

This is a transcribed excerpt of the original text.

Chairman Amiri Baraka assigned Comrade Amina to form a committee of women comrades to put together a paper on the "Woman Question" in preparation for the July 3-7 Central Council meeting, The Committee members were Johari (St. Louis), Laini (New York), Jaribu (Baltimore), Sharifa (Detroit), and Jalia (NewArk). The Committee met in NewArk on June 7 to discuss the outline presented by C. Amina and to suggest research materials that would lend to a whole-sided, historical analysis of the Woman Question, Black Women, and Revolution.

This paper is not meant to represent a final position but a position from which we can hold discussion and work for a revolutionary line.

Defeat Opportunism and Bourgeois Ideology!

Support Democratic Centralism! Build the Congress of African People!

Firmly Grasp Marxism-Leninism- Mao Tse Tung Thought!

Our Cry: Socialist Revolution! Liberation for the Black Nation!

Victory to All Oppressed People!

Long Live Chairman Amiri Baraka!!

This is a transcribed excerpt of the original text.

Summation of the Black Liberation Movement

What is the Black Liberation Movement? The Black Liberation Movement has objectively and historically been a movement of an enslaved and oppressed Black Nation (whose common territory is the Black Belt South) to liberate itself from the oppressor nation (controlled by the Anglo-Saxon U.S.' Monopoly Capitalist Class). Cabral defines National Liberation in this way, he said "The National Liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the Imperialist domination to which it has been subjected. The objective of national liberation is to regain this right usurped by Imperialism, that is to say, to free the process of development of the national productive forces."

As a result of the historical struggle of the Black Liberation Movement from Slavery to the Civil Rights Movement, Black people have regained and gained some democratic rights, along with that, the emergence of a small Black Bourgeoisie, a Black middle class and a large working class, a Black Proletariat. As a matter of fact, 96% of Black people in the United States are workers (wage-slave earners) that still suffer from economic exploitation and national oppression. It is based on the economic exploitation and national oppression of the 96%, with 53% of Black people still in the Black Belt South, that makes the cry: Socialist Revolution! Liberation for the Black Nation! correct in this present period, ie, the class struggle, a war of the working class which is the exploited class in alliance with oppressed nationalities against the Capitalist Class, the exploiting class, which is 1/2 of 1% of the total population, and its lackies, the lieutenant class, which is another 1%.

Where Were the Women in the Black Liberation Movement?

From the very beginning, Black Women have been a critical part of the Black Liberation Movement. Slavery hit Black women and the Black family the hardest. Black Women were used to breed a free and cheap labor force for the Capitalists. They were used to nurse the slave owners' children while their own children were taken from them and sold into slavery. Black women like Black people were without life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness. They were the property of the slave owners.

Black Women Struggle in the Anti-Slavery Movement

In the Anti-Slavery Movement Black women like Sojourner Truth (1797- 1883) traveled to countless meetings to speak out in protest of slavery and in support of women's rights. Harriet Tubman (1820-1913) led over 300 slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad. Ida B. Wells Barnett (1864-1931) waged campaigns against lynching and struggled for Civil Rights of Black people. Women's Rights Movement was closely connected with the anti-slavery movement and Black women were among the hardest fighters in the anti-slavery movement. Even though Black women spoke up in behalf of women's rights, they correctly saw the abolition of slavery as the priority.

In the Civil War

During the Civil War, Black women continued to struggle for the abolition of slavery. They labored to look after the sick and wounded, staff hospitals as well as took over jobs that had, up until then, been held by men. Many Black women joined the armies as nurses, spies, and soldiers. Women like Mary Elizabeth Bowers served as a spy for the Union Army.

Capitalism Drives Black Women, Too!

The lynchings and repression of Blacks after the Civil War and Reconstruction period included Black women. Often times women were lynched if they spoke out against their husbands being killed or their children being beaten or killed. Such was the case of Mary Turner who was lynched while 8 months pregnant because she said the lynching of her husband was “unjust”.

With the “Great Migration” to industrial northern centers, Black women saw the opportunity and need to leave the South to escape repression. “In Birmingham, due to the shortage of domestic labor, an article appeared on June 19 (in the early 1900's) in local papers stating that all women must work. The white women immediately protested and on the 21st another article appeared headed, “Negro Women Here Ordered To Work”. About the same time, the municipal employment agency issued an order stating that “All Negro women... must either go to work or to jail.”¹

“The proportion of employed Black women during this period was almost three times as large as that of white women though they were confined to a narrow range of occupations like agriculture, domestics, and personal service. They were bound to the lowest paid jobs and more than any other group of women, excluded from any other occupation.”² Even though Unions like the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.) talked about nondiscriminatory laws in relationship to Black people and women, they deliberately made union fees so high Black men, let alone Black women, were unable to pay them. In 1920 when the 19th Amendment granted 25 million women the right to vote, 3 million of them were Black and 3/4 of the Blacks were excluded from this because they lived below the Mason Dixon line and like Black men were denied this right. The use of a poll tax was one way of denying Black people the right to vote by maintainers of “White Supremacy” for profit, even though this was in direct violation of the 14th and 15th Amendments. As Capitalism displaced Black people from the South during World War I and again in World War II, Black women were a part of that displacement. Though, as we stated earlier, only about 17% of them joined the Black Industrial working force.

Black Women in Civil Rights Struggle, the Democratic Revolution

During the Civil Rights Movement and student sit-ins, the Black Liberation Movement of the 60's, Black working women and thousands of Black women students protested and fought for the democratic rights and self-determination of Black people. Women like Rosa Parks who had

¹ Herbert Aptheker, *The Negro People in the United States*. p. 239.

² Philip S. Foner, *The Policies and Practices of the American Federation of Labor 1900-1909*. p. 249

initiated the movement of the fifties. Daisy Bates in Little Rock, Arkansas, who fought in behalf of the "little Rock Nine" whose home was bombed. Gloria Richardson in Cambridge, Maryland, led the Nonviolent Action Committee, one woman to head a local civil rights protest movement. Diane Nash Bevel, chairperson of the Student Protest Group in Nashville, Tennessee and SNCC organizer. The early sixties rang with the name Fanny Lou Hamer whenever Mississippi, civil rights and struggle were mentioned. Black women were a critical part of the Black Democratic Revolution not to mention all the unnamed masses of Black women involved in local community struggles fighting back and at the work place. It was the united struggles of Black women and men that moved history forward in the Black Liberation Movement.

Urban Black Family

As Black people got more and more urbanized, Black women were faced with the question of the Black Family (that had been all but destroyed by Capitalism). The masses of Black women were faced with the question of survival, both for themselves and their children. By 1960, 53.4% of Black households were headed by Black women between the ages of 15-49. Capitalism had already separated Black men from Black women which made the Black family a question of principal concern. Both men and women in the Black Liberation Movement searched for resolutions to these critical concerns and it was the Black Liberation Movement's concern for the family that led to the question of the Black women's role in the revolution. Black Nationalists, in particular, cultural Nationalists, in an attempt to solve the question of the Black Family, incorrectly defined the women's role as a submissive one. Although that definition was never allowed to dominate in practice because Capitalism was setting fire to both Black women and Black men and both had to fight. This is particularly true among Black working class women who had to sell their labor power along with Black men and who also were a part of the Black proletariat. By 1960, 25% of Black women were a part of the Black work force.

CAP's Ideology Historically Plus Changing Position on the "Woman Question"

First, it is necessary to see that leading members of CAP came from working class community based organizations had been experienced in various phases of the Black Liberation Movement of the 60's in the streets of working class communities. We had not analyzed Capitalism. We were not in factories (which was a weakness) nor were we on campuses. Most members had either grown beyond the school age or had rejected school on the basis that it was white. We think the above things are important because it lays the material basis from which our ideas on the Woman Question come.

It had been from our work in the community that led us to see that Black women had been left in the lead of many struggles, particularly around the areas of education, housing, health and welfare. Many of these women expressed a need for male leadership, criticizing the men for not taking up their responsibility and leaving them to do everything. Not having an understanding of Capitalism and its relationship to oppression, nations, workers, and the family, we took an idealist position on the woman, relegating women to the role of education, social organization and

inspiration and defining femininity as submissiveness which turned out to be repressive when men could use that definition to justify everything from polygamy to keeping women in political ignorance. In order that we see this in its proper perspective, we must also at the same time understand the Nation of Islam's effect on the "Woman Question". The Nation called for the "Protection and Elevation" of Black Women, the control of Black women by Black men. Since historically, Black women had been separated from Black men and misused from slavery on, this rhetoric seemed correct.

For those who were involved in community struggle and rebellions of the late sixties, fighting what we thought was cultural domination of white people, the theories and rhetoric of the National of Islam became a part of our practice just as much of Kawaida's social practices were similar to the social practices of the Nation of Islam. What is also important is the historical internal struggle within CAP as to interpretation of the social practices and the Woman Question in general. This was an ongoing struggle. As stated earlier, many men within the organization found it to their advantage to interpret and use the social practices to their own interest, fostering repressive social relationships - but women, too, used many social practices to express what we now know to be their own petit bourgeois social interest and backgrounds and put more emphasis on superficial aspects, such as clothes, cutting hair, rituals, such as name ceremonies, food, and so on rather than trying to seek political clarity as the priority. We can honestly say that the women's unit in the National (Newark) consistently attempted to struggle against these elitist interpretations of the social practices and stressed politics as being the main task though we are clear that the incorrect approach to the Woman Question in the first place was at the root of all those incorrect positions.

When the question of women's liberation came up, this was rejected immediately as middle class and white. We never did see our liberation coming separate from that of Black people (and we still hold this view). Again, we did not have Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought (M-L-M) to guide our analysis so we could not see women's oppression as a part of the development of Capitalism, though we still view the women who originally raised Women's Lib in the bourgeois media like Gloria Steinem and organizations like The National Organization of Women (NOW) and the Black Feminist Movement as being bourgeois feminism and we still reject it. This time with MLM as our guide.

Black Women and the Women's Liberation Movement

Women make up over two fifths of the total work force in the U.S. 33 million women are in the labor force. Women are an active and exploited sector of U.S. Capitalism (44% of all minority workers are minority women) which means if we are to successfully wage a struggle against the system of Monopoly Capitalism the women must be organized and be a critical part of the struggle.

The Woman Question is a class question. That can only be resolved through class struggle. But Black women are not only part of the working class, they are also a part of an oppressed nation and they are women which adds up to triple oppression. Class oppression, national oppression, and oppression because of their sex. Black women's struggle is inseparable from the struggle of Black

people, just as it is inseparable from the struggle of the whole multinational working class for revolution... the overthrow of Monopoly Capitalism. The Democratic demands of women just as the democratic demands of the exploited classes must be raised and fought for. But under the system of Monopoly Capitalism these demands can only be reforms. (Capitalism is not designed to meet the needs of the masses of people nor can it sustain any reforms the people force it to make. Capitalism can only meet the needs of a few and make profit for them. Capitalism must exploit.) But to the Revolutionary, these reforms are a means to Revolution, so Black women must fight for their democratic rights and join in with women from other oppressed nationalities, and progressive and working-class white women to wage a legitimate and revolutionary struggle.

One recent diversion the Capitalist had aimed particularly at women, is the bourgeois feminist movement which correctly points to the inequality and exploitation of women within the society but does not expose the Class character of this inequality and so does not speak to the overthrow of Capitalism and the unification of men and women to struggle against those inequalities. The bourgeois feminist movement seeks "equality" for women but to have equal access to become fully a part of this exploitative system and not a revolutionary organized sector in collaboration with the whole multinational working class to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat! and so lay the conditions for "The abolition of every possibility of oppression and exploitation."

Black Women's United Front (BWUF)

"The first task of the proletariat and its advanced detachment, the Communist Party, is to engage in decisive struggle for freeing the women workers, and peasants from the influence of the bourgeoisie, for political education and the organization of women workers and peasants beneath the banner of the proletariat." -Stalin

"The second decisive task of the working class is to forge an army of workers and peasant women out of the women's labor reserve to operate shoulder to shoulder with the great army of the proletariat." -Stalin

There is no Revolutionary Communist Party in the United States. But Black Women, just as all women who are not themselves a part of the bourgeoisie, and the whole working class is now suffering under the leadership and influence of the bourgeoisie. Does this mean there can be no revolutionary work in the United States, no agitation, no propaganda, and no organization because there is no Revolutionary Communist Party? No! Black Women must be snatched, just as the entire working class must be snatched, from under the influence of the bourgeoisie and their lackies (the labor aristocrats, petit bourgeois politicians, and revisionists) with their bourgeois nationalism and bourgeois feminism. This is the kind of mass struggle that will help in building an advanced detachment, a Communist Party. It is true, Revolutionary work is, and will be, limited without a Revolutionary Party to guide it and lead in the decisive tasks. But there will be no party without Revolutionary mass work.

A Black Women's United Front is an important step in a) uniting Black working class women in a leading role in the Black Liberation Movement and in the struggle for the democratic

rights of women, b) winning over Black women intellectuals, professionals and other social strata, c) carrying on political education, d) coalition work with other groups involved in struggle aimed at the destruction of Monopoly Capitalism. Finally, B.W.U.F. is an important step in preparing Black women for the coming of a Revolutionary Multi-National Women's Front that will be “an active army in the liberation of the proletariat.”

Black Women's Struggle and the Revolutionary Movement of the Whole Working Class and All Oppressed People in the United States and the World.

The struggle for Black Liberation and the Black Women's Struggle is a struggle against Monopoly Capitalism/Imperialism because it is the economic, political and social oppression of Imperialism that causes National Oppression of Black people and other people of color. It is Imperialism that causes the oppression of Black women and all women. It is Imperialism that causes the exploitation of the whole multinational working class in the United States and throughout the world. Imperialism in its worldwide search for profit causes dependent nations, colonies, neo-colonies, and semi-colonies throughout the world and in particular in Afrika, Asia, and Latin America.

The Imperialists (the Monopoly Capitalist Class), a small group of people who own everything that produces wealth in a society, the land, the factories, the mineral resources and the people, a small group who controls all the institutions- the schools, the courts, the jails, the police, the laws, the shole government and other people's governments - while the rest of us own nothing but our ability to sell our labor, that is, we can work for them.

The only way Black people, women and all people oppressed by Imperialism (which includes the oppressed people of the world) can be liberated is by changing the exploitative social relationships of Imperialism. This can only be done through the unity of Black and other oppressed nationalities in union with women and the whole multinational working class in a Socialist Revolution led by a new multi-national Communist Party.

The Capitalist State, which is the instrument of the Imperialists, must be completely smashed and replaced with a Socialist State if we are to begin to talk about equality. Only Socialism can speak to the equal distribution of the world's wealth! democracy for working people, justice and equality for women. Because Socialism means justice and equality for the old and the young, where those who are now oppressed and exploited because of their class, race and sex under Imperialism, will rule under and it is only Socialism. This is the Dictatorship of the Proletariat - and it is only working class rule that will provide the conditions for people, nations, and countries to be liberated.

It is the objective oppressive conditions of Imperialism itself and the people's willingness to struggle that unites workers, oppressed nationalities, and women in the United States and all over the world in a fight for their survival.

Today we are faced with the dominance of the 2 world Super Powers, U.S. Imperialism and Soviet Social Imperialism whose contention and collusion attempt to either halt! or abort! the peoples revolutionary movement around the world. But as the Chinese said at their Tenth National

Congress: "We must uphold proletarian internationalism, adhere to the consistent policies of our Party, strengthen our unity with the proletariat, the oppressed people and nations of the whole world, strengthen our unity with all the countries subjected to imperialist aggressions, subversion, interference, control and bullying and form the broadest united front against imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism and in particular against the hegemonism of the two superpowers - the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. We must unite with all genuine Marxist-Leninist Parties and organizations the world over and carry the struggle against modern revisionism through to the end."

In Summary

In an attempt to approach the Woman Question in a Revolutionary way for a Revolutionary line, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the following points:

1. The question of oppression and resistance of Black women and Black people are interrelated and inseparable.
2. Black Women's willingness to participate in struggle has been directly related to their class and national oppression.
3. Historically the Women's Rights Movement was closely connected with the anti-slavery movement.
4. CAP's prior incorrect position of the Woman Question was due to not analyzing Capitalism, not having the correct understanding of its relationship to oppression, nations, workers, and the family; being influenced by the Nation of Islam.
5. Black Women's Struggle for Women's Democratic Rights is a struggle for reform under the Capitalist system. Revolutionaries must see these struggles as a means to Revolution.
6. Women's Liberation does not expose the class character of women's inequality and does not speak to the overthrow of Capitalism and therefore must be rejected on this basis.
7. BWUF is an important step in a) uniting Black working class women in a leading role in the Black Liberation Movement and in the struggle for the democratic rights of women, b) winning over Black women intellectuals, professionals, and other social strata, c) carrying on political education, d) coalition work with other groups involved in struggle aimed at the destruction of Monopoly Capitalism. Finally, BWUF is an important step in preparing Black Women for the coming of a Revolutionary Multi-National Women's Front that will be "an active army in the liberation of the Proletariat."
8. The struggle for Black Liberation and Black Women's struggles is a struggle against Monopoly Capitalism/Imperialism because it is Imperialism that causes National Oppression of Black People and the Oppression of Black Women and all women.
9. The only way Black people, women and all people oppressed by Imperialism (which includes the oppressed people of the world) can be liberated is by changing the exploitative social relationships of Imperialism. This can only be done through the unity of Black and

other oppressed nationalities in union with women and the whole multinational working class in a Socialist Revolution led by a new multinational Communist Party.

As Revolutionaries, Black Women! Comrades in Struggle, we are prepared to go against the tide with our class brothers and sisters for the liberation of oppressed nationalities, we are prepared to wage a class war in the interest of the working class, fight for revolution and die serving the people.

Our Cry: Liberation for the Black Nation! Socialist Revolution!
Victory to All Oppressed People!!

Reference Books

Aptheker, Herbert, A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States.

Aptheker, Herbert, The Negro People in the United States.

Baraka, Amiri, Black People and Imperialism.

Black Women's United Front- CAP on the Woman Question, Congress of Afrikan People.

Davis, Daniel S., Struggle to Freedom.

Davis, J.P., American Negro Reference Book.

DuBois, W.E.B., Black Reconstruction.

Foner, Philip S., The Policies and Practices of American Federation of Labor. Franklin, John Hope, From Slavery to Freedom.

Marshall, Roy, Negro and Organized Labor.

Marx, Carl, F. Engels, V.I. Lenin, Joseph Stalin, The Woman Question.