

Racism and sexism are intertwined, and are inseparable.

They spring from the same historical, economic and psychological roots. They serve the same purpose, which is exploitive.

The most racist societies are also the most sexist. The examples that spring to mind are firstly, Nazi Germany, where women's place was defined by the three 'K's' - kitchen, church, children. Then there were the southern states of America during the slave era, a totally racist society where in addition, black women suffered sexist exploitation of a direct kind from the white men - part of the price of conquest. While the white woman's 'purity' had to be preserved at all costs, leading to the nightmares of lynching. Such a society revealed all the most ~~max~~ potent features of racism: the macho men, excessive drinking and masculinity, and of sexism, the impotent and useless female whose sole purpose in the society is ornamentation and reproduction.

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But the strongest contemporary example that we have is South Africa.

Take the question of sport: the most favoured game is the violent one of rugby, and physical prowess is most deeply admired (This is why, incidentally, the sport boycott against South Africa has been so effective -o it cuts to the roots of what is most important to them) And when we consider sexism, we find the degraded position of black women, which I dealt with at our panel yesterday, so will not develop here, plus the uselessness of most white women, who go in for a great deal of personal adornment and live their lives through ambitions projected onto their children.

In addition there is a tremendous potency in sexual matters. So strong are feelings on this question that there are actually two laws in South Africa, the Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act, to prohibit any sexual relations, in or out of marriage, across the colour lines. Although only a tiny section of the population has ever been involved in inter-racial sexual relations ~~is~~ (and this is more a question of class and education than anything else) yet this has become a focal-point not only for these laws, but the leading writers of South Africa, such as Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer, Peter Abrahams and Andre Brink have all made the story of a relationship across the colour bars as the theme of a major novel. Perhaps this is because in a way it exemplifies what both racism and sexism are all about. (And it is interesting to note that the men responsible for the colourbar laws regarding sex, are the very ones to cross the borders into Swaziland where in the casinos and fun palaces they can enjoy the pleasures of black prostitutes.)

WHY ARE SOME SOCIETIES SO DEEPLY RACIST? The causes may be found in society, but are not simply attributable to that society, they have a greater universality.

Fromm says 'Only if the idea answers powerful psychological needs of certain social groups will it become a potent force in history.' In South Africa this need is evident in the authoritarian character of the ruling white establishment, in their morals and in their religion. The ruling church, the Dutch Reformed Church, is based on strict Calvinist principles, on the ideas of male authority, sin, the literal interpretation of the bible and strict adherence to a reactionary mode of behaviour. This is the authoritarian personality who in turn is very repressed, having sublimated all his own potent needs. Because both women and people of a different race are groups that are immediately identifiable by appearance, they become the repositories for the psychological hang-ups and inadequacies of this type.

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Of course 'explanations' are given for the racist/sexist attitudes. But whatever those explanations are, they are the OUTCOME of racist and sexist exploitation, the result of it, and not its cause. To give examples: the backwardness of blacks in South Africa is the outcome of apartheid laws that deny opportunities for education and skilled work, BECAUSE it suits the structures of an exploitive society in terms of profitability. But then, in turn, the 'backwardness' is given as the reason for the denial of human rights - blacks are not 'educated' enough to be given the vote.

In the same way FEMALE characteristics of passiveness, supportiveness, ~~ix~~ lack of leadership, are used as reasons for not allowing women full achievement. But these very characteristics are the outcome of the culture, education and economic conditions of their society.

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WOMEN IN THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE=. ~~It is interesting that in our African National Congress movement, as a white woman I have encountered more sexism than racism.~~ The ANC and those against apartheid consciously and positively oppose racism because they understand it so well. But in many ways they are less aware of sexism. I found this out when I expressed what could be termed feminist views. I realised that my views would prove threatening to the men, and this was evidenced by the violence of their reactions. But I had failed to realise that women are also threatened. The responsibilities of decision-making are hard. It is easier to submerge oneself. You may renounce power, strength and pride, but then you gain security against the torture of doubt. Women who ~~xxx~~ react strongly against women's movements are not only saving themselves from having to make political decisions, they are also saving themselves from doubt about the meaning of life, of identity, questions answered by submerging themselves in a greater whole. These are psychological questions, but should not be forgotten when we are concentrating on practical steps that can be taken. *Those like myself who feel strongly about the position of women have 2 groups of adversaries: our enemies and our friends.* P.631

It is never the right time to raise such questions. The American poet John Whittier chided feminists in the anti-slave movement for raising the question of women's rights, and thereby, in his opinion, abandoning the cause of the slave for what he termed a 'selfish crusade against some paltry grievance of your own.' (Paltry!)

But Samora Machel, leader of the people of Mozambique, has ^{P.24-25} spoken out very clearly on this question about 'the right time.' ~~!We cannot limit the revolutionary process to certain people while neglecting others, because this would halt the revolution, destroy it. The roots of an evil which we underestimate and decide to pull out at a later date become the roots of a cancer which can destroy us, invading the whole body, before we get to that 'later date'.~~

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He went on to state that the mechanism of women's alienation is identical to the mechanism of the alienation of the colonised man in colonial society, or of the worker in capitalist society. The Colonised man is called a second class human being by virtue of his skin. The woman is called an inferior human being by virtue of her sex. The process of alienation reaches its peak when the exploited person, reduced to total passivity, is no longer capable of imagining that the possibility of liberation exists and in turn becomes a tool for the propagation of the ideology of passivity and resignation. It must be recognised that the centuries-old subjugation of women has to a great extent reduced them to a passive state, which prevents them from even understanding their condition.

But, he states definitely, there can be no revolution without the liberation of the women. The struggle for women's emancipation, in turn, cannot succeed without the victory of the revolution.

The mental conditioning subtly persuades the oppressed group internally to accept its own oppression and thus pre-empt a revolution. Large groups, even whole countries, have been made to feel inferior, to tacitly cooperate with the ruling power.

Hence, of course, the potency of the idea of black consciousness which is an assertion of equality, even superiority.

But basis of contradictions involved in w/m's struggles lies in basis of society: Machel 28.29 - contradiction not between women & men

I want to speak for a minute on the question of war and racial and sexual freedom. Today's threat of war adds to the feelings of powerlessness and impotency. The vastness of cities, the size of industry, the international nature of corporations, the military power of governments, and overriding all this, the threat not simply of an armed struggle but of the actual destruction of life on earth. Every woman asks herself, what do my children face?

Let us put the question of apartheid into a world context. People recognise it is evil, but fail to understand it is not simply a moral question of bad or oppressive laws. South Africa is a country of extreme exploitation and therefore has an aggressive stance towards the world. It is an imperial country, in modern terms, which means it exploits the labour resources of neighbouring African countries and ties them to its own economy. It interferes thus in the economies of these countries. In the case of Namibia, over which it has illegally taken control, it is literally stripping the country of all its assets before allowing it any form of independence. Its imperial action goes as far as constant military incursions into neighbouring Angola with the purpose of overthrowing the peoples' government and setting up an apartheid puppet ally in its place.

Consider the coin in reverse: A South Africa freed from its racist and exploitive nature holds the key to the development of Africa as a whole and particularly to Southern and Central Africa. Just as today it plays a key role in suppressing struggles to end racism and imperialist exploitation, it could also be the key to building up the new nations. It is the one truly developed country of Africa, with the resources, the technical abilities, the experience and the wealth needed to set the poor countries on their feet.

I haven't time to develop these themes properly, but ask you to consider the real dangers of racist/sexist South Africa in terms of the world - it is not just a national question. South Africa, we believe, through assistance from West Germany and Israel, possesses the atom bomb, certainly the means and expertise to have such power. The pressures that have operated in Europe and America and Asia against the use of atomic weapons don't weigh with the South African white government. Their racial attitudes, apart from anything else, would make them conscienceless and ruthless in the exercise of such power over black nations.

South Africa holds up a mirror to all humanity. In it we see ourselves with every ugly feature enlarged and distorted, the human race at its most base.

We need to smash that image, to restore ourselves, and that requires us to end institutionalised racism, to fight against sexism, to end separateness in all ways. You cannot be separate and equal.

Thus the destruction of apartheid ^{that} embodies the most extreme form of these evils is therefore a precondition to the achievement of a world without power struggles and wars, a world of peace and justice, for which we women so deeply long and strive.

- (1) Women in sexist Society (Signet)
- (2) Mozambique: Song + seeds of Revolution, Machel

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