

into the very fabric of this system. The demands of Gay liberation and women's liberation cannot be granted to any large degree without playing havoc with the roles that are so necessary to maintaining capitalism. We are taught to look for support almost exclusively from our families rather than from coworkers, comrades, and friends. The family acts as an enormously conservatizing factor in organizing workers because a worker feels that any action she or he takes will also be suffered by her or his family. Women workers are discouraged in organizing because they believe that their jobs are only temporary or supplemental.

The ruling class seeks to repress Gayness as part of an overall assault on phenomena and ideas that do not fit within the sexist division of labor. Given that they have found it impossible to totally repress Gayness, they seek to contain it or rather to define it in terms of the same sexist roles. But much of what Gay people are flies in the face of these roles. Lesbians are capable of living and loving without the "protection" of a man, [and] faggots are able to do the cleaning and the cooking and satisfy each other sexually and emotionally without the presence of a woman as a service station. Likewise the struggle for women's liberation, the independence and power being displayed by women and for that matter by all oppressed people, refutes the lies and myths.

Why is socialist revolution incomplete without Gay liberation? Socialism by definition is a transitional stage of history. A bridge between the capitalist system of private ownership of the means of production and communism or classless society. Under socialism the workers consolidate their victory over the bourgeoisie, the rule of the proletariat over the capitalist class. Having achieved this the workers seek to destroy the system of classes and class rule itself. The destruction of the divisions that exist among the people like sexism and racism, which derive from class rule, are critical to the destruction of class society, and indeed one cannot really be said to be practicing socialism if one is not working to overthrow them. Inevitably, if the working class is not seeking to destroy these divisions they will revert to supporting them. We cannot proceed in the revolutionary process when we are borrowing heavily in our theory and practice from the bourgeoisie. When communist organizations or socialist countries uphold sexism they are doing the work of the capitalists, not of the workers.

If one defines victory for the workers only in terms of economic gains or only in terms of taking state power you are ignoring the heart of socialism, its fundamental goal—human freedom.

1.A.7.

Robin McDuff, Deanne Pernell, and Karen Saunders

From "An Open Letter to the Antirape Movement" (1977)

This statement offers an early expression of anticarceral feminism and reveals how debates over police, prisons, and the legal system helped to moti-

vate and ground the development of intersectional analysis. Written by three members of Santa Cruz Women Against Rape, it was published in a feminist magazine called *The Second Wave*.

We, the members of Santa Cruz Women Against Rape, are concerned about the direction the antirape movement is taking, in particular in its relationship to the criminal justice system.

When the organized movement against rape first started about five years ago, most antirape groups were collectives of feminists, brought together by their anger at the way the police and the courts treat rape victims. These groups (including ours) were primarily political. We were critics of the police, the courts, and the hospitals, the institutions that traditionally deal with rape victims. Their dreadful treatment of women became a topic of interest to the media, largely due to the efforts of the women's movement against rape. In a snowballing effect, many other antirape groups formed. Many of these groups, however, did not consider themselves political, nor even feminist. . . . [T]hese groups tended to encourage or cajole women to report rapes to the police.

The explicitly political groups have been frustrated—both by the ineffectiveness and unresponsiveness of the criminal justice system and by the steadily increasing rate of reported rapes. While many remain critical of the criminal justice system in theory, most groups, in practice, feel it is important to build or improve relationships with the police and other criminal justice agencies; they hope this will lead to increased prosecution and conviction of rapists. In attempting to build these relations, such antirape groups have withheld criticism of these agencies, as opposed to applying outside pressure through the media, demonstrations, etc. Consider also that many groups are supported through government funds. As a result, there is an inevitable push, if not outright obligation, to persuade women to report to the police. . . .

We support the right of an individual rape victim to go through the criminal justice system, if she so chooses, because there aren't many other alternatives. But as antirape groups, we have the responsibility to expose the function and challenge the process of the criminal justice system. Attempts at "good relations" with the criminal justice system have served to co-opt our movement and have led to the belief (or hope) that the criminal justice system can solve the problem of rape. Yet the sexist and racist nature of the criminal justice system only makes the problem worse. . . . [T]he women involved have no power in the process: it is the police who decide if she was "really raped," the DA who often decides that it isn't a "good case" so won't prosecute, and the juries who hesitate to convict a rapist.

It is true that the conviction rate for rapists is very low. This is largely due to sexism and the sexist myths about rape in our culture. We abhor the reasons for this low conviction rate, but that doesn't mean we should work for a high conviction rate. Those convicted of rape are most likely to be Third World and/or poor White men, as is true of convictions of nearly all other crimes. In order for

a DA to “win” a rape case, he (or, rarely, she) must use sexist, racist and classist stereotypes and assumptions, thereby supporting the worst aspects of this society. If the goal of this process is to fight and end rape, it is self-defeating to use racist and classist means to get to that end.

Historically, rape has been a tool used against Third World people. The sexist myth that women “ask for it” and lie about rape is applied many times more to Third World women than to White women. Black women have been particularly subject to rape by White men since slavery, because society has never given them any protection. The myth that most rapists are Black men has had enormous consequences for them. Thousands of Black men have been lynched or legally executed because they “looked at a White woman wrong.” Of the 450 legal executions for rape, 408 of these men were Black. In addition, rape has been a primary weapon used against women in the genocidal campaign against Native Americans. It is crucial that antirape groups fight the racist myths, stereotypes, and institutions that are associated with rape. We cannot turn our backs to the racism of the system when a Black man is being prosecuted and expect that same racism not to be used against Joann Little, Yvonne Wanrow, Inez Garcia, and many others. No matter what our intentions are, the system is racist through and through, so the first step in this process is to stop supporting the criminal justice system.

The answer to the problem of rape is not just to get rapists “off the street.” Prisons themselves are incapable of changing rapists. The pressures inherent in this society’s culture are intensified in prison. Male sex roles, violence, and power relations which lead to rape in the first place are strongly reinforced. Rapists in prison don’t stop raping—they simply use their power over men weaker than themselves. . . . Prisons don’t deal with the roots of the problem, they only add to the cause. . . .

Those antirape groups who spend time working for reform legislation encounter many of the same problems and obstacles. Sexist attitudes (and actions) cannot be legislated away. . . .

The time and energy that is now used both in developing a working relationship with the criminal justice agencies and on reforming legislation could be much better spent. The antirape movement should work on community education and on developing practical alternatives that deal with both the symptoms and the roots of sexism and violence. . . . Some of our ideas and alternatives are [as follows]:

1. We encourage people to get together to discuss ways to watch out for each other. This includes block watching to make neighborhoods safe, organizing at workplaces to get support to deal with hassles from bosses and fellow workers, and organizing at schools to get self-defense classes, etc.
2. We try to create the consciousness in people that they should respond to a scream or a call for help and that they should go to a woman’s aid if it looks like she’s being hassled.
3. We print the descriptions of men who rape, hassle, and assault women so

that rape will become a public issue, so that these men will lose their anonymity, and so women can be warned of some particular men.

4. We support confrontations of rapists by women (or women and men). The message we want to present to them is that we know who they are and what they did, that they are responsible for their actions, and that they have the responsibility to change. We try to offer follow-up reeducation by antisexist men. Although we think that each individual confrontation is important, we hope that each one will have the widespread effect of encouraging people to force men to stop violent and sexist behavior. This means that people have to deal with the men close to them—their family, friends, etc., as well as with strangers who hassle women.

A confrontation allows a woman who's been raped or hassled to be active and powerful in a situation in which it is safe for her to be so. She can make the decision about how a confrontation will take place and what she'd like to say. We help her get together a group of women who will be supportive to her during the process. This is very different from reporting a rape to the police where the woman's role is a passive one (as a witness for the state) and where others make decisions about her case for her. . . .

We realize that rape is not going to end by the creation of these few alternatives, that rape will only end with the development of a new system that provides a context for these changes in people's lives. We want to develop a movement that is working toward these changes. It is crucial for antirape groups not to focus on rape as an isolated issue to the exclusion of developing a broader analysis of the society as a whole.

1.A.8.

Daniel Tsang

"Third World Lesbians and Gays Meet" (1980)

The first national Third World Lesbian/Gay Conference was held immediately before the first March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights on October 14, 1979. The conference, which was organized by the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays in collaboration with other groups, drew LGBT people of color from around the United States as well as a small number from outside it. Tsang published this report about the conference in *Gay Insurgent*, a radical gay and lesbian newspaper.

Some five hundred Third World lesbians and gay men converged on the nation's capital the weekend of October 12–15 for the first national Third World Lesbian/Gay conference. The event was almost completely ignored by the corporate media, which missed a historic march October 14 by two hundred of the