic material necessities of survival.

For these reasons, I think the destruction of patriarchy (as well as our continued survival) are (are more likely under socialism than imperialism. And in this context, the victories of such national liberation movements as those in Vietnam, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, and the strength and militancy of the Chicano/Mexicano, Puerto Rican, Black and Native American movements in attacking imperialism from within current U.S. borders offer much hope to all of us.