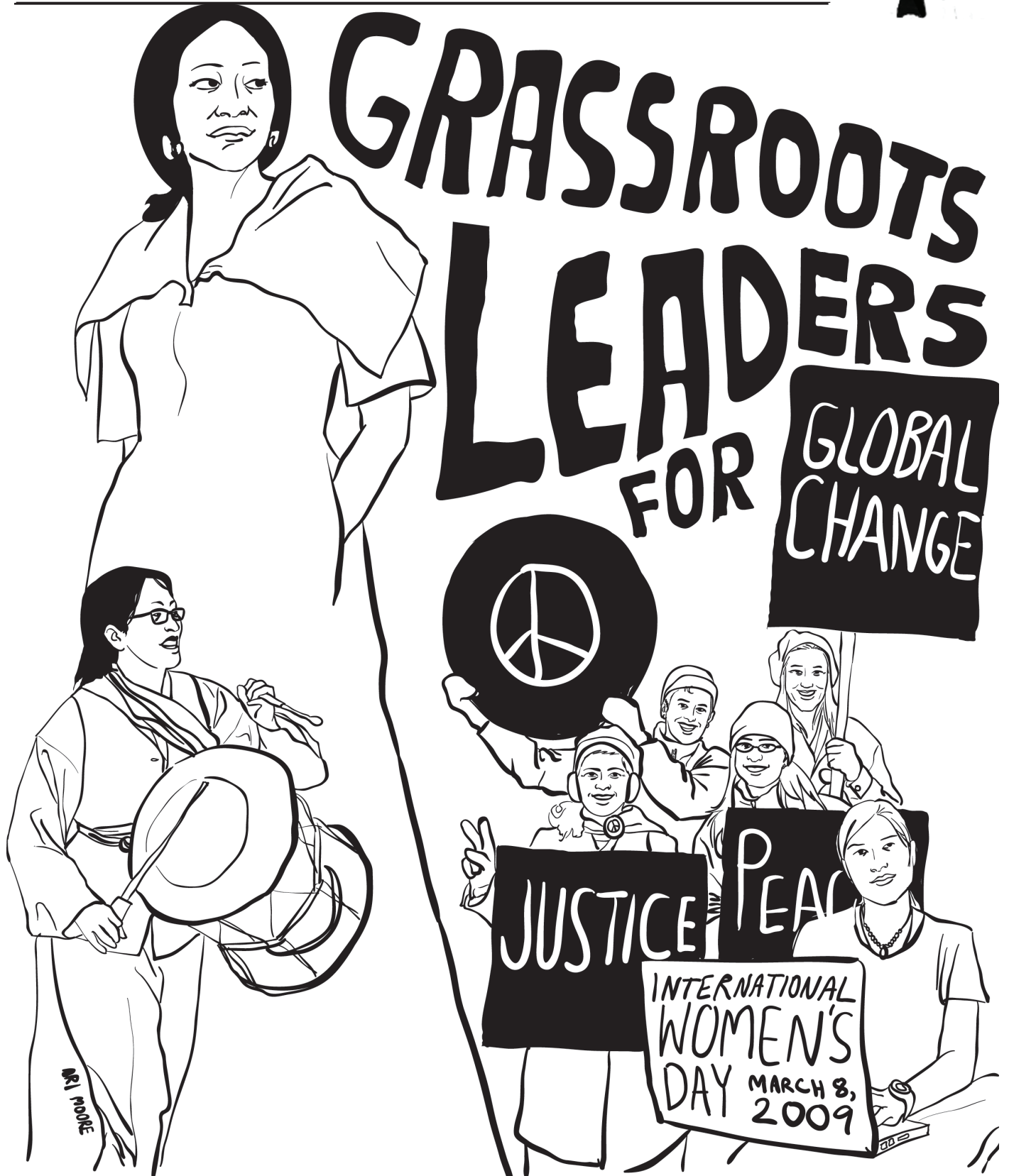


Socialist Women



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Socialist Women

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International Women's Day, 2009

The word "radical" is derived from
the Latin word "radix" meaning
"root". Those of us who identify as
radicals work to get at the root of
social problems and to "uproot" those
systems that are perpetuating them:
to organize as agents of change.

For socialist feminists,
International Women's Day clearly
embodies radicalism and demands
change. At the same time, it brings
a diametrically opposite mean-
ing to it. International Women's
Day also stands for continuity.

In the first decade of the 20th
Century, while the women of the
Socialist Party and the women of
the Second International were envi-
sioning international socialist femi-
nist solidarity, feminists in Japan
were initiating a literary move-
ment toward the same ends: the
liberation of women and the cre-
ation of a different kind of society.

In 1911, one year after the found-
ing of International Women's Day,
Yosano Akkiko wrote a poem that has
inspired radical women ever since:

*The mountain moving day is coming
I say so, yet others doubt.
Only a while the mountain sleeps.
In the past
All mountains moved in fire
Yet you may not believe it.
Oh man this alone believe,
All sleeping women
Now will awake and move.
All sleeping women
Now will awake and move.*

To thoroughly uproot the sys-
tems of capitalism and patriar-
chy, we must acknowledge and
honor those who have gone before
us. We need to appreciate the
continuity between their pas-
sion and persistence and ours.

We hope that as you read this
issue of *Socialist Women*, you will
feel like the leaders you are—
Like mountains moving in fire.

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Grassroots Leaders: In Their Own Words



Photo by James White

Women dancers and other protesters at a pro-immigrant rally. National City, CA, September 2006.

Indigenous Rights, Minority Rights

From Dotti Chamblin, member of the Makah Grandmothers' March from Neah Bay, Washington, to Portland, Oregon, October 2008, to raise awareness of Native American treaty rights

"Who knows if we'll ever get justice. But we will be out there, making the effort. We want our children to know that no matter how old or crippled you get, you are not powerless. We're doing this so they will remember: This is what their grandmothers did." (reported by Diane De La Paz, Peninsula Daily News, October 2, 2008)

From Meredith Parker, Makah tribal member, Neah Bay, Washington, describing her visit with two other Makah women to southwestern China in November 2008

"China has 56 recognized peoples, all but one of them, the Han Chinese, minorities. Just meeting with folks on the other side of the Pacific with the same sorts of questions, concerns and challenges that we as American Indian people have faced in the United States, it changes your perspective on things." (reported by Jim Casey, Peninsula Daily News, November 16, 2008)

Students' Rights

From the Radical Student Union of the New School (New York City), during the occupation on December 19, 2008: excerpt from the RSU's Points of Unity

"Our goal is to build a movement for social revolution. By social revolution, we mean a fundamental transformation in the defining values and

institutions of the various spheres of social life (kinship, community, economy, polity, international relations).

"We live in a patriarchal society. By patriarchy, we mean a system of male supremacy encompassing the whole set of unequal man-woman relationships that are found in the family, the workplace, the state, and the dominant religious and cultural institutions of all contemporary societies.

Human Rights

From the Latin and Caribbean Women's Health Network: Declaration on the Defense of Women's Rights in Nicaragua, October 2008 (excerpt)

"The attacks promoted by the Nicaraguan government under Daniel Ortega against the defenders of women's human rights in this country have not been limited to legal proceedings against them, but are being expressed in ongoing persecution and direct threats against their lives and the lives of their families. The situation is totally unacceptable and thoroughly reproachable and merits the most profound condemnation by the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network.

"In light of this situation, we declare our solidarity especially with our colleagues Ana Maria Pizarro, Sophia Montenegro, Patricia Orozco, Juanita Jimenez, Lorna Norori, Luisa Molina Arguello, Martha Maria Blandon, Martha Mungula, Mayra Sirias, Violeta Delgado and Yamileth Mejia. These outstanding women have a longstanding and steadfast commitment to improving women's living conditions and health in Nicaragua, especially among the poorest and most vulnerable. Nonetheless, because of their work, these activists are the object of the abovementioned attacks. National, regional and international attention must be drawn to their plight."

"We reject patriarchy and seek to build feminist kinship relations to free people from oppressive and narrowly defined roles that have been socially imposed, to abolish the sexual division of labor, and to end the sexist and heterosexist demarcation of individuals according to gender and sexuality. Society must be respectful of an individual's nature,

See Students' Rights on page 4

Student's Rights

continued from page 3

inclinations, and choices and all people must be provided with the means to pursue the lives they want regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, or age.

"A feminist society would provide the means for the flourishing of traditional couples, single parents, lesbian and gay parents; communal parenting; and multiple parenting arrangements.

"The task of raising children must be elevated in status, highly personalized interaction between children

and adults should be encouraged, and responsibilities for those interactions must be distributed equitably throughout society without segregating tasks by gender.

"Central to the creation of a feminist society is reproductive freedom—the freedom to have children without fear of sterilization or economic deprivation, and the freedom not to have children through unhindered access to birth control and abortion."

Immigrant Rights

From Maria Cristina Guevarra, Secretary General of the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines, speaking out on forced migration on October 27, 2008, International Youth Action Day

"[The example of the Philippines, one of the world's top remittance-reliant countries, if not the most] is reflecting the economy of underdevelopment, always on the verge of collapsing and only buoyed by Filipino overseas workers' dollar remittances... Instead of addressing the roots of poverty, decades-old landlessness and agricultural unrest, indebted-

See Immigrant Rights on page 5

Abortion Rights

From Stephanie Cholensky, Socialist Party USA, on action by the Bush administration to allow health workers to refuse to provide abortion or family planning services

"The Bush administration's so-called 'conscience' rule, allowing health workers to opt out of providing abortion and family planning services is yet another example of the propensity of both Democrats and Republicans to jeopardize the health care of the individual by placing it in the hands of bureaucrats and organized religion. Although mainly directed at family planning choices that are not abstinence-only, including contraception and abortion, the vagueness of this rule has the potential to eliminate any and all health care services that a provider receiving federal funds find religiously objectionable. This is much like the conscience clause in the Global AIDS act allowing organizations to deny treatment to HIV-infected individuals whose lifestyle they consider immoral. Though patients denied treatment would be able to seek care at another facility, there is no stipulation that the patient be made aware that other options exist. This ruling blatantly targets the young and poor, who are more likely to receive health services at

See Abortion Rights on page 14



Photo by James White

Women at a pro-immigrant rally being held back by police in riot gear. National City, CA, September 2006

Immigrant Rights

continued from page 4

ness, phenomenal unemployment and injustice in the home countries, the imperialist and neo-colonial governments force their people to migrate despite harsh working conditions, low salaries and human rights trampled upon." (reported in the World Student Christian Federation News, November 11, 2008)

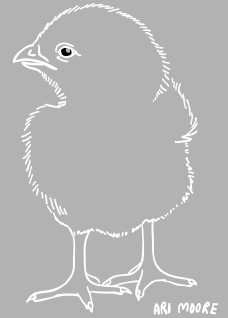
From Lois Danks, coordinator of the North Olympic Peninsula (Washington) Stop the Checkpoints Committee, on resistance to Border Patrol interior highway checkpoints

"[in response to escalating actions by the Border Patrol on the Olympic Peninsula] Port Angeles Radical Women called a meeting in the town library. People came from all over the peninsula and beyond to form Stop the Checkpoints Committee, based on four issues: defend civil liberties; no racial profiling, raids, and detentions; defend immigrant workers and families; no police state on the Olympic Peninsula. Within two weeks, the committee kicked off its campaign with a rally and march of nearly 200 people on September 20. Some had never marched before and some were seasoned activists with groups including the Green Party, Socialist Party, and Democratic Party.

"Rally participants were clearly united on the goal of stopping the checkpoints, and loudly cheered those who spoke at the open microphone. The mutual support among the marchers and passing honkers gave everyone strength. It showed that working people from different political organizations, towns, and backgrounds can unite and be heard.

"No matter who you are or where you are—big city or rural town—speak out! You will find others who agree and together you can take action." (excerpt from a report by Lois Danks that appeared in the January, 2009 issue of Freedom Socialist; to contact the Stop the Checkpoints Committee, write to info@stophcheckpoints.com)

MIGHT DOES NOT MAKE RIGHT



Socialist Party Statement of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY strives to establish a radical democracy that places people's lives under their own control - a non-racist, classless, feminist socialist society... where working people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically-controlled public agencies; where full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work; where workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions; and where the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few. We believe socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future - to a real radical democracy from below. The Socialist Party fights for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. We support militant working class struggles and electoral action, independent of the capitalist controlled two-party system, to present socialist alternatives. We strive for democratic revolutions - radical and fundamental changes in the structure and quality of economic, political, and personal relations - to abolish the power now exercised by the few who control great wealth and the government. The Socialist Party is a democratic, multi-tendency organization, with structure and practices visible and accessible to all members. Join us today.

Workers' Rights

From "Mexican Labor News and Analysis", a UE online publication, December, 2008: report on the teachers' opposition movement

"Mexican teachers, members of the opposition National Coordinating Committee (la CNTE) of the Mexican Teachers Union (el SNTE) have for months been engaged in strikes, marches and other protests against the Alliance for Quality Education (ACE), a reform program adopted by the government and the union. In Guerrero and Michoacan, for example, they have taken blocked highways or taken over toll stations. The protests in several states have been large, militant and in some cases have led to violent repression by the authorities.

"Now, for the first time, the teacher reform movement is working on its own alternative to the ACE program. For decades la CNTE has fought principally for two objectives, local control of the unions and higher wages for teachers. The development of a vision and plan for educational reform will represent an important step for the movement.

"Representatives of la CNTE from the Distrito Federal, Guerrero, Michoacan, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Queretaro, and the Valley of Mexico are currently working to draft the document. The draft reportedly calls for the integral and well-rounded development of all students, but also the inculcation of values of social solidarity. It also calls for continuing the normal schools, some of which the government has threatened to close, with expanding democracy in education, using the public media, and raising teacher pay and funding for schools.

"If la CNTE succeeds in producing an educational reform document that can inspire teachers, parents, students and the public, it will represent a significant step in creating an alternative to the bureaucratic and commercial vision of the government and the union leadership. It will be awaited with great anticipation."



From a painting by Tom Keough

From Emilia Dorseau and Anabel Garita, among the 135 workers at the Stella D'Oro Biscuit Factory, Bronx, New York, on strike since August 13, 2008, in response to management's plan to slash wages by as much as 25%, impose crushing premiums on health insurance, eliminate holiday, vacation and sick days, and eliminate extra pay for working on Saturdays

"According to Emilia Dorseau, a Stella D'Oro employee for 18 years, many of her coworkers are single parents. 'They need the money for children around the holidays,' she said. 'You cannot tell children otherwise. If they want something you have to provide for them. The unemployment money we get now is not enough to pay bills and to make children happy.'" (reported by Micah Landau, NYC Indymedia, December, 2008)

"Another striker, Anabel Garita, said she usually worked on the packing table, grabbing cookies as they passed and packing them in boxes. She was making \$18 an hour, but she said the company wanted to cut her wages. 'I work the night shift, so I can go to school,' she said, adding that the company's new rules would

make it impossible for her to study for her G.E.D." (reported by Marc Santora, New York Times, December 28, 2008)

From Silvia Mazon, one of the workers occupying the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago, December 2008

"They want the poor person to stay down. We're here and we're not going anywhere until we get what's fair and what's ours. They thought they could get rid of us easily, but if we have to be here for Christmas, it doesn't matter." (reported by Monica Davey, New York Times, December 7, 2008)

From Leah Fried, union organizer for Local 1110 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, representing the Republic workers

"Here the banks like Bank of America get a bailout, but workers cannot be paid? The taxpayers would like to see the bailout go toward saving jobs, not saving C.E.O.'s." (reported by Monica Davey, New York Times, December 7, 2008)

Notes on Leadership, 1975

The following are two statements on leadership from the period in the 1960's and 1970's known as the Second Wave of feminism. Through them, we can feel the vibrancy of the leadership debate and the seriousness of the movement at that time, as well as appreciate the contemporary relevance of the issues they raise: concepts of leadership; coexistence of democracy, accountability, and action within our groups and organizations; leadership and gender; the ambivalence of women towards leadership; and leadership relating to program.

The first is an excerpt from a discussion paper in which the Lexington (Kentucky) Socialist Feminists put forward a "situational leadership" model after taking issue with both a traditional conception of leadership and the New Left "radical democracy" pattern of organization.

The second is an excerpt from a critique of the Lexington paper by the long-time radical activist and trade union organizer, Clara Fraser (1923-1998), one of the founders of Radical Women, a socialist feminist organization that continues to organize according to the democratic centralist leadership model Fraser puts forward here and in other writings.

Our thanks to Radical Women for providing us with these articles. We look forward to hearing your comments on them. The full texts are available upon request.

From the Lexington Socialist Feminists

We see a traditional conception of leadership, prevalent in American culture, occurring within the context of the goals of an organization. These goals traditionally are static and are not debatable. In this situation, the would-be leader must study the "old masters" in order to come up with an understanding of the fundamen-

tal principles. Then, these principles, fundamental and unchanging, are mechanically applied to situations as they arise. In the absence of substantive debates about purpose and/or direction, the major focus of activity inevitably becomes the instrumental administering of the organization..

This administering, then, is done within the parameters of hierarchical patterns of social relationships. These patterns reflect an underlying theory of dominance. Within this organizational situation one can rise in the hierarchy to become a "leader" if one subscribes to the non-debatable goals and possesses certain skills of persuasion.

New left organizations tried to implement a "radical democracy" pattern where always "the people decide." Collective participation was paramount. There was a thorough questioning and re-questioning of guiding political principles. Everything was open for debate and re-evaluation.

A common result of this new left pattern was a political void. In these instances there was necessarily an over-emphasis on administering short-range projects. Inevitably, the old style leadership patterns re-emerged. These organizations experienced/experience great difficulty in establishing stability and long range commitment or direction. People were not encouraged to articulate a position of ideological direction. In fact, the opposite often happened; people who tried to articulate such positions were viewed with alarm and suspicion. Their individual motivations were questioned. Consequently, the ideology of the new left reflected the dominance of its originators with a token analysis of third world peoples, women and traditional working class people.

The question that is distilled from this experience: Is a form of collective organization viable; and, what

does it imply about the notion of leadership and direction? The point of departure we will use in addressing this question is our experience in women's organizations.

In the beginning, it is important to acknowledge the reasons for the formation of women's organizations. In mixed organizations, women's experience, despite the rhetoric of those organizations, was still one of being pushed into an auxiliary role. Often women were encouraged to participate in these organizations; however, our effectiveness was judged by our abilities in rational persuasion, our ability to talk in abstractions and to debate these abstractions endlessly. Our leadership was constantly rated in terms of our skills or know-how—the techniques of getting things done.

Recognizing a need to explore questions of common experience and development, women felt it necessary to be together, organizationally, where individualistic barriers of defensiveness could be broken down. Through our analysis of experience in mixed organizations and our analysis of the culture, in general, we began formulating an ideology that at its center rejected hierarchical patterns of relationships. We also emphasized development of consciousness of our social position rather than viewing other people or ourselves in terms of objectified roles. And we viewed traditional women's work as humanly meaningful despite its present distortions and relegation to a position of subservience to paid labor.

Because of this analysis, we think the women's movement has an important leadership role to play in regard to left politics. Because of our experience of being dominated in our innermost personal lives, the principle of rejecting dominating patterns of relationships both in the culture as a whole and in left orga-

See Leadership on page 10

Response from Clara Fraser

“Notes on Leadership,” in my opinion, raises the right issues and places them squarely in the proper context — the historical one. So I find myself in agreement with the approach, and with many of the particular formulations. However, I am not exactly sure just what the conclusions are (i.e., the solutions offered) and there seems to be — again, I am not sure! — a lingering aroma of what I call New Left Organizational Anarchism, which I do disagree with. Perhaps your intent was to be tentative and suggestive, rather than definitive, in order to better stimulate discussion; in any case, let me indicate the shape of my reflexes to what I think you are proposing.

You describe concepts of leadership as polarized between traditional bourgeois structures, based on hierarchical power, and the relatively recent New Left rejection of all organizational forms in favor of collective decision-making and constant re-examination of policy. You imply that both poles are deficient, and that a new leadership model must be constructed.

A deeper thrust into political history would soon reveal that another model does exist, one that has proven its feasibility. I refer to the Leninist-Bolshevik practice of democratic centralism, which, in its undefiled (by Stalinism) form, is a marvelously flexible and practical process. In its real form, utilized honestly to serve revolutionary politics, it is never static, mechanical, rigid or mysticized. Instead, it is dynamic, sensitive, adaptive, and clearly designated as a tool, a means, a method for achieving goals and serving programs, and, moreover, a method which demands total participation and involvement in decision-making as well as operations.

Democratic centralism simply means that decisions are made by the total body, and that after decisions are made, the body acts in a

centralized, united, uniform manner to achieve the agreed-upon goal. Disputes are suspended while the action is underway; afterwards, a free-wheeling and deep-going post-mortem is in order, as a check upon the action and policy, and a basis for further decision-making.

It should be apparent, by now, that I do not seem to have the same vibrations about certain concepts as you seem to! For instance, I am not opposed to Structure or Hierarchy or Dominance or Power or Organizational Methods, *as such*. These are things, processes, connoting no absolute right or wrong in themselves. It is actually the combination, the interrelations, the synthesis of these phenomena that counts. Hierarchy, Dominance, etc., are not bad, not masculine, not capitalist — they may or may not be, depending on who uses them how and for what purpose and to what effect. What’s wrong with “non-debatable goals,” “persuasion skills,” “technical know-how,” personal style/personality/charisma, energy, rugged individualism??? Nothing is wrong, if these are used democratically, collectively, thoughtfully, considerately, and in a fashion guaranteed to protect individuality and human dignity.

Without leadership, there is no movement, no organization, no development of consistent theory, no division of labor, no refinement of practice, no stability, no training and demonstration, no growth. Without leadership, nothing guarantees that the program will be implemented, for everybody cannot do everything at the same time. We desperately need strong, rational, logical, persuasive, effective, energetic, rugged female individuals as leaders, just as we need ranks with the same qualities who love and admire and support and criticize their leaders as they themselves learn to develop and perfect leadership qualities. Nobody has to be dominated, or repressed, or intimidated, but everybody has to learn to take criticism and evaluation. Real leadership welcomes and organizes debate, criticism, hard



Clara Fraser

looks at policy and practice; real leadership is nothing to fear, and something to tenderly nourish!

One final comment, or elaboration on a previous point: In the final analysis, discussions of leadership cannot productively occur in a vacuum, cannot be separated out of the context of program. If you decide to go underground, and resort to guerrilla tactics, you would have to adopt stringent military organizational forms. If you opt for revolutionary politics it follows as the night the day that you must build mass combat organisms marked by a bold and forceful cadre.

If you accept this reasoning then strong leadership must be built but strong leaders may well display tendencies toward personal domination. Indeed, if they didn’t, they probably wouldn’t be strong leaders.

And this is where everybody else, the collective, comes in: the control function is squarely in the hands of the total group precisely in order to curtail bureaucratic and oppressive feints. This means the collective may not resort to “rejecting” dominating patterns by eliminating leadership, but is obligated, is responsible for exercising its muscle (so to speak!) to hold leadership reins where indicated.

And in this collective enterprise lies the ultimate leadership, the real heroines. This was Marx and Engels’ concept and it is mine. And I think it should be yours, because it is neither male nor female, bourgeois nor **See Response on page 12**

International Women's Day in the English Language Classroom

by Courtney J. Campbell

Imagine a country where radical holidays are not only celebrated, but form part of the popular culture, where fireworks burst on May Day, and International Women's Day (IWD) is found on the calendar and recognized by school children.

You can open your eyes – in Brazil

common to present the women in your life with flowers or chocolates and to offer compliments of praise and appreciation, while the political aspect of IWD is often unknown.

In March of 2008 I had been employed as an English as a Foreign Language teacher in Brazil for five years. But when a friend and teacher who knew of my involvement with

cate well in English, allowing for a lesson plan that focused on gaining a greater proficiency in discussing politics and gender and also a deeper understanding of the history and meaning of IWD. For the most part, the class was guided by a series of pointed questions and texts.

To set the foundation of our discussion, we brainstormed a list of

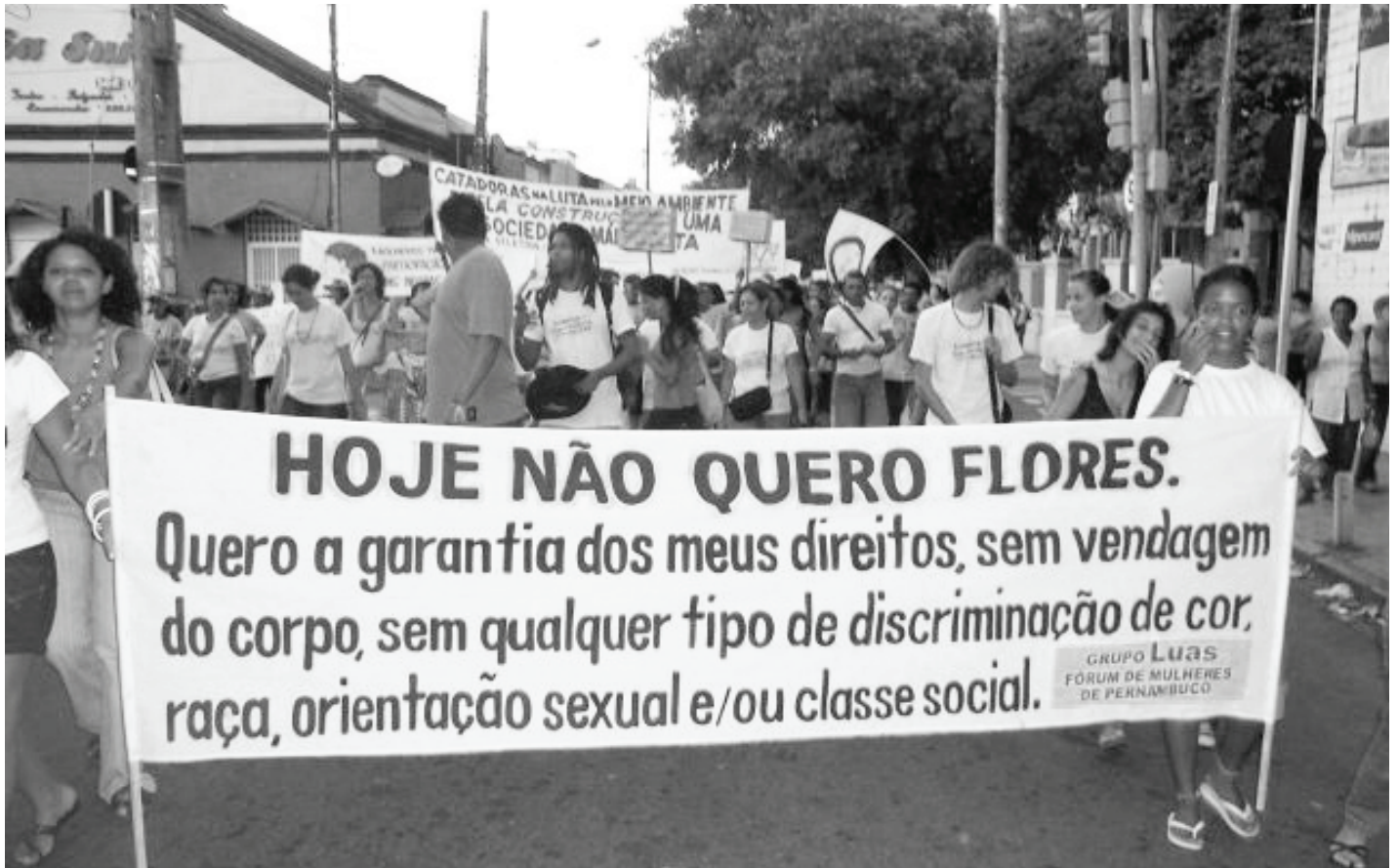


Photo by aria Carolina Morais and Courtney J. Campbell

Sign says: 'Today I don't want flowers. I want my rights to be guaranteed, without selling my body, without any discrimination based on color, race, sexual orientation or social class.' From IWD events in Recife, 2008

(and several other countries) May 1st is Labor Day and forgetting IWD could be a serious social faux pas. That sounds great, but a brief conversation with the average Brazilian teenager reveals that IWD celebrations in Brazil hold about the same connection to its origins as Halloween does in the U.S. On March 8th, it is

Socialist Women and IWD events in Recife asked if I would facilitate discussions on IWD in a few of her classes, I accepted, not realizing that this would become one of the most meaningful experiences of my English teaching career.

The students, fifteen to eighteen years old, could already communi-

holidays and then placed them into a chart on the board with columns for "holiday," "type of holiday" and "how to celebrate." In this discussion it was the students who chose the names for the categories and named holidays such as "Independence Day" as "political," "Easter" as "religious,"

See Classroom on page 12

Leadership

continued from page 7

nizations is non-negotiable. We will stand firm on that belief. Out of our consciousness of being at the bottom of hierarchies, we also see the basis of establishing common understandings with other oppressed peoples. Finally, our conception of meaningful work, developed through our analysis, cannot be bought off with token advances within the capitalist framework of selling oneself for another's advantage.

To sum up: women's conception of our leadership role in regard to left politics comes from our ideological analysis. On the other hand, our commitment to persist comes from the depth of our personal understanding (integrating the personal and political).

But, like the new left which we were/are critiquing, women also have experienced difficulty in establishing viable, long-term organizations. Perhaps this difficulty could be written off with "our movement is still young." But we must be conscious of what we are striving to develop.

We believe that a major part of our dilemma revolves around our ability/inability to come to grips with collective leadership in practice. Any political decision involves a complexity of dimensions. It is in relation to this complexity that we must begin to view leadership.

Any or all of the ways of viewing a situation under debate or discussion encompasses part of the complexity. None of these styles in isolation, however, effectively confronts the complexity. As we develop a consciousness of who we are politically, that consciousness must include a constant awareness of each of our personal ways of viewing situations. In other words, through which prism do I see the situation? All too often, the person who possesses particular old style skills of domination (articulateness, persistence, know-how) is accepted as the person whose indi-

in the mayor's house

by Puma Perl

I planned to leave the golden man's house at
7:45 He lived
ten blocks and five dimensions
from gracie mansion
He didn't want me to go
He loved my tall walk
down his hallway
I left at 8:15

In the mayor's house
on world AIDS day
there is an open house
by invitation only
guests devour
sandwich triangles
bland, tasteless slivers
served on silver trays
tired red ribbons
wilt fresh pressed shirts
are you anybody?
narrowed eyes wonder
no, they decide
i'm nobody

vidual way of viewing a situation is the legitimated way. While acknowledging that that person's particular prism is a part of the complexity, we must not let it be the only legitimated one.

In other words, leadership is not defined by one's position in an organization or by one's personality. Instead, leadership can be situational. Some situations may dictate the need of one particular approach rather than another.

By recognizing that we all have real and legitimate abilities, in combination with the power to re-evaluate political principles, we can overcome the fear of being dominated by abstraction or personalities.

Because this conception of leadership will provide a meaningful experience of what we are attempting to establish for ourselves throughout the

everyone takes pictures
on the good side
I find new friends quickly
through the common language
of provocative subversion
the mirrors hang high on the walls
we bounce without reflection
irrelevant as promises
the line creeps listlessly

little mayor mike b poses
looking only into camera eyes
as he shakes my hand
hot gold morning cum
runs down my leg
staining my appropriate
black suit

Puma Perl is a poet and fiction writer who believes strongly in the transformative power of the creative arts. Her work has been published in cause & effect, Madswirl, The Mom Egg, Brain Box, and other print and on-line publications. She has been a featured reader in various New York City venues. Her first chapbook, "Belinda and Her Friends," was released by ebracee-press in 2008 and can be found via www.ebracee-press.com.

culture, women will be encouraged both to develop our practice and motivated for long-term struggle.



Photo by Shira

Theory: A Lyricist For a Movement

by Franklin Pleasant

More than an homage to Sonia Sanchez and her similarly titled book, *Homegirls & Handgrenades* is a manifesto of epic proportions. On her first solo album, *Theory*, aka the Lioness from Neo Griot, uses sterling sharp lyrical skill, awe inspiring creativity, and surgically precise delivery to bring the thunder, or as she puts it, "...open minds ... and burst bubbles." *Theory* leaves no room for interpretation when it comes to what is important: her family, including her son Masai who has his debut on *Homegirls & Handgrenades* with a rendition of "The Wheels on the Bus," her people, and her hometown, Flint, Michigan.

For *Theory* one of the biggest compliments that she can receive is to hear young women say that they love her music. As a woman who loves Hip Hop, *Theory* is consistently aware of the contradictory and sometimes hurtful messages of artists in her preferred musical format. *Theory* makes it abundantly clear that she is aware of the "split consciousness" given her by Hip Hop but feels that it is her responsibility to give young women an empowering voice that represents intelligent women who struggle against sexism, racism, classism and everything else just to BE. To them *Theory* gives "Woman to Woman," which is the ultimate girl power anthem and a sure crowd pleaser, and "The Towers," a ballad to all of the powerful women who have influenced her life.

Theory's passion for Flint is not just talk. *Theory* shows her love by doing the hard work it takes to move a city forward. As co-founder and Executive Director of Raise It Up! Youth Arts and Awareness, a nonprofit agency dedicated to providing performance art opportunities to help youth gain personal, social, cultural and political awareness, *Theory* is in the trenches organizing for social change on a daily basis. Calling on her creativity to inspire and assist youth in using art as a tool for working through a variety of life's

THEORY



PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT

HOMEGIRLS & HANDGRENADES

challenges, she has mentored countless young people who have gone on to shine on their own. More information at www.myspace.com/raiseitupworkshops

Theory has also been the catalyst for creation of a Flint Chapter of the National Hip Hop Political Convention national coalition utilizing the transformational power of Hip Hop music to unify the Hip Hop generation into a force for political change. NHHPC-Flint has worked to empower youth in addressing the recent questionable interpretation of a city ordinance which made sagging pants a misdemeanor. With the support of *Theory*, NHHPC-Flint, and other local organizations, Flint's youth planned and hosted several proactive direct action activities designed to address local government and adults.

Theory has also used her skills as an organizer to confront authorities in Jackson, Ohio, that allowed a young woman with special needs to be repeatedly molested by another student on a

minivan going to school. When the local authorities and courts denied responsibility, *Theory* sought out the young woman and helped her family to raise awareness and direct action against this injustice. More information at www.myspace.com/justiceforthewades

In addition to a nearly endless list of musical and ideological influences, *Theory* counts among her S/heroes, Tunde Olaniran and Jon Connor. Taste This! and Invincible provide *Theory* with inspiration. This is not surprising because *Theory* knows how to pick her team. Her collaborations pack more of the same superior lyrical power. "So Alive," her collaboration with Tunde, shows that she can write a love song as deeply passionate as her passion for justice.

When I approached *Theory* for an interview about her music, art and work, it had been a while since the last time I had listened to the *Homegirls & Handgrenades* album.

See *Theory* on page 12

Classroom, *continued from page 9*

and “Sweetest Day” as “cultural” or “commercial.” I then asked the students what kind of holiday IWD is, and, not surprisingly, they categorized it as a cultural holiday.

With this definition set, it was the perfect time to ask students what they knew about the history of IWD. In most classes there was at least one student who had heard of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, although maybe not by that name. But none of the students were aware that before that tragedy, in 1909, the Woman’s National Committee of the Socialist Party in the U.S. had organized a National Woman’s Day march that served as the precursor to the first IWD and had supported the German revolutionary Clara Zetkin in her 1910 proposal for an official IWD. I provided texts and documents that were read or passed around the class on the importance of IWD throughout history, particularly of the importance of the March 8, 1917 manifestation in Russia.

Once we had completed a basic overview of the history of IWD, we could begin to discuss the contradiction between the way that it is celebrated in Brazil and the origins of this holiday. To emphasize this point, I introduced to the class the case of Armenia, where after the fall of the Soviet Union, IWD was replaced with the “Day of Beauty and Motherhood” and the date was changed by a month (much in the way that May Day was replaced by Labor Day in the U.S. and displaced to September). I wrote on one side of the board “Day of Beauty and Motherhood” and on the other “IWD-1917” and asked students to associate words with each phrase. On the side of “Beauty and Motherhood” the students listed words like “soft,” “pretty,” “serving,” “maternal,” and “domestic,” while on the side of “IWD-1917” the students listed “strong,” “united,” and “powerful.”

From here we discussed flowers (What do flowers do? What do they symbolize? Once they are cut, what is their purpose?). The students began to ask questions like “But what does that have to do with IWD?” and “Why would they change the name and date of the holiday?” to which I carefully responded, “I don’t know. Why would they?” We discussed their questions until the contradiction became apparent to each student.

In the beginning of class, there were the inevitable teenage joking and goofing around, but by the time we discussed Armenia, even the young men who had moments before made humorous comments about “a woman’s place” were silenced and the young women, who had once seemed disinterested by anything remotely political, were engaged. As sparks of recognition and understanding became evident in the eyes of the students in each classroom, I realized that I too had received a present for IWD, and it wasn’t flowers. My gift was to receive the same response to my final questions in each classroom. What kind of holiday is International Women’s Day? Political! What does it represent? Our strength and power to unite to make profound political and social change.

Courtney J. Campbell is a poet and essayist, a member of the Editorial Collective of “Socialist Women”, and a graduate student in the History Department of Vanderbilt University.



Theory *continued from page 11*

When I first heard it I was overtaken by her raw lyricism and I felt the need to do very little critical processing. This article has allowed me to thoroughly review a great deal of Theory’s body of work. When I put my copy of Theory’s album into the CD player of my beat up old Bonneville, it was like visiting a room full of my best friends. These are friends who are not afraid to face the harsh realities of the world in which we exist, friends with the vision to see the hope that our particular moment in history represents, and friends who are sensitive enough to see the power that exists in each individual to change our world. They are all in the room when Theory’s music is playing.

For more information about Theory and to get your copy of *Homegirls & Handgrenades* go to: www.myspace.com/theorymuzik or go to www.theorymuzik.com. See for yourself at Theory’s next performance on March 7, 2009, 8:00 pm at Mama’s Hip Hop Kitchen, Bronx, New York.

Franklin Pleasant entered this plane of existence at some point during the nineteen seventies. Born, raised, and enhanced, in Flint, Michigan, where he spends a lot of his time, Franklin is an avid supporter of local arts. He is currently self employed working with various community groups and organizations to formulate and implement community crafted solutions to local issues.

Response *continued from page 8*

New Left, military nor anarchist. It is simply objectively true.

I’m in complete accord with your view that the women’s movement has an important leadership role to play in regard to left politics. Indeed, I believe we are destined to be the leadership of the radical movement. Thanks again for asking me to contribute to the discussion.

husband from her mouth

by Rachel Carlson

husband?
what
husband?
what's a
hus
band?
is that something you pick up
on the side of the road
and chuck back
when you realize it's not alive
doesn't need your help and
isn't ultimately
bad for the environment?

hus
band.
why can't I hear that word
without some waitress in a diner
with a smoker's swallow and a
dialect that is more throat than
vocal sayin it?
and it isn't without love but it's
more
about dis
gust.
my hus
band.
there's something else in her mouth
other than words in there
it's writhing and wants to get out
I wish she'd stop talking,
open her mouth and let the birds
fly out.
cause
I'm sick of her
disappointment.
I want to chuck it back
on the side of the road
because it isn't alive and
ultimately
it's bad,
real bad
for the
environment.

Rachel Carlson is 35 and single. She currently lives in Bellingham, Washington where she helps coordinate the local Gatekeeper program, which targets and treats at-risk seniors. She works within the program, as a mental health counselor, social worker and (reluctant) community trainer."

"All Right Youssif?" Spider-Man said

by Gill O'Halloran

I worry about my son.
Will his Ipod be ripped from his
neck
if he comes home late at night?
Should he really have taken music
AND art?
Are condoms in his pocket a good
thing and
just what is it he sees in Pete
Doherty ?
Like parents the world over
I fret at times

Iraqi parents must worry too,
because
while senators and parliaments
debate the rationale and political
viability
of a gradually staged withdrawal
versus a permanent presence, Iraqi
kids
starve
drink rusty water
play with guns
stage mock executions
for fun
don't go to school
for fear of bombs
or kidnap
They help wash bodies
shot in the head
or keep watch for Mahdi's army
to help buy bread
They bed-wet and stutter
or utter no words at all

A mother picks the shrapnel from
6 year old Ahmed's withered arm
but she knows jihad goes deeper

I guess we all worry

Originally published in La Luciole.
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author.

Gill O'Halloran, from London, is the author of a book on addiction, and has published poetry in Citizen32, Empowerment4women, La Luciole and the Gild of Outside writers.

The First Step Is the Hardest

by Jason "Juice" Hardung

The homes around here are painted
in bright modern colors.
Just like her toe nails she paints to
feel pretty.
The lawn deep green
deep rainforest carpet lush cool
green. Soft. The roof
a gentleman's top hat grey silk
shimmering in the sun.
White fence, the pickets are teeth
in the suburban smile of white
america.

But the windows, dilapidated
like sad eyes
blue not in the pupil like the inno-
cence of a child pointing up at
airplanes
but blue hanging underneath like a
bruise.
Like the woman inside and her
swollen eyes
not just from the hard knuckles
but from those nights she looks out
the window.

The crickets and their violins; the
symphony somewhere out there
under the streetlight and the dark
spaces between
the cars going someplace, the faint
echo of freedom's yawn like cool
breeze.
She sits at the window
while he sleeps. Her tears in unison
with the click of the sprinkler
and from the door to the street
seems like miles.

Jason "Juice" Hardung has been published in many literary journals and is heavily involved with Wolverine Farm Publishing. He lives in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he rides his old Schwinn around town. The Rocky Mountains watch over him and his cat watches for him out the window!

No longer following Abortion Rights

by Jeni Senter

“Walk a mile in my shoes,” you say.
I say I have for too long trod in the
footsteps of man;
a path stained with blood and tears,
a path marked by dominance and
repression.
now is the time you should walk a
mile
in mine.

Jeni Booker Senter is a published poet, essayist, and print journalist devoted to the advancement of women. She has over 70 published articles and essays and is a recent contributor to “Northwest Florida Business Climate Magazine” and “Blackwater Review Literary Journal.”

In Memory of Comrades

**Bea Hermann
Georgia Lloyd
Ann Rosenhaft**

**Arthur S. Kazar
Forest Park, Illinois**

continued from page 4

federally funded facilities, are less likely to have educational resources other than their health care provider, may have limited access to transportation or live in an area with only one hospital, pharmacy or clinic, or are bound by their insurance to receive care at a specific facility. This ruling is totally unacceptable to the Socialist Party USA whose principles and platform unequivocally support women’s right to complete control over their bodies.”

From the Latin and Caribbean Women’s Health Network: Declaration on the Uruguayan President’s Veto of the Abortion Rights Bill, November 2008 (excerpt)

“We reject utterly and with indignation the veto imposed by the President of the Republic of Uruguay, Tabare Vasquez, with regard to the Law to Defend Sexual and Reproductive Health, which was recently approved by both houses of this country’s legislative branch. President Vasquez’s decision only serves to weaken the very essence of democracy and jeopardizes the separation of Church and State. Moreover, this action ignores the international commitments to protect human rights that have been taken on by Uruguay in recent years.

“We who have made the defense of human rights our leading ethical

and political commitment denounce the incoherence of the president position, as it does not reflect the democratic vote of the Uruguayan Parliament and flagrantly ignores the solid majority of Uruguayan society, which favors a law that strives to promote the recognition and protection of sexual and reproductive rights as human rights and the State’s responsibility for taking action to guarantee these rights.

“On the other hand, the president’s stance also gives evidence of an open alliance with a religious hierarchy that seeks to impose a single moral standard and one that is profoundly reactionary. This religious hierarchy has always opposed any law, public policy or program that supports the right of women and men to make free and sovereign decisions over their own bodies.

“Therefore, the veto of President Tabare Vasquez is a tremendous setback and fails to take into account the specific rights and needs of women with regard to sexuality and reproduction, matters that should only be resolved with a comprehensive and humanitarian approach, one that is based on rights and never repressive. Nonetheless, this head of state—like other public figures who declare themselves to be progressive and defenders of freedom—has decided to ignore women’s needs and human rights, but instead impose an unacceptable punishment.”

International Women’s Day - Celebrating 100 Years

- March 8, 1908: 15,000 women march through New York City demanding better pay, shorter work hours, voting rights and an end to child labor under the slogan of “Bread and Roses.”
- May 1908: The Socialist Party designates the last Sunday in February as National Woman’s Day.
- February 28, 1909: First National Woman’s Day celebrated in the United States.
- 1910: At an international socialist women’s conference in Copenhagen Denmark, German social-democrat Clara Zetkin proposed a Women’s Day that would be international in character and to honor striking garment workers in the U.S. Her proposal was accepted unanimously and led to the establishment of International Women’s Day by the Socialist International.

Chicago Socialist Party, PO Box 61-8124, Chicago, Ill 60661-8124

International Women's Day Greetings

The Socialist Youth Front (SUF) of Denmark wishes our sisters and brothers in the U.S. democratic socialist feminist movement a happy International Women's Day. We hope you will keep up your good work on women's rights, and we look forward to increased cooperation between our organizations throughout 2009.

Hasta la victoria - siempre!

To contact SUF

Web: www.ungdomsfront.dk

Mail: suf@ungdomsfront.dk

Happy International Women's Day

to our revolutionary sisters in struggle from Gaza Strip to the sweatshops and service industries of the USA! As labor activists, immigrants, mothers, women of color, queers, elders, youth, artists and the disabled, women continue to lead the fight for bread and roses for all.

National Radical Women

www.RadicalWomen.org
RadicalWomenUS@gmail.com



We still have a long way to go

by Maggie Phair

Women workers receive an average 77% of what men make. A new study shows that in a 40 year worklife, women lose \$434,000 due to the gender wage gap. The Equal Pay Act was passed 45 years ago. Is this act in effect? In 2006 women earned on average \$31,402 while men earned on average \$48,678.

Equal pay for equal work is vital to equality in the workplace and in society. Four votes were needed in the Senate in 2008 to stop the filibuster against any vote on the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which had been passed by the House. The House also passed the Paycheck Fairness Act which would make gender discrimination equal to other kinds of wage discrimination like race, disability, or age. The Senate is unlikely to consider the Paycheck Fairness Act during this session. William Greider has recommended that the filibuster-ending vote be reduced from 60 to 55. Maybe that would help.

Over half the 37million people with incomes under the poverty line are women. Women in America are 3% more likely to be poor than men, but Black and Latina women are more than twice as likely as white women to be living in poverty. That is, poverty as defined by the census bureau—three times the cost of a low-cost food budget or, in 2007-2008, \$21,200 for a four-person household. This actually defines dire poverty.

Thirteen percent of elderly women (75 and older) are poor compared to 6% of elderly men. And of course, the elderly have greater medical expenses, which are excluded from consideration in determining the poverty rate.

Sexual violence and domestic violence produce job loss, health problems, and homelessness. Victims of intimate partner violence lose 8 million days of paid work each year.

Women are more likely to bear the cost of child-raising. Absent fathers seldom pay the full-cost of child rearing. Some pay nothing.

Women are paid less than men, even when they have the same qualifications and work the same hours. In 2007, full-time year round women workers age 25-32 with a bachelor's degree earned 14% less than men. Women are tracked into low paying occupations such as teaching, child care, cleaning, and food service. Occupations that are dominated by women are low paying. Women are more likely than men to care for children, elderly or disabled family members. One study found that 69% of unpaid caregivers to elders are women.

Women continue to be treated as inferior, both in household decision-making, responsibility for household work, and in all status issues. But women are now essential to family well-being, earning about one-third of family income. Only families with a working woman have seen real improvement in living standards.

Women need affordable child and elder care, paid family leave, contraceptive services so they can plan their families, the support and protection to leave violent situations including job and housing stability, and pay equality.

Women and men must organize for women's rights if the goals of the founders of International Women's Day are ever to be fully achieved.

Maggie Phair is a long-time member of the Socialist Party USA and the California Peace and Freedom Party. She lives in Southern California.

Leadership as Socialist-Feminist Practice

by Tina Phillips

At my first Socialist Party national convention in 2001 in Boulder, Colorado, I learned about the policy of gender balance. One of my comrades from southern California complained that he was not able to go to the convention as a delegate because of the gender balance requirement. At the time, I felt he was right: it was unfair. But as I began my socialist feminist education, I came to appreciate gender balance and understand its purpose, which is to give equal voice to women's thoughts, ideas, vision, and action. Since dismantling patriarchy (the power of men over women) is a central objective of socialist feminism, an important part of our role as socialist feminists is to work to redistribute power, and ensure that power is shared among all groups of people. Our goal is to stop hierarchies and to establish more horizontal organizational structures where power is equally distributed.

Over the past 8 years, I have come to see that the voices of people of color, youth, and queer people, as well as women, are important in any leadership situation. I have tried to apply the principles of diversity and equity in all areas of my organizing work. This empowers individuals, while benefiting the whole. In my youth organizing, in particular, I've worked both within and outside the Socialist Party to integrate the goals of the group with socialist feminist practice.

For one thing, I make sure that the groups I work with acknowledge their internal leadership. I believe that appreciation of good work by group members is essential. It is not only the right and ethical thing to do; it has to happen to maintain high morale. Why is it that leaders are constantly taken advantage of? People are frequently asked to take on leadership roles that require a considerable expenditure of time,

effort, money, and talents, yet often are treated in an abusive manner.

As a socialist feminist, I believe that women and youth ought to be appreciated for their efforts and contributions to any organization of which they are a part. They should not be tokens, placed in positions for convenience and then not taken seriously. This is despicable and wrong. An organization should commit itself to respecting the opinions and work of women and youth, acknowledging them in official and unofficial ways. Their leadership is critical to the ongoing vitality of the group.

In turn, women and youth have the responsibility, as well as the right, to bring organizing issues and strategies to the group as a whole. Some of the most important work being done right now by women and youth is in opposition to such consequences of capitalism and imperialism as war, violence, poverty, militarization, budget cuts, school tuition hikes, layoffs, and the prison-industrial complex; and in defense of human rights, reproductive choice, queer rights, and immigrant rights.

Within those different struggles, there lies an internal struggle that must be externalized as well. This is the struggle for women's and youth rights. For women and youth, taking on leadership roles is an important part, but not the only aspect, of the process of asserting and defending our rights.

I think we need to be as inclusive as possible in creating leadership for our organizations and communities. A leader is not someone who has their own agenda and pushes that agenda to the exclusion of all others. That is a dictator. A leader is someone who is often times a follower of the will of the people they represent, but also a person who respects and listens to minority voices. Leaders help organize thoughts and make plans clear so that a group can take action. Leaders give of themselves

but should also acknowledge a job well done. This helps create relationships of mutual respect and appreciation. A leader should be engaged in cooperative spirit and action, and should work toward resolutions that are agreeable to all. As a socialist feminist, I value leadership in all its forms and I work to bring voices together.

As socialist feminist leaders, we show our regard for others in the way in which we do what we do. We believe that the process is just as important as the product. This is the heart of socialist feminist practice.

Tina Phillips is a Group Home Counselor, LGBT Youth Program Coordinator, and college student pursuing a Master's Degree in Social Work in Hayward, California.

Join us

on the streets for women's rights! Sunday, March 8, 2009, International Women's Day. Founded in 1910, inspired by the 1909 actions of the Woman's National Committee of the Socialist Party of the USA: Socialist feminist then, socialist feminist now, socialist feminist forever!

Socialist Party of Massachusetts

PO Box 15342, Boston, MA 02215

www.socialistparty-usa.org/mass/

International Women's Day Greetings

from Jesse Lokahi Heiwa on behalf of

NOMAS

(National Organization for Men Against Sexism); Pro-feminist, anti-racist, gay-affirmative, enhancing men's lives)

info: www.nomas.org