

POOR BLACK WOMEN

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BIRTH CONTROL PILLS AND BLACK CHILDREN

a statement by the Black Unity Party (Peekskill, N.Y.)

A RESPONSE

by black sisters

POOR BLACK WOMEN

by Patricia Robinson

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Birth Control Pills and Black Children

The Brothers are calling on the Sisters to not take the pill. It is this system's method of exterminating Black people here and abroad. To take the pill means that we are contributing to our own GENOCIDE.

However, in not taking the pill, we must have a new sense of value. When we produce children, we are aiding the REVOLUTION in the form of NATION building. Our children must have pride in their history, in their heritage, in their beauty. Our children must not be brainwashed as we were.

PROCREATION is beautiful, especially if we are devoted to the Revolution which means that our value system be altered to include the Revolution as the responsibility. A good deal of the Supremacist (White) efforts to sterilize the world's (Non-whites) out of existence is turning toward the black people of America. New trends in Race Control have led the architects of GENOCIDE to believe that Sterilization projects aimed at the black man in the United States can cure American internal troubles.

Under the cover of an alleged campaign to 'alleviate poverty', white supremacist Americans and their dupes are pushing an all-out drive to put rigid birth control measures into every black home. No such drive exists within the White American world. In some cities, Peekskill, Harlem, Mississippi and Alabama, welfare boards are doing their best to force black women receiving aid to submit to Sterilization. This disguised attack on black future generations is rapidly picking up popularity among determined genocidal engineers. This country is prepared to exterminate people by the pill or by the bomb; therefore, we must draw strength from ourselves.

You see why there is a Family Planning Office in the Black Community of Peekskill.

The Sisters Reply

Here is the sisters' reply:

September 11, 1968

Dear Brothers:

Poor black sisters decide for themselves whether to have a baby or not to have a baby. If we take the pills or practise birth control in other ways, it's because of poor black men.

Now here's how it is. Poor black men won't support their families, won't stick by their women -- all they think about is the street, dope and liquor, women, a piece of ass, and their cars. That's all that counts. Poor black women would be fools to sit up in the house with a whole lot of children and eventually go crazy, sick, heartbroken, no place to go, no sign of affection -- nothing. Middle class white men have always done this to their women -- only more sophisticated like.

So when whitey put out the pill and poor black sisters spread the word, we saw how simple it was not to be a fool for men any more (politically we would say men could no longer exploit us sexually or for money and leave the babies with us to bring up). That was the first step in our waking up!

Black women have always been told by black men that we were black, ugly, evil, birches and whores -- in other words, we were the real niggers in this society -- oppressed by whites, male and female, and the black man, too.

Now a lot of the black brothers are into a new bag. Black women are being asked by militant black brothers not to practise birth control because it is a form of whitey committing genocide on black people. Well, true enough, but it takes two to practise genocide and black women are able to decide for themselves, just like poor people all over the world, whether they will submit to genocide. For us, birth control is freedom to fight genocide of black women and children.

Like the Vietnamese have decided to fight genocide, the South American poor are beginning to fight back, and the African poor will fight back, too. Poor black women in the U.S. have to fight back out of our own experience of oppression. Having too many babies stops us from supporting our children, teaching them the truth or stopping the brainwashing as you say, and fighting black men who still want to use and exploit us.

But we don't think you are going to understand us because you are a bunch of little middle class people and we are poor black women. The middle class never understands the poor because they always need to use them as you want to use poor black women's children to gain power for yourself. You'll run the black community with your kind of black power -- you on top!

Patricia Haden - welfare recipient
Sue Rudolph - housewife
Joyce Hoyt - domestic

Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

Rita Van Lew - welfare recipient
Catherine Hoyt - grandmother
Patricia Robinson - housewife and psychotherapist

Poor Black Women

by Patricia Robinson

It is time to speak to the whole question of the position of poor black women in this society and in this historical period of revolution and counterrevolution. We have the foregoing analysis of their own perspective and it offers all of us some very concrete points.

First, that the class hierarchy as seen from the poor black woman's position is one of white male in power, followed by the white female, then the black male and lastly the black female.

Historically, the myth in the black world is that there are only two free people in the United States, the white man and the black woman. The myth was established by the black man in the long period of his frustration when he longed to be free to have the material and social advantages of his oppressor, the white man. On examination of the myth, this so-called freedom was based on the sexual prerogatives taken by the white man on the black female. It was fantasied by the black man that she enjoyed it.

The black woman was needed and valued by the white female as a domestic. The black female diluted much of the actual oppression of the white female by the white male. With the help of the black woman, the white woman had free time from mother and housewife responsibilities and could escape her domestic prison overseered by the white male.

The poor black woman still occupies the position of a domestic in this society, rising no higher than public welfare, when the frustrated male deserts her and the children. (Public welfare was instituted primarily for poor whites during the depression of the thirties to stave off their rising revolutionary violence. It was considered as a temporary stop-gap only.)

The poor black male deserted the poor black female and fled to the cities where he made his living by his wits -- hustling. The black male did not question the kind of society he lived in other than on the basis of racism: 'The white man won't let me up 'cause I'm black!' Other rationalizations included blaming the black woman, which has been a much described phenomenon. The black man wanted to take the master's place and all that went with it.

Simultaneously, the poor black woman did not question the social and economic system. She saw her main problem as described in the accompanying article -- social, economic and psychological oppression by the black man. But awareness in this case has moved to a second phase and exposes an important fact in the whole process of oppression. It takes two to oppress, a proper dialectical perspective to examine at this point in our movement.

An examination of the process of oppression in any or all of its forms shows simply that at least two parties are involved. The need for the white man, particularly, to oppress others reveals his own anxiety and inadequacy about his own maleness and humanity. Many black male writers have eloquently analyzed this social and psychological fact. Generally a feeling of inadequacy can be traced to all those who desperately need power and authority over others throughout history.

In other words, one's concept of oneself becomes based on one's class or power position in a hierarchy. Any endangering of this power position brings on a state of madness and irrationality within the individual which exposes the basic fear and insecurity beneath -- politically speaking, the imperialists are paper tigers.

But the oppressor must have the cooperation of the oppressed, of those he must feel better than. The oppressed and the damned are placed in an inferior position by force of arms, physical strength, and later, by threats of such force. But the long-time maintenance of power over others is secured by psychological manipulation and seduction. The oppressed must begin to believe in the divine right and position of kings, the inherent right of an elite to rule, the supremacy of a class or an ethnic group, the power of such condensed wealth as money and private property to give to its owners high social status. So a gigantic and complex myth has been woven by those who have power in this society of the inevitability of classes and the superiority and inferiority of certain groups. The oppressed begin to believe in their own inferiority and are left in their lifetime with two general choices: to identify with the oppressor (imitate him) or to rebel against him. Rebellion does not take place as long as the oppressed

are certain of their inferiority and the innate superiority of the powerful, in essence a neurotic illusion. The oppressed appear to be in love with their chains.

In a capitalist society, all power to rule is imagined in male symbols and, in fact, all power in a capitalist society is in male hands. Capitalism is a male supremacist society. Western religious gods are all male. The city, basis of 'civilization', is male as opposed to the country which is female. The city is a revolt against earlier female principles of nature and man's dependence on them. All domestic and international political and economic decisions are made by men and enforced by males and their symbolic extension - guns. Women have become the largest oppressed group in a dominant, male, aggressive, capitalistic culture. The next largest oppressed group is the product of their wombs, the children, who are ever pressed into service and labor for the maintenance of a male-dominated class society.

If it is granted that it takes two to oppress, those who neurotically need to oppress and those who neurotically need to be oppressed, then what happens when the female in a capitalist society awakens to the reality? She can either identify with the male and opportunistically imitate him, appearing to share his power and giving him the surplus product of her body, the child, to use and exploit. Or she can rebel and remove the children from exploitative and oppressive male authority.

Rebellion by poor black women, the bottom of a class hierarchy heretofore not discussed, places the question of what kind of society will the poor black woman demand and struggle for. Already she demands the right to have birth control, like middle class black and white women. She is aware that it takes two to oppress and that she and other poor people no longer are submitting to oppression, in this case genocide. She allies herself with the have-nots in the wider world and their revolutionary struggles. She has been forced by historical conditions to withdraw the children from male dominance and to educate and support them herself. In this very process, male authority and exploitation are seriously weakened. Further, she realizes that the children will be used as all poor children have been used through history -- as poorly paid mercenaries fighting to keep or put an elite group in power. Through these steps in the accompanying analytic article, she has begun to question aggressive male domination and the class society which enforces it, capitalism. This question, in time, will be posed to the entire black movement in this country.

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