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AFRICAN AGENDA

A Voice Of Afro-American Opinion

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Special Issue

DEDICATED TO WOMEN IN STRUGGLE

EDITORIAL

On March 8, 1974, women and men in the United States and around the world paid special tribute to International Women's Day. In 1910 at the International Socialist Congress of the Second International, Clara Zetkin, a German revolutionary, proposed that March 8th be a day of tribute to working women throughout the world. The initiative for this proposal came from the demonstrations of the women needle workers of New York City in 1908 who were seeking to organize the first needle trade union.

All over the world, women are playing leading roles in the fight against imperialism and the social, political and economic oppression heaped upon them. In Africa, this is especially true of women in such organizations as the Congolese Women's Organization of the People's Republic of the Congo, the United Women of Tanzania and the Center for the Promotion of Women in the Republic of Guinea who are equal with men in the fight to rid their countries of imperialist domination. The part that women play in the liberation movements is especially important since they are directly on the front line of the battle against Portuguese colonialism and imperialism. Such South African women of the African National Congress as Winnie Mandela now facing a jail sentence, Lilian Ngoyi, former President of the ANC Women's League, and Florence Mophosho, one of the leaders for Angela Davis Freedom in Africa, and the women in the PAIGC, FRELIMO, SWAPO, MPLA and ZAPU, face direct physical abuse at the hands of the Portuguese and South African aggressors.

International Women's Day takes on added significance this year because of

the courage and leadership displayed by the women of Vietnam who along with their men successfully repulsed United States military aggression. Their struggle against U.S. domination and the contributions of such outstanding women as Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, Foreign Minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, is an inspiration not only to women, but to all people who are fighting monopoly

Ain't I A Woman?

That man over there say
a woman needs to be helped into carriages
and lifted over ditches :
and to have the best place everywhere.
Nobody ever helped me into carriages
or over mud puddles
or gives me a best place...
And ain't I a woman?
I could work as much
and eat as much as a man—
when I could get to it—
and bear the lash as well
and ain't I a woman?
I have borne 13 children
and seen most all sold into slavery
and when I cried out a mother's grief
none but Jesus heard me...
and ain't I a woman?

Sojourner Truth

lies and imperialist exploitation. Vietnam is a shining example of the contributions and the supreme sacrifices of women involved in struggle and completely dismantles the unfounded capitalist propaganda about the inferiority of women.

In the U.S., Afro-American women are among the most exploited and suffer four forms of oppression: 1) they are exploited as members of the work-

ing class; 2) they are oppressed racially; 3) as women, and 4) as a nationality. At the same time, they are the least recognized and honored for their contributions to the struggle of the Afro-American community.

The history of the social democratic struggle of Afro-Americans in this country has shown that Afro-American men and women have struggled *together* in the fight against national and class oppression. However, male supremacy within our ranks still prevents the full equality of women in our struggle. Our struggle is still lacking the consistent advancement of the full equality of Afro-American women in the struggle against capitalist exploitation. This problem which hinders the development of women, must be combatted together with men. Capitalist exploitation imposes a heavy burden on all of us and requires a unified struggle free of the bourgeois social ideology which imposes restrictions on the contributions that women should make to the struggle for liberation. Our liberation depends on Afro-American women playing new and flexible roles. The development of our struggle can be measured in part by the degree to which Afro-American women are participating in the total fight against monopoly capitalism.

In this issue of the *African Agenda*, the special significance of Afro-American women is honored in light of the importance and meaning of International Women's Day. March 8th is not just a special day for women; the other 364 days of the year should also be days that we struggle for the equality of women in our society in a unified fight against capitalism.

South African Women In The Fight Against Apartheid

To understand and appreciate the contribution and the role of the oppressed and struggling women of South Africa, one has to view these in the broad context of the liberation struggle in South Africa. The Black women of South Africa are subjected to the same economic, political, and social exploitation as the Black men, and suffer further degradation as women. The racist policy of apartheid, or "separate development" as the South African regime would like it called, relegates the indigenous Africans to the level of slaves. The methods used by the white minority government to stem the rising tide of the liberation struggle inside South Africa are reminiscent of the Gestapo tactics of Nazi Germany. Although South Africa is rich and industrially developed, all of the wealth of the country is confiscated by the white minority. This wealth is produced through the ruthless exploitation of the African majority who are the most oppressed and humiliated in the country of their birth.

Black South Africans, who make up over two-thirds of the population, are forced to live on a mere 13% of the land. These separate areas, (bantustans) are the most barren land. Over 70% of the African women remain on the bantustans to cultivate the tiny family plots, while their husbands work as migrant laborers. The small returns of these plots force many women to seek work as field hands on white farms or as domestic servants for white families. Only about 27% of them can find jobs in the cities since rigorous controls exist to keep them out. Aside from domestic and field work, there are few openings for African women. Only 0.1% manage to get a secondary education. The plight of wives of political prisoners is even more tragic. They live under continual harassment. In this context, the women of South Africa have never remained indifferent to the exploitation and oppression of their people. They have always played a prominent role in the fight for liberation.

When the African National Congress was founded in 1912, Charlotte Maxeke, the first African woman medical doctor in South Africa, served in the National Executive of the ANC. She inspired her African sisters to become fully involved in the fight to prevent them from having to carry passes. The first organized action of the anti-pass campaign was carried out by women who assembled at the Administrative Offices of the government and made bonfires out of passes. In 1948, the African National Congress Women's League



Lilian Ngoyi with Dorothy Nyembe
Leading a demonstration of women in
Natal during the late 50s

was founded. The Women's League was a founder-member of the Federation of South African Women which is now banned. Many militant activities were conducted by South African women against the forced removal and dispossession of whole tribes and the banishment and deportation of patriotic chiefs. Many women were arrested for taking part in the 1952 Defiance Campaign organized by the ANC. Women were active in the struggle against the Bantu Education Act of 1954 and the Bantu Authorities Act of 1957. They participated in the 1955 Kliptown Congress where the historic "Freedom Charter" was adopted. South Africa's Women's Day, August 9th, was born in the heat of struggle in 1956. On that day, more than 20,000 women from all parts of South Africa converged on Pretoria, the capital, to confront the Prime Minister in a protest against passes. Lilian Ngoyi, then President of the Federation of South African Women, led them in this action.

The first person to be placed under house arrest in South Africa was a woman, Helen Joseph, Secretary-General of the Federation of South African Women. Many of them are languishing today in South African prisons like Dorothy Nyembe. In 1962, Lilian Ngoyi was confined to a ghetto-suburb of Johannesburg and continually harassed by the Special Branch of the regime police force. Her ban was lifted 11 years later. In 1969, five women were among the 22 Africans who faced charges under the Suppression of Communism Act and for promoting the aims of the ANC. They were Winnie Mandela, Martha Dlamini, Joyce Sikhakhane, Virginia Mngoma and Rita Nzanga. These women were subjected to extreme torture

during their year and a half detention, but they never faltered in that ordeal. They were finally acquitted of the charges thanks to their fortitude and wide coverage given to the case in the international press. Winnie Mandela, whose husband Nelson Mandela is serving a life imprisonment sentence on notorious Robben Island for leadership in the ANC, is still being persecuted. A few days after her acquittal, a ban was imposed on her by the government to prevent her further activity. More recently, she was sentenced to one year in jail for allegedly violating the ban order. The case is now being appealed. Such inhuman injustice is characteristic of the racist white minority regime under the leadership of Prime Minister Vorster in South Africa.

The participation of women in the struggle for freedom in South Africa is growing daily. The courageous fighting spirit of the women of South Africa is a beacon light for women involved in struggle around the world. The African-American Solidarity Committee joins all progressive forces in saluting the women of South Africa.

A Talk With Sylvia Woods

Sylvia Woods is a staunch Black woman who has a long history of struggle in the trade union, Black liberation and defense movements. She led the midwest campaign to free Angela Davis and now serves as the Coordinator of the Chicago Area Committee to Defend Political Prisoners. She is a mother, a worker, a housewife, and a dynamic member of the Communist Party of the USA. The *African Agenda* staff interviewed Sylvia to get her perspective of the role of Black women in the movement in the 20th century. The following article is the content of that interview.

"I first became conscious of the trade union movement and the liberation struggle when I was about 11 or 12 years old. My father was a Garveyite. He also was a trade unionist, a roofer, but he belonged to an auxiliary union. There were the white trade unions and the black trade unions; the black unions were called auxiliaries. My father was a staunch trade union man who told me that no matter how bad a union was, it was better than nothing and if there was ever a chance for me to join a union, I should.

I remember in the South, women had special problems. My mother had let my little brother sell newspapers and he went to sell newspapers down by the railroad station. He became tired and he was sick. So he sat down near a white restaurant and this man came out, and

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A Talk With Sylvia Woods

wanted to know what was this little "nigger" sitting out here for and my brother said, "I don't feel well. As soon as my stomach stops hurting me, I'm gonna leave." This man kicked him. My brother came home and told my mother. My mother went down to that restaurant and walked straight in to this all-white restaurant and said, "Who owns this God-damned place!" The guy said, "I'm the manager here, what do you want?!" She said, "Well, some S.O.B. came out of this place and kicked my child and I'm gonna wreck this place if it isn't rectified." The manager walked around the place and asked who kicked this little "nigger" who was sitting outside. The man who did it stood up, and my mother said, "You're going to jail this night or to Hell, either one. You don't go around kicking my son."

I'm saying this to say that my father could not have done this. But she was so angry that she just didn't care and she went. And, the guy went to jail. Black women have always taken the forefront. And my father didn't feel bad about it. He knew that he could not have done it. No matter how angry he was. They would've killed him and thought nothing of it. He didn't feel that she was acting the man. He felt that she was doing something that he could not do at the moment.

Then I came to Chicago looking for a job. I went to the steam laundry to try and get hired. The guy wouldn't hire me because they were only hiring experienced people. This was the height of the depression and where was I going to get the experience? I think I was all of 16 years old I had already been married a year. I kept going back everyday until he finally hired me. I worked there for about two years and every one was black.

One day, they decided that they wanted to have a floorlady. They only had a real old foreman and he had to run all over the place. When he would leave, of course, we would stop working and cut the machines off and rest, because it was a 10 hour day and grueling work. The night they said they were going to hire a floor lady, we thought, well this is good, one of the black women will become the floorlady. But they brought somebody in from the outside, a white woman to be our floorlady. So I said to everybody, "This is wrong. We should not let her be the floorlady. We've worked here three and four years and to let her come in, this would not be right." We decided that we weren't going to put up with her being our floorlady. I didn't know how to go about organizing people. Sit

down strikes were just beginning, so I said, "We'll just stop; we just won't work. Stay here and we'll tell him he has to get rid of this woman. What he did was go and get the police to come and throw us out of the place. We fought with the police, and we tore up the laundry. But they succeeded in throwing us out. I didn't know what else to do after that so everybody came to my house and we had a big party. In the morning everybody went home and went out looking for other jobs, because we didn't know what was the next step to take.



So I went to work in another laundry where they then began to organize the laundry workers, and I worked in that struggle and we organized most of the laundries.

I worked in a laundry until the war started, then I went into a war plant. This is where I really learned to organize. The shop I worked in was an unorganized shop. I worked in organizing that shop and was elected Financial Secretary Treasurer of the Bendex Local 330 of the United Automobile Workers. I was elected with 25% of the workers there black and the rest white. I never lost an election. The plant closed down after the war. That was my introduction to the trade union movement and to my ability to organize.

I could tell you about some of these wonderful black women organizers that I met. And I think I'd like to talk about the very first one whose name was Miranda Smith. She worked in Durham, North Carolina with the tobacco workers. In the tobacco industry, it was so segregated that when these people decided to go out on strike under Miranda Smith's leadership, they decided that the blacks and the whites couldn't even picket together. So they decided that the blacks would picket on one side of the street and the whites would picket on the other. Miranda be-

came nationally known; in fact, when she died, Paul Robeson flew all the way from New York to sing at her funeral. She was well loved by both blacks and whites, and she integrated that local. She got them to work together and the next time they went out on strike, they did not march separately. She was really my idol.

I want to tell you about the small women who worked and organized and had the children, had to go home to supper, come back to the union meeting, do the washing, the ironing and the cooking. And they weren't daunted by it; they just did it.

One such woman was Othelia who was working with another woman named Alma Settles. Othelia was working in one of the Maremount shops, AF of L had it and it was just a company union. The workers looked up to her even then. Even this rotten AF of L leadership respected her. When she had a grievance, they would settle her grievance. UAW went in to organize that shop and they went to Othelia and showed her the difference in the unions. That woman could call a meeting with just a few hours notice and you wouldn't be able to get into the hall. She was next to Miranda Smith in my estimation. She was good at organizing. She had the foresight to do things on a scale that people understood, and people would move, even the backward whites would move for her.

She and Alma Settles formed a team, Alma didn't have any children but Othelia had eight children. Whenever there was anything going on, she never left out her husband. She would say, "I want you to know that I'm here tonight because of my husband and I want him to stand up; I want you to see my husband." She had a good husband who helped her with the children.

These good men, we have them. These Black men who've gone through so much and are still willing to help their wives. There are some, of course, who are jealous, but then the women learn how to handle this, and still go on to do their work without wrecking the marriage.

Organizations that have been born since the second World War like the civil rights organizations and the Welfare Rights Organization, have developed Black women like Ruby Mabry. Women like Ruby Mabry who were coming along at that time didn't know about organization and how to organize. But when it became necessary to have an organization for welfare mothers, these women came up and they learned and they did. And this is something that is

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AFRO-AMERICAN WOMEN

Black women in this country are faced with four-pronged discrimination—discrimination as a sex, a class, a nationality and a race. It is now widely accepted that women are discriminated against in the job market and in educational institutions, are demeaned in the child-support and divorce courts and so on. Even a source such as the Congressional Quarterly Fact sheet on Sexual Discrimination (1972) indicated that 3 of every 4 full-time working women in 1970 earned less than \$6,000 and that the more education a woman had, the greater the gap was likely to be between her income and that of a male with an equal amount of education. However, Black women annually receive in pay only 85% of that received by white women.



In the struggle against oppression, the position of the Black woman worker warrants special attention as she has been severely exploited as a source of cheap labor by the capitalist system. Her need for employment as either a contributing or as the sole supporter of her family has made her especially vulnerable to the exploitive devices of the capitalists. She has often been forced to accept lower wages for harder work merely to procure a job.

Because of the racial discrimination in the job market against Black men, Black women have consistently either shared the responsibility for the support of the family or have been the sole supporters. According to the 1972 statistics published by the U.S. Department of Labor there were 4.2 million Black and minority women in the labor force. Of this number 52 percent were single, widowed, divorced or separated from their husbands, about 16 percent were wives whose husbands had 1971 incomes below \$5,000. Only 22 percent were wives whose husbands had incomes of \$7,000 or more. This large number of Black mothers in the work force points to the need for adequate quality day care centers. The proportion

of minority children whose mothers were the heads of families in 1971 was three times higher than that for white children. Black children must not be victimized because their mothers are workers.

Although there has been some advancement in the types of jobs Black women hold, they are still heavily concentrated in service and domestic positions. A comparison of the 1960 and the 1971 figures published by the Dept. of Labor indicates a rise in the number of Black women in clerical positions from 9.3 percent in 1960 to 22.0 percent in 1971. While the percentage of household workers dropped from 35.1 in 1960 to 16.5 in 1971, the heaviest concentration of Black women workers still remains in the area of service workers.

In addition to class oppression, Black women are discriminated against because of their nationality. A nationality is a group of people having the same language, national culture, and national psychology. As a member of an oppressed nationality, the Black woman has historically had to wage a struggle

for civil and human rights. The very characteristics which comprise the nationality of Blacks are used as tools of discrimination against them. The Black woman's oppression does not end here. She also faces racial discrimination. On the job she is given the most menial, lowest paying jobs at whatever level she is functioning. Although many Black women have made the transition from domestics to "professional and related services" they are in this category mainly as clerk typists, housekeepers, laundry maids etc. Twenty-five percent of all employed Black women are found therein.

The racial and sex discrimination against the Black woman has had negative implications for the Black woman. Her slave background initially stigmatized her as immoral, ugly, emasculating. She worked the fields, and was sexually exploited as a breeder of more slaves. Racist bourgeois historians have attempted to erase the heroic and vital contributions that Black women have made in the context of the Black liberation struggle. It is a known fact that

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Two Years Of Struggle

The first issue of the *African Agenda* was published two years ago on March 2, 1972. The A.A., which is published by the African-American Solidarity Committee has grown tremendously and its influence is felt in all sectors of the Afro-American and other communities. The *African Agenda* is read by people in the African countries including the African liberation movements, and in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean. Labor leaders, rank and file members of the working class, political activists, churches, community and political organizations, opinion makers and other sectors of the Afro-American community are subscribers to the *African Agenda*.

The purpose of this publication is to propagate the ideas of the African-American Solidarity Committee, and to discuss the social, political, economic, and cultural issues that affect the Afro-American community. In the pages of the A.A. we have discussed such issues as the "Role of Black Labor in the Anti-Imperialist Struggle", Zionism and its relationship to South Africa", "The Socialist Countries Role in Africa", the Middle East, and the social and economic conditions of the Afro-American community. The comments that we have received have indicated that people feel the newsletter is a vital and necessary publication and should be

expanded.

During the past two years we have never missed an issue even though the A.A. is put out by a volunteer staff. At times we had to combine our regular monthly issue into a double issue published every two months. Because of the excellent response we have received we are announcing a fund raising drive to increase the size of the A.A. to a regular eight page monthly publication instead of our regular four page monthly size. We have tried to keep the cost of the publication at one dollar per year in order to reach as many people as possible. However, because we intend to increase the size of the publication, increased printing and mailing costs we are announcing a change in our standard price.

The next issue of the A.A. will cost 20¢ per issue with yearly subscription costing two dollars. Institutions and organizations will be charged ten dollars per year, while foreign subscriptions by air will cost \$3.50 and by surface \$2.50 per year. Bulk orders of ten or more per month will still receive a 40% discount. We feel this increase in price is still reasonable considering the increased cost of publishing the A.A. The content of the publication speaks for itself, and we'd like to thank our subscribers and the many people who have supported our efforts.

1975 — International Women's Year

At the initiative of the Women's International Democratic Federation, the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year. This decision testifies to the general recognition of the big role our contemporaries are playing in the life of society.

By proclaiming the principle of de jure and de facto equal rights for men and women, noting the growing importance of women's activities in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres, developing friendly ties and cooperation among countries, consolidating world peace, the United Nations decision stresses the participation of millions upon millions of women in the process of human development.

This is why we evaluate International Women's Year as a very great event not only for women and the organizations which unite them, but for all democratic progressive and peace-loving forces, whose support is an essential condition for the actual implementation of genuine equality.

In preparing for 1975, we must give the greatest attention to the important question of defending the rights of mothers, especially working mothers. Their interests must be respected in all spheres of work and life, and this will not be any special privilege, but merely the fulfilment of a direct duty by state and society.

The protection of motherhood assumes, first of all, care for the health and upbringing of children. This, in turn, means that measures aimed at improving the position of women must take interests of children fully into account. Only then will women be able to play an active part in economic and public life.

The WIDF has presented a number of important proposals to the United Nations, envisaging practical assistance to women in many countries. The Federation pointed out the importance of working out a draft agreement on eliminating discrimination against women, adopting a declaration on the protection of women and children in circumstances of armed conflicts, and under conditions of intensified struggle for national liberation, etc.

In addition, the Federation has asked the United Nations to demand that all governments, which have not signed the agreement on women's rights, or have signed it but are not implementing it, adhere strictly to that agreement. The Federation likewise considers it necessary that the agenda of the General Assembly sessions in 1975 include a point on the role of women in the modern

world. This presupposes that contacts will be strengthened with all special United Nations agencies concerned with problems affecting the position of women and children, to demand that practical steps necessary for the solution of such problems are taken.

The International Women's Year must not, of course, be limited to actions within the United Nations system. It must bring about an explosion of activity to reveal and settle the most acute problems which face millions of women in various countries, it must show the importance of the gains attained through constant struggle, and broadly publicize the experience of women in the lands of socialism.



Members of the African American Solidarity Committee participating in the International Women's Day march in Chicago on March 9, 1974.

At its Havana meeting in April-May 1973 the Bureau of the WIDF discussed the need for a liaison and publicity committee. Now, after a meeting of representatives of national, regional and international women's organizations, which took part in the World Congress of Peace Forces, such a committee has been formed. It was one of the first joint actions for the International Women's Year.

The declaration adopted in Havana states: "The Bureau of the WIDF considers that for national and international women's organizations and for all concerned about the position of women, the International Women's Year must offer real opportunities for developing cooperation and conducting joint actions."

"The culmination of these actions will be a World Congress of Women in 1975, which will mark a new stage in the struggle for peace, national independence, social progress and democratic freedoms, for the rights of women and the future of the youth."

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau and Our Responsibility

On Feb. 23, 1974 the African American Solidarity Committee, The African Information Service and the African Student Association of Northwestern University sponsored a forum in "Salute to the African People of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau". The forum was attended by over 100 people who heard Mary Smith, Exec. Officer and Business Agent of the Veterans Administration Independent Service Employees Union, and member of the National Staff of the National Anti-Imperialist Conference in Solidarity With African Liberation, and Harold Rogers, Editor of the topic. Antar Mberi of the Ohio Poets read a number of poems in salute to Amilcar Cabral and Guinea-Bissau. The forum was chaired by Ebony Hannibal, member of the AASC. Ben Fernandes and John Silver representing the P.A.I.G.C. in the U.S. were unable to attend due to illness. At the meeting Ron McCantz from the Chicago Black Labor leaders presented a check of \$100.00 in behalf of his organization for the P.A.I.G.C. The article below is an abridged version of Mary Smith's speech.

I'd like to thank the African American Solidarity Committee, the African Information Service, and the African Student Organization for inviting not only me, but *all* of us to participate in this salute to the independence of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. As working people, especially Black working people, we have a special interest in the role of our government in Africa. Our interest in Africa is based not only on historical reasons, but also on the fact that there are people in Africa who still are not free, and who are struggling against racism, economic and social exploitation and foreign domination. Today, over 50 million Africans suffer under the boot of colonial and imperialist exploitation. In many ways, they are facing a struggle similar to ours here in the United States against economic, political and racist repression from corporate monopolies.

In parts of Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique, the Portuguese government is presently one of the countries that is carrying out war against the legitimate aims and goals of the people. Behind the Portuguese attempt to maintain its colonial presence in Africa is the United States government. The Azores Agreement of 1971 between the U.S. and Portugal provided Portugal with 436 million dollars in military equipment. This money represents 3/4 of Portugal's military budget in Africa which goes to suppress the freedom-loving people in the Portuguese colonies. This money, which was given without our consent, could feed our school children in Chicago for five years or send thousands of Black high school graduates to college for four

years.

The issues that I am speaking about are not as far away from our problems of unemployment and high oil and gas prices as you may think. Portugal not only relies on our military aid but also allows American companies to invest in its illegally-held territories in Africa. U.S. companies that move out of our communities and open up shop in Africa are taking jobs with them and adding to the growing unemployment here in America. For example, Firestone Rubber in Akron, Ohio is moving some of its plants and equipment from Akron, Ohio to Mozambique. They are building a rubber plant which will employ 5,000 Mozambicans, exploiting them under slave-like conditions for a mere wage of 20c a day. At the same time, many people in Akron will lose their jobs. Or take for example the recent "discovery" of oil in Cabinda (Northern Angola) by the Gulf Oil Company. Gulf is using this oil to supply the Portuguese army in Angola and Mozambique instead of providing the gas needs of millions of people in this country during the so-called "oil shortage" period. Our answer to Firestone and Gulf Oil must be to fight to keep jobs here at home in order to prevent the economic exploitation of our brothers and sisters in Mozambique, and to boycott Gulf Oil and call for lower oil and gasoline prices.

We have a special role to play in this country in helping the struggling peoples of Africa. They share our interest in freedom from economic, racial and social oppression. We salute the independence of Guinea-Bissau as a victory for us and all freedom-loving people. We are struggling against the same enemy but on different fronts. We are struggling against monopoly exploitation in the U.S., and they are struggling against Portuguese Colonialism backed by U.S. imperialism. Our job here is to take steps that advance the struggle of people in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Under the leadership of the late Amílcar Cabral, who was brutally assassinated by Portuguese agents, the PAIGC has led the people through many years of long and difficult struggle. In September 1973, when the PAIGC declared the birth of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, the Portuguese were only occupying a few coastal cities and the Island of Cape Verde. On the other hand, the PAIGC had liberated 3/4 of the territory and were meeting the needs of the people. Today over 70 countries have recognized the new states leading the fight to back entrance of the new state in the U.N. It is ironic that more nations recognize the Republic of Guinea-Bissau than have relations with the state of

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The 1973 All-African Women's Conference

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the All African Women's Conference held in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, from July 24 to 31, 1973, FRELIMO, the liberation movement from Mozambique presented their view on women in the liberation movements. FRELIMO was represented by a delegation composed of comrades Deolinda Raul Guesimane, member of the Central Committee and the Head of the delegation, Marcelina Chissano and Rosaria Tembe. We quote from their speech:

"For us the All African Women's Conference represents a platform of struggle from where women of our continent can coordinate their efforts in the hard struggle they are undertaking against the many forces which oppress them. To define clearly these forces must be our first task. Then it is necessary to decide on the methods of struggle. Finally, we must study and develop ways in which we can best coordinate our efforts so that they can be made more effective. It is with this perspective that we came to this meeting at which we commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the AAWC."

"We are supposed to talk about the role of the women in our struggle. We find this somehow difficult, since in our organization, women and men fight and work together, side by side, in every kind of activity: we women participate in the actual fighting, integrated in military units; we work as political commissars, mobilizing the people, enlightening them on all aspects of our struggle; we transport war materials to the front lines; we defend the people against enemy incursions; we participate in production; we are active in the schools and in the hospitals. So, if it is true that some tasks, by their nature, fall more under our responsibility — like taking care of children (we have several nurseries and creches which are run by women, — in general we can say that we do the same work as men. And this we consider as one of the greatest achievements of our revolution. Specially if we consider against which background this situation arises. Traditional society, which kept women absolutely dependent on men, deprived women of any initiative, left them with no voice in the affairs of the community — their only task being the bearing of children and the undertaking of domestic work. And then came colonial society in which women became instruments of labour, even more exploited than men."

"All this is being changed now in our country. And we wish to draw your attention to this special point, which tells



Comrade Deolinda at the AAWC Seminar:

of our experience: These changes have been accomplished through our political engagement. It has been our militant role in a political organization having a correct political line that has given us the proper orientation necessary to make our efforts more effective. It is political awareness that has enabled us to find the most correct path to our emancipation. At the same time, we feel that it is within this political perspective that we, the Mozambican women, can formulate the best forms of coordinating our efforts with other African women. Our experience — we repeat — taught us that we must organize ourselves and struggle within a movement; that is, our women's organization must be an arm, an instrument of a political movement."

"We wish now to make an appeal to all African women and to the women of the world to help us surmount the difficulties that we face in order to accomplish our task in a more effective way."

"Our appeal is not only for material support. It is primarily a call to the African women and all women, to take an active part in our struggle: to mobilize their people, by organizing meetings of solidarity, distributing information about the successes and difficulties of our struggle, using every possible means, such as radio, press, cultural manifestations, exhibitions, etc., to develop at all levels — students, workers, etc. — the solidarity movement with our cause. The effort of political mobilization represents without a doubt, the most important contribution, it creates the material solidarity indispensable for the pursuit of our struggle."

Vietnamese Women An Inspiration To All

The victory of the Vietnamese people over the U.S. aggressors and the continuing struggle against a puppet regime in the South has won the admiration of millions of the world's peoples. Vietnamese women are a special inspiration to their sisters struggling for national liberation and against imperialism in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Vietnamese women and men have waged a struggle for women's equality that is inseparable from the struggles against neo-colonialism and imperialist oppression.

Under the feudal conditions of the 17th century Vietnamese women were treated like cattle. They were bought and sold as wives, and they functioned as servants to their husbands. Women were told to follow the Three Obediences throughout their life; obedience to their father, to their husband, and if he died to her eldest son. The upper classes kept concubines and so caused thousands of peasant women to live a life as a household servant. It was cheaper to buy a wife than hire a servant. These backward practices benefited the feudal lords and pervaded the society in general. But among the vast majority of the people, the poor peasants and the hard facts of life helped mediate against such absurd notions.



The poor peasant usually could not afford to buy one wife much less two or three. So these "marriages" were looked down on and scorned. It is difficult for a man to command complete and blind obedience from a woman who has labored beside him all day in the fields. When men and women must sweat and struggle on a day to day basis just to survive, the essential equality between the sexes is impossible to hide. The history of Vietnam is studded with women folk heroines like Trung Trac and Trung Nhi, two sisters who led a general insurrection against Chinese feudal domination. This tradition among peasant women, a tradition of fighting side by side with their men; whether it be for the next meal or against foreign invaders served as a firm foundation for the revolutionary struggle of the Vietnamese people.



The French colonial regime brought a double oppression to the Vietnamese masses; the oppression of feudalism and colonialism. In addition women suffered the additional oppression of women by men. In short women were the SLAVE'S SLAVE. In order to pay the taxes imposed by the colonialists, men, women, and children were forced to work in capitalist enterprises. Women worked 12-14 hours a day for two-thirds the pay the men received. If a woman became pregnant she was immediately fired. Many young women tried to hide their pregnancy by binding their waists tightly; this practice caused many stillbirths. Women worked in factories, rubber plantations, and rice fields; many families were driven into the cities where women were forced to become beggars and prostitutes in order to survive. The condition of the Vietnamese people deteriorated under colonialism. But as women joined the developing Vietnamese working class the true nature of women's oppression was unmasked and women participated in and often gave leadership in the struggle of Vietnamese workers against colonialism.

In 1930 the Indochinese Communist Party (later to become the Vietnamese Workers Party) was founded. The party clearly saw that the struggle for the equality of the sexes was a necessary part of a successful struggle for national liberation. Women comprised over half the population and did much of the work in the country. Ho Chi Minh emphasized that women were the most oppressed segment of the Vietnamese people. Here for the first time the fight for women's equality was waged in a principled manner within the broader struggle for national liberation. Women participated on every level in the struggles against the French colonialists and the Japanese invaders; their contributions were critical to victory. This was only possible through a vigorous and constant struggle against male supremacy and for the equality of the sexes.

The role of Vietnamese women in the struggle against U.S. aggression is well

known. Women tended factories and fields, participated in military actions, were active in the political struggles of the time; they served as directors of schools, factories, generals in the army and as chief negotiators at the peace table. The principles which have guided Vietnamese women serve as a beacon to us all. First to recognize and pay tribute to the contributions of women in the overall struggles of the people. Second to insure that women are accorded equality in all facets of life; but most especially within political organizations and movements. And thirdly to recognize the struggle for women's equality as inseparable from the general struggle of the world's fight against oppression, imperialism and for peace. A women's movement that does not completely embrace the struggles of an entire people is doomed to failure; and just as surely any political movement which ignores, or postpones a vigorous fight for complete equality of the sexes and against reactionary male supremacist ideologists will be defeated.

(continued from page 5) Guinea-Bissau

Israel which is a member of the U.N

Our immediate responsibility to this new state is to build a movement in the U.S. that calls for the removal of all Portuguese troops and colonial administrators from African territories and for the seating of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau in the U.N. Already several organizations in this country have called for the recognition of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau in the U.N. The Vietnam Veterans against the War, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Episcopal Diocese of Philadelphia, the United Church Board of World Ministries and the organization in which I serve as a national staff member, the National Anti-Imperialist Conference in Solidarity with African Liberation, have called for and are demanding that the U.S. government recognize the Republic of Guinea-Bissau in the U.N. We are presently collecting signatures calling for the removal of South Africa from the United Nations and for the seating of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

In closing, I want to stress that it is of great importance that Black people, who can especially appreciate the significance of achieving true freedom, be in the forefront of a movement that gives active support to the just struggle of the people of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. As we salute the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, we renew our commitment to struggle against *all* forms of racism and exploitation, at home and abroad. I leave you with the slogan of the PAIGC: the struggle continues! We Will Win!! Thank you.

(continued from page 2)

A Talk With Sylvia Woods

wanted to know what was this little "nigger" sitting out here for and my brother said, "I don't feel well. As soon as my stomach stops hurting me, I'm gonna leave." This man kicked him. My brother came home and told my mother. My mother went down to that restaurant and walked straight in to this all-white restaurant and said, "Who owns this God-damned place!" The guy said, "I'm the manager here, what do you want?!" She said, "Well, some S.O.B. came out of this place and kicked my child and I'm gonna wreck this place if it isn't rectified." The manager walked around the place and asked who kicked this little "nigger" who was sitting outside. The man who did it stood up, and my mother said, "You're going to jail *this* night or to Hell, either one. You don't go around kicking my son."

I'm saying this to say that my father could not have done this. But she was so angry that she just didn't care and she *went*. And, the guy went to jail. Black women have always taken the forefront. And my father didn't feel bad about it. He *knew* that he could not have done it. No matter *how* angry he was. They would've killed him and thought nothing of it. He didn't feel that she was acting the man. He felt that she was doing something that he could not do at the moment.

Then I came to Chicago looking for a job. I went to the steam laundry to try and get hired. The guy wouldn't hire me because they were only hiring experienced people. This was the height of the depression and where was I going to get the experience? I think I was all of 16 years old I had already been married a year. I kept going back everyday until he finally hired me. I worked there for about two years and every one was black.

One day, they decided that they wanted to have a floorlady. They only had a real old foreman and he had to run all over the place. When he would leave, of course, we would stop working and cut the machines off and rest, because it was a 10 hour day and grueling work. The night they said they were going to hire a floor lady, we thought, well this is good, one of the black women will become the floorlady. But they brought somebody in from the outside, a *white* woman to be our floorlady. So I said to everybody, "This is wrong. We should not let her be the floorlady. We've worked here three and four years and to let her come in, this would not be right." We decided that we weren't going to put up with her being our floorlady. I didn't know how to go about organizing people. Sit

down strikes were just beginning, so I said, "We'll just stop; we just won't work. Stay here and we'll tell him he has to get rid of this woman. What he did was go and get the *police* to come and throw us out of the place. We fought with the police, and we tore up the laundry. But they succeeded in throwing us out. I didn't know what else to do after that so everybody came to my house and we had a big party. In the morning everybody went home and went out looking for other jobs, because we didn't know what was the next step to take.



So I went to work in another laundry where they then began to organize the laundry workers, and I worked in that struggle and we organized most of the laundries.

I worked in a laundry until the war started, then I went into a war plant. This is where I really learned to organize. The shop I worked in was an unorganized shop. I worked in organizing that shop and was elected Financial Secretary Treasurer of the Bendex Local 330 of the United Automobile Workers. I was elected with 25% of the workers there black and the rest white. I never lost an election. The plant closed down after the war. That was my introduction to the trade union movement and to my ability to organize.

I could tell you about some of these wonderful black women organizers that I met. And I think I'd like to talk about the very first one whose name was Miranda Smith. She worked in Durham, North Carolina with the tobacco workers. In the tobacco industry, it was so segregated that when these people decided to go out on strike under Miranda Smith's leadership, they decided that the blacks and the whites couldn't even picket together. So they decided that the blacks would picket on one side of the street and the whites would picket on the other. Miranda be-

came nationally known; in fact, when she died, Paul Robeson flew all the way from New York to sing at her funeral. She was well loved by both blacks and whites, and she integrated that local. She got them to work together and the next time they went out on strike, they did not march separately. She was really my idol.

I want to tell you about the small women who worked and organized and had the children, had to go home to supper, come back to the union meeting, do the washing, the ironing and the cooking. And they weren't daunted by it; they just did it.

One such woman was Othelia who was working with another woman named Alma Settles. Othelia was working in one of the Maremount shops, AF of L had it and it was just a company union. The workers looked up to her even then. Even this rotten AF of L leadership respected her. When she had a grievance, they would settle her grievance. UAW went in to organize that shop and they went to Othelia and showed her the difference in the unions. That woman could call a meeting with just a few hours notice and you wouldn't be able to get into the hall. She was next to Miranda Smith in my estimation. She was good at organizing. She had the foresight to do things on a scale that people understood, and people would *move*, even the backward whites would move for her.

She and Alma Settles formed a team, Alma didn't have any children but Othelia had eight children. Whenever there was anything going on, she never left out her husband. She would say, "I want you to know that I'm here tonight because of my husband and I want him to stand up; I want you to see my husband." She had a good husband who helped her with the children.

These good men, we have them. These Black men who've gone through so much and are still willing to help their wives. There are some, of course, who are jealous, but then the women learn how to handle this, and still go on to do their work without wrecking the marriage.

Organizations that have been born since the second World War like the civil rights organizations and the Welfare Rights Organization, have developed Black women like Ruby Mabry. Women like Ruby Mabry who were coming along at that time didn't know about organization and how to organize. But when it became necessary to have an organization for welfare mothers, these women came up and they learned and they *did*. And this is something that is

(continued on page 8)

Recommended Books

1. *The Emancipation of Women* by V. I. Lenin, International Publishers, N.Y. Price: \$1.65.
2. *Darkwater*, by W. E. B. DuBois. The article "The Damnation of Women" is of special importance along with the rest of the articles in the book. Schocken Books, N.Y. Price: \$2.75.
3. *Unit On Apartheid*, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, Notes and Documents, "Apartheid And The Disabilities of African Women In South Africa", December, 1973, United Nations, N.Y.
4. *Women On The Job*, by Judy Edelman, New Outlook Publishers, N.Y. Price: 40¢
5. *If They Come In The Morning* by Angela Davis, Signet Books, N.Y. Price: \$1.25.

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Harold S. Rogers Editor

(continued from page 3) **Women**

the precarious conditions of Blacks — economically, socially and politically — necessitated that Black women fight hand-in-hand with the Black man for basic rights.

There is a strong need to organize Black women workers. In approaching this task however, we must acknowledge the distrust of unions among Black women workers. This has been caused by a history of weak unions, a lack of representation of Black women by the unions and a history of racial discrimination which excluded Blacks from the union membership.

The need for laws to protect Black women in the labor force is obvious. However, we must be wary of such proposals as the Equal Rights Amendment whose wording is so vague as to permit an extremely broad interpretation. It might even permit interpretations that can actually be used to the disadvantage of Black women workers especially those in service and factory positions. The ERA can be construed to mean that women would not be protected against tasks that might endanger their health. For example there would be no protection against required lifting of heavy weights (over 10 to 25 lbs.). Also a law which did not allow for any differential treatment of women might be used to rob them of any maternity benefits that they might have.

The oppression faced by Black women and their involvement in the labor force have contributed to their political awareness. As Alva Buxenbaum points out this has been consistently demonstrated by their involvement in the fight for education, child care, the rights of welfare mothers, their involvement in the civil rights movement and their opposition to the war in Vietnam. However there still exists a need to further politicize Black women workers to help them change their superexploitation in the context of the total working class movement. As Lenin pointed out, it is also necessary to demonstrate the link between their struggle and the struggle of the proletariat everywhere against private ownership of the means of production.

(continued from page 7) **Sylvia**

beautiful and different. This has been the great change. Where ever there's any kind of movement, Black women come up from the ranks like they were born knowing how to organize. And they get in there and do such a beautiful job. The other thing that I glorify is these young Black women with these college educations who are not going off like we used to do. This is a big change. You know, you used to grow up to get an education to try to get away from where you came from. But these women are coming back to where they came from. They're teaching that our college education and our knowledge belongs in the ghetto and we're gonna come back to the ghetto; in fact, we're never gonna leave it. Black women should make it their business to see that our children get a Black education. That and the fight to make the schools what they should be.

In the trade union movement, there's definitely a lot of work to be done. I don't think there's a woman on the Executive Board of the AFL-CIO. There's no Black women in the top leadership of the UAW. It's supposed to be the most progressive labor union. They certainly don't fight for women's rights in the shops like they should.

Black women have to struggle first on things that are nearest to the people; things that they need. I don't think that there is any mother who isn't interested in seeing that her child gets a decent education. And this can be struggled around. You can struggle, certainly, around day nurseries. Our people are not lazy. If a mother could find that she could go to work and make a decent salary, that she would be able to take care of her children, then she would.

Certain things hit certain people at certain times. It's hard; organizing is one of the hardest, most thankless jobs. But you keep on plugging. Nothing is ever lost. Never give up, knowing that this is a part of the struggle. Because it's planned that workers should be as tired as they can be so that all they have enough nerve for is to go home and try to get up and go back to work tomorrow. If you're dedicated, you've got to be in there plugging. And it's not easy."

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