

# **Anarchism and the Continuing Struggle for Women's Freedom**

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As anarchist-communists, we oppose sexism whenever and wherever it exists, although we also realise that class position differentiates the experience of sexism. We salute all the woman freedom fighters, and the older generation of women, many our mothers, who bear the scars of the gruesome battles in which they stood firm, fighting the oppression imposed on the African native by colonial conquest.

There were hard times in the apartheid era, where black women were abused, raped and oppressed: the state did nothing to stop this, but aided it, as the state was part of the system of oppression. History shows that dispossession and systematic dehumanization for the purposes of exploitation and domination were undertaken through the uncontrolled and coercive mayhem of the South African state.

## **CAPITALISM'S GUILT**

It is now 20 years into the era of parliamentary democracy, but the oppression of women continues to haunt society. We live in capitalism, and capitalism has a major impact on the current situation. The oppression of women lets the bosses have a flexible work force, it makes it easy to hire and fire women at will. Women don't really have job security, and they are often fired when they fall pregnant. The bosses justify lower wages and job security for women, saying that men are the breadwinners.

This is one major reason that women are concentrated in low-wage and insecure jobs as domestic workers, seasonal farm workers, contract workers and in factories — all areas where the wealth of the economy is being produced, where they are exploited severely.

Working class and poor women are oppressed, not just as members of the working class, but as women. They face problems that men do not. However, their special oppression as women is in many ways due to their class position in the class system of capitalism and the state.

## **CLASS EFFECTS**

We realise through capitalism a wealthy woman can afford many things, and has full access to things like cars, credit cards and a "maid". And we know that many of the struggles to end women's oppression are dominated by middle-class and upper-class women. But since upper class women have an investment in capitalism and the state, they cannot fight against the deep causes of women's oppression in the system. They are part of the system.

## **HOME-GROWN OPPRESSION**

Building a strong working class movement requires tackling the stumbling blocks working class and poor women face in society to date. When we men exercise a degree of power over women, it is unethical, immoral and insensitive — yet this home-grown oppression is manifested so widely in people's lives that it's seen as normal.

But who benefits from this behaviour? It is the ruling class. All these hierarchies support one other, and collectively serve the same purposes: keeping the working class exploited, divided and controlled, to the benefit of the big business-state alliance.

The long history of women's oppression continues to haunt modern day society. While women are expected to work as hard, even harder than men, they earn less, and have less security, as well as many household tasks. Yet in our movements we do not have enough women in leadership, some even asking if women are competent for these positions. And because women working class and poor face so many burdens, it makes a difficult situations, like limiting their participation within their unions and movements, and this in return makes them vulnerable and silenced from voicing our some of their specific grievances.

## **RIP UP THE TREE OF PAIN**

Thus we as anarchist-collectivist oppose sexism wherever it exists. But only a powerful, united working class movement can rip up the tree of women's oppression, growing in the soil of capitalism. But such a movement can only be built by fighting against attitudes and systems that oppress women.

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