

**MARCH 8**

**INTERNATIONAL  
WORKING  
WOMEN'S DAY**

**A Celebration of Women's  
Revolutionary Traditions**

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Trade Union Action League  
New Orleans, LA

Liberation League  
New Orleans, LA

Revolutionary Political Organization (Marxist-Leninist)  
New Orleans, LA

Excerpts from the following books were used in the program:

*Twenty Years in Underground Russia: Memoirs of a Rank and File Bolshevik*, by Cecilia Bobrovskaya, Proletarian Publishers, Chicago;

*Before the Dawn*, (2 volumes), by Shevqet Musaraj, "8 Nentori", Tirana, Albania;

"A Mother's Letter to Her Daughter," is reprinted from *Sandino's Daughters* by Margaret Randall, New Star Books, Toronto;

*Draft Party Program of the RPO(ML)*.

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# Preface

This pamphlet is the result of a program celebrating International Working Women's Day which was held at Emancipation Hall, Delta Books, in New Orleans, LA. on March 8, 1986. The program was dedicated to the role of working class women in the struggles against exploitation, for socialist revolution and national liberation.

Both the program and the pamphlet represent the collective efforts of a multi-national, ad-hoc committee of working women of all ages associated with the Trade Union Action League, the Liberation League, and the Revolutionary Political Organization (Marxist-Leninist). The speeches, poems, and songs in this pamphlet were all presented at the program. They are reproduced here in order to preserve and disseminate information about the courageous and revolutionary heritage of working women in the struggle for social emancipation.

The valor and dedication of the women whose lives are depicted here are an inspiration to working women everywhere who are fighting against exploitation and for revolution. We hope that this pamphlet will help to revive the revolutionary tradition of International Working Women's Day, celebrating the victories of the past, the struggles of today, and the bright future that lies ahead.

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## The History of International Working Women's Day

March 8, International Working Women's Day, is an occasion to celebrate, a day set aside in honor of women workers world-wide. It is a day to demonstrate against all forms of women's oppression under capitalism and to further the struggle for the complete emancipation of women.

The original women's day was initiated in the United States on March 8, 1908, when working women, from the home and the garment sweatshops, demonstrated in New York City for the right to vote and against capitalist exploitation.

In 1910 the International Socialist Conference designated March 8 as International Women's Day. Rosa Luxemburg, a revolutionary socialist leader whose life is described in this pamphlet, was one of the delegates to the conference who supported the resolution.

International Women's Day became a symbol of the world-wide struggle against capitalism and the oppression of women. In 1917 in Petrograd, Russia, 90,000 workers went on strike, joined by thousands upon thousands of women. In 1927, women throughout central Asia demonstrated against laws which enslaved women. In 1936 in Spain, 80,000 women in Madrid demonstrated against fascism.

Today, International Working Women's Day is an important part of our fight against the exploitation of women in the United States and world-wide. In the U.S. today women workers are paid about half the wages paid to men, women still bear the main responsibility of household chores and child-rearing, and the political, social and economic rights of women are still restricted. Meanwhile, women of all ages continue to be subjected to degradation, male chauvinism and physical assaults.

Women workers are oppressed because they are workers under capitalism and oppressed because they are women under capitalism: a double burden of oppression. For those women who are members of the oppressed nations (Afro-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, etc.) the burden is tripled. The oppression of women stems from capitalism. Working women can only be freed by smashing the capitalist system and building a genuine socialist society.

This is the goal of the struggle for the complete emancipation of women. This celebration of International Working Women's Day is dedicated to the heroines and leaders in the fight for freedom and the struggles of everyday working women for their emancipation.

## Part 1

# Resistance, Rebellion & Revolution: The United States

From the plantations of the Black Belt South to the factories of the big cities, working women in the U.S. have always played an heroic role in the resistance against capitalist exploitation and national oppression.

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## Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman was a staunch revolutionary fighter against slavery and the most valiant conductor of the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad provided safe houses and transportation for escaped slaves on their way to the northern states and Canada. It aided over 60,000 slaves to escape to freedom. Its thousands of collaborators directly challenged the Fugitive Slave Law and defied long prison terms and death at the hands of pro-slavery lynch mobs.

After escaping from slavery herself, Harriet Tubman returned to the South 19 times between 1849 and 1861 and led 300 slaves to freedom. Her courage made her a legend in the North and South alike, inspiring hope among the slaves and fear among the slaveowners, who offered a \$40,000 bounty for her capture, dead or alive. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, she once again returned to the South, working for the Union Army in South Carolina. At the head of a unit of Afro-American guerilla fighters she led many daring missions behind enemy lines, gathering intelligence, carrying out sabotage, and liberating slaves.



# Ella Mae Wiggins

Ella Mae Wiggins was an Anglo-American strike leader in Gastonia, North Carolina who was shot through the heart on her way to a union meeting on September 14, 1929. A group of hired thugs from the company fired into a truck of strikers and Ella Mae fell dead.

Ella Mae Wiggins was 29 years old when she was murdered. She worked in a textile mill and had given birth to 9 children. All of her children caught whooping cough at one time. She was working nights and didn't have anyone to care for them. She asked the foreman to switch her to day shift so she could tend the children but he refused. She had to quit her job to care for the children. Unemployed, there wasn't enough money for medicine and four of her children died.



Ella Mae Wiggins

In 1929 textile workers in North Carolina averaged earnings of \$10 a week. The age of the workers ranged from 13-60 years. They worked 10-11 hour shifts. In Gastonia the shifts were 12 hours. Many times the workers had to work 6 days a week. 50% of the textile workers were women. When the company proposed wage cuts, the workers went out on strike.

In the spring of 1929 there were 18,000 textile workers on strike in 15 different communities in North Carolina. These strikes took place in company towns: company towns means the company owns the houses, the stores, the church, the school, the doctor, the school teacher, the preacher. Strikers were evicted from their homes, their children thrown out of schools; the company-controlled newspapers and preachers ranted and raved against the strikers. The strikers' headquarters in Gastonia, a small shack, was attacked by a mob of thugs and burned down. The strikers defended their headquarters and their lives with arms and during this attack the chief of police was killed. Strike leaders were hounded down and arrested, tried and given long sentences in prison for this righteous act of self-defense.

The Gastonia strike was led by the National Textile Workers Union, a revolutionary union initiated and led by the then-revolutionary Communist Party, USA. Ella Mae Wiggins embraced the revolutionary spirit and leadership of the strike and took upon herself the building of unity with the handful of Afro-American workers who were employed in the textile industry. She knew that the unity between Anglo-American and Afro-American workers was critical to building the unity of the entire working class.

Ella Mae Wiggins was not only a strike leader, she was also a songwriter. She wrote and sang songs throughout the strike, on the picket lines, at rallies and outside the jail. Her music is a rich legacy of the revolutionary spirit of this struggle. As they laid her in her grave, her fellow workers sang "The Mill Mother's Lament" a song written by Ella Mae that sums up the terrible suffering of the women in the textile factories:

Ella Mae Wiggins

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# Mill Mother's Lament by Ella Mae Wiggins



We leave our homes in the morn-ing We kiss our chil-dren good-bye,  
D



While we slave for the boss-es, Our chil-dren scream and cry.

We leave our homes in the morning,  
We kiss our children good-bye,  
While we slave for the bosses  
Our children scream and cry.

And when we draw our money,  
Our grocery bills to pay,  
Not a cent to spend for clothing,  
Not a cent to lay away.

And on that very evening  
Our little son will say:  
"I need some shoes, mother,  
And so does sister May."

How it grieves the heart of a mother  
Now everyone must know.  
But we can't buy for our children,  
Our wages are too low.


It is for our little children,  
That seems to us so dear,  
But for us nor them, dear workers,  
The bosses do not care.

But understand all workers,  
Our union they do fear.  
Let's stand together, workers,  
And have a union here.




# "I Hate the Capitalist System" by Sara Ogan Gunning

The words to this song were written by Sara Ogan Gunning, a mountain woman whose husband was a coal miner. Her husband and father both died from "black lung" caused by breathing coal dust in the mines. Her baby son died of starvation. The experiences she wrote about in her songs are shared by working women throughout the U.S.




I — hate the Cap't - list sys - tem, — I'll

D A7 D



tell you the rea - son why, They caused me so much

G A7 D



suff - 'ring, — And my dear - est friends to — die.

Oh yes, I guess you wonder  
What have they done to me  
Well, I am going to tell you,  
My husband had T.B.

Hard work and low wages  
And not enough to eat,  
Going naked and hungry,  
No shoes on his feet.

Chorus:

I had a blue-eyed baby  
The darling of my heart  
But from my little darling  
Her mother had to part.

The rich and mighty capitalists,  
They dress in jewels and silk;  
But my darling blue-eyed baby,  
She starved to death for milk.

Chorus:





I had a darling mother,  
For her I often cried,  
But with these rotten conditions  
My mother had to die.

"Well, what killed your mother?"  
I heard some capitalist say,  
Was hard work and starvation  
My mother had to pay

Chorus:

They call this a land of plenty  
For them I guess its true;  
That's for the rich old capitalists  
Not workers like me and you.

Oh what can you do about it,  
To these men of power and might?  
I tell you Mr. Capitalist,  
I'm going to fight and fight and fight.

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## My Life and Struggles by Willie Mae Brown

I want to tell you a little bit about my life. I have suffered exploitation and oppression as an Afro-American, as a woman and as a worker. But I have learned that the capitalist system is the cause of this suffering and that only revolutionary change can put an end to it.

My mother was just 5 days away from her 15th birthday when I was born in 1931. So I was raised by my grandparents. When I was six years old, my grandparents moved from what we called the hills, to the Delta. The delta is land at the edge of the hills, very rich land. Everything that you planted on it grew, so we moved there.



My grandmother worked for some of the rich landowners there. The first person she worked for was very rich. Her salary some months was \$10.00. She was lucky enough to get a raise from the second person she worked for; her salary was raised to eighteen dollars a month. She worked very hard. She did things like tend the garden, plant the seeds in the garden, preserve the food,

she did all of this. She also had to be at work for 5:00 am in the morning. That's the time the rich landowner ate his breakfast. Alone. At 9:00 in the morning she had to fix breakfast for his wife and from around 11:00 to noon, his son may have gotten up to eat. All of this took a very long time, but of course she had to do it. She also did the washing and ironing, and this was sometimes not for the person she worked for but was for other people, to try to supplement her salary.

I remember that she had to wash the clothes over the scrub board and they had these old black pots that she had to boil these things in to get them white. The wife of the landowner wanted her clothes starched, even her sheets, pillow cases, and her husband's underwear. She wanted everything ironed. She wanted to put it away ironed.

My grandfather also worked. He tended the barn. He kept the mules in shape, he fed them. This was an all-day job. He had a little better salary which was \$20 a month.

When my grandmother finished the meals for the people, she went home around 3:00 o'clock in the evening, and she had to come back for 5:30-6:00 p.m. to prepare supper for them. So really her whole day was taken up at that house, because she had to prepare the meals and it wasn't until 7:00-8:00 o'clock at night that she would get off.

During the winter months she sent me to a religious school that was very strict. I had to drop out because the tuition at that time was \$50 a month, and with my grandmother's salary she couldn't afford it.

So I had to help out to get things that I needed. I worked, I picked cotton for a dollar per hundred pounds, that's a penny a pound. I hoed cotton for a dollar a day which was very bad. We had to leave in the morning on the truck to go out in the hot sun and work from sun up to sun down and you weren't allowed to lolly gag. We only got to eat one meal. You weren't allowed to get water. You had to wear clothes, because the sun was beating down on you and you had to cover yourself up. We were under constant pressure from the overseer that they had in the fields. They wouldn't allow you to chop down their cotton, if you did you'd get fired. Sometimes I cut it down; I couldn't help it really, so I'd pick it up and put it in my pocket. That was the way that I kept the job. But you couldn't even go to the bathroom, that was the least thing they should have let you do, you just had to not go. If you went to the bathroom in the woods you'd be fired. The landowner was an odd, queer man, he was just like the first people that I read about in slavery. He had the opportunity to get any woman that he wanted on the plantation and if they didn't submit to him, well he would make it hard for them. Usually he would get the younger women and he had some children by them. He approached me; I was one of his victims.

Life on the plantation is very bad. You work hard and you never have any future in your work. It's not much different today than it was when I was coming up. There are families of a lot of people, I'd say sometimes from ten to fifteen people in the family. All those people have to work. There is no school during the months that the plantation is working. Your kids can't go to school.

What makes me feel bad about the way they treated the people, was that some people would have somewhere around forty or fifty bales of cotton that they would have picked every year. I

don't remember exactly what bales of cotton sold for but I'm sure that it was a sum that was good. November was the time of year that they settled with the people. But even working all year some people did not get a dime. They didn't get anything and they ended up owing the landowner.

The food that we ate consisted primarily of fat back, molasses, bread, and biscuits. You had to get all this from the commissary. Most of the people were illiterate, they couldn't count, they didn't know their names as written down, so they had to depend on the landowner's bookkeeper to keep books for them. And we know that he cheated, because anytime you have 40-50 bales of cotton a year you should draw some money. But most of the people ended up not only getting nothing but owing the landowner. This was the way of keeping them down, cause they were not allowed to leave the plantation. They had to stay there. If they tried to leave, then he'd have the sheriff pick them up.

Well, I just look back on that, and I find out that the landowner made a lot of money off people. He had two plantations adjoining each other and he left all this to his son who never really did anything. In fact he didn't even have to serve in the armed forces because they bought his way out. He didn't have to do anything.

I stayed on the plantation until I was 16 years old. I went to Jackson, Mississippi and I lived there awhile and some years later I got married to a musician and moved to New Orleans. I was happily married and I always did want a large family because I was raised alone and I always wanted company. I thought that kids were the best thing that I could have had. This was still not the best thing that I did because that was a lot of responsibility for my husband and me. He was a musician and at the time, back in the 50's, work was hard to come about. After he worked in the French Quarter for a while, the go-go girls started going in, white go-go girls that weren't dressed too well. All the musicians lost their jobs in the French Quarter so they had to go elsewhere to look for work. He tried a few bands and, well, they didn't pay too much. At that time you didn't get very much when you played here in the city. \$10 a night was a pretty good price for a musician starting out. So that was a large responsibility on us.

We had a pretty happy marriage until the kids started getting larger and wanting more things and he just couldn't afford to give it to them. I think it affected him more so than me. Anyway, he started fooling with drugs and I think drugs destroyed him. Each little problem brought on more drugs and after my son started having problems with the police, well that really got him. He always felt guilty that maybe it was his fault that this happened.

I know now that these drugs were designed to destroy people; it wasn't just by chance that they were put there. They were put there so they can keep the people from awakening, so they can keep the Black people's minds dead.

I got my first job in 1967 in a department store downtown, that was about the time that my husband and I broke up. I didn't have any money; I had to work because I had gotten to the last point in my life that I thought I could stand. I didn't have money to pay my rent. I didn't have money to pay the utilities and only a meager supply of food and stuff in the house to feed the

kids. But I raised my kids in a way that they accepted this and it wasn't a problem like some kids that you know of who complain all the time.

So when I started working, I worked 8 hours a day and I had to depend on my eldest son to do the cooking and so forth. But I didn't have a large enough salary to support them, so we still didn't have money to really live well. But I thought at the time that this was good that I was working, not knowing that this was affecting me or affecting my health.

My next encounter was on the New Orleans lakefront in 1978 with the police. My family was on an outing on Lakeshore Drive. We were playing games and thought we were having fun when we were attacked by a group of whites. They were yelling racist names at us and said that we were on the "wrong side"; what they meant was the "white side" of the lakefront.

At that time we didn't know who they were. They attacked us with sticks. One of the attackers, a lady, hit my 16-year-old daughter with the butt of a gun and caused a terrible wound. I guess we would have been killed if it had not been for someone who called the uniformed police. They came in and didn't arrest the people who attacked us. We discovered then that the whites who had attacked us were members of the New Orleans Police Department. We didn't know that to begin with. So after that we couldn't say anything to the police. We weren't allowed to say anything. They took us and they arrested five of the people in our group. The only reason they didn't arrest everybody was because everybody wasn't out there. Some people had gone with my daughter to try to get the blood cleaned off her.

We tried to pursue it in court and didn't get any relief. They didn't believe anything we said anyway because the police were involved. We still have charges on our records: aggravated battery on an officer. I never passed a lick and I don't think anybody else did unless they were attacked and some people in our group really were badly attacked. They tell me that the reason that they don't remove this from the record is because we have civil proceedings. But at the time they were told to drop the criminal charges against us, so I didn't think we had any charges still on our records. I don't see why they could drop them and we still have a record. Why is it that the young men in our group will grow up with a record for the rest of their lives, I suppose, when in fact the state never accepted the charges against them?

That incident basically gave me strength to try to do something about this system because there are a lot of evil things out there. I know we have to do something about it. It's really too blatant now. My life is the reflection of thousands of Afro-American women and, in some cases, all women. This experience has taught me that the system is flawed and that we must seek change. I personally feel that I have benefited, though rather late in life. And after that attack on the lakefront by the police I decided to seek some changes. I was fortunate to meet some people who are involved in revolutionary work and I think I have benefited. I will continue to fight.



An Afro-American woman being assaulted by Birmingham police during the rebellion of 1963

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## Honor Her Memory

This poem is in honor of Eula Love, a 39-year-old Black woman in Los Angeles who was gunned down by police in a dispute over a \$22 gas bill. The author is unknown.

The last straw. This is the last straw.

No way they're going to cut me off.

Maybe that's what she was thinking when she took a stand  
in front of her house.

No way they're going to come onto this property.

The electric. The phone.

Food every week higher than last.

The gas. Now the gas.

Final Notice – Shut-Off.

It's blackmail. How can I feed these children  
if I can't even cook on the stove?

But how am I supposed to feed them if I pay that bill?

A few dollars left once a month from the social security from their daddy,

He'd be so mad if he could see  
what they've done to his family.

No way they're going to turn off that gas.

Justifiable homicide.

And the killer cops still out on the street.

Cruising. Feeling strong.  
"If they try something, let 'em have it.  
Remember Eula Love-  
No D.A. in this city will give you any trouble."

It's the last straw.  
No way they're going to get away with this.  
You keep it down; you don't make trouble.  
work as hard as you can  
And you can end up lying handcuffed,  
your life bleeding out of you  
on your front lawn  
just the same as if you fought them up front.  
The best defense is fighting back  
But not alone, and with your eyes on the long road.  
That's what we know. We all know it.  
There's no hiding out, no way out some ladder,  
Climbing a rotten ladder to sit on a rotten roof.  
**I'd rather be with my friends, getting prepared,  
thousands, millions of us  
and we'll all stand our ground alongside Eula Love.**

## Part 2

# Revolutionary Women Around the World

## The Proletarian Revolution

The highest aspirations of the working class movement are reflected in the lives and work of communist women. Without the active participation of working women, there can be no socialist revolution; the socialist revolution is the only road for the complete emancipation of women.

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### Russia: Cecilia Bobrovskaya

Cecilia Bobrovskaya was born in 1873 in Russia. She was a rank-and-file member of the Bolshevik Party during the Russian Socialist Revolution of 1917 and during the years preceding it. Her work in the Bolshevik Party centered on getting revolutionary literature and information to the workers, who were terribly exploited under the rule of the Czar. This was a very difficult task as she was constantly shadowed by spies. In some instances she was forced to live an extremely meager existence, with very little food and inadequate clothing. However, she was committed to the work and sought factory workers, students, and peasants to organize and build a revolutionary party and to produce and circulate the revolutionary newspaper, the *Southern Worker*.



Cecilia was under constant pressure from the authorities and used a variety of creative techniques to escape police interference with her work. She described one such event:

"They watched my house", she said, "and consistently dogged my steps quite openly. When I had to attend to some urgent business I would have to start out early in the morning and pretend to go shopping. Sometimes I would go into various shops and try on a number of garments. This would take a long time and sometimes the spy would get tired of waiting and go away."

Cecilia helped to organize the workers general strike in Kharkov for the first of May, the International Workers' Day. The strike created a big stir. After that Cecilia's work and that of the party went at a feverish pace. The police were hunting down the revolutionaries. First a group of eighteen railroad workers was arrested and exiled on the charge of instigating the May first demonstrations. This resulted in the arrest of the entire revolutionary organization and most of the circles of workers who were in contact with them.

During this wave of arrests Cecilia was picked up by the Czarist police. She was taken to a well-known Kharkov prison. Prison conditions were harsh and the authorities did everything to try

and break her spirit. The governor of the prison was a thorough-going reactionary who ruled the prison with an iron grip. Cecilia described the expression on his face as "murderous."

Her cell was located on a long dark corridor, with cells on either side. She was not allowed any contact with the outside or with the other prisoners. After months of this solitary confinement she suddenly felt the compulsion to hear the sound of her own voice and tried to strike up a conversation with the guard. But they had all been well-trained and wouldn't talk.

She could not lie down during the day because her bed was raised at 6 a.m. and lowered only at six in the evening. Likewise, the table and bench were raised and fastened to the wall. She was of short stature and it was hard even to raise herself to the high windowsill to catch a glimpse of the blue sky. She was permitted a fifteen to twenty minute daily walk in the yard each day.

After a period of time the police released many of those who had been arrested with Cecilia. For a long time Cecilia could not understand why the police kept her in jail longer than the members of the committee. She knew that they had obtained all the particulars of the organization. She was not a member of the committee. But at one of the examinations she was soon enlightened upon the matter.

"I was brought into the prison office and after a pleasant greeting, Norenberg (one of the prison officials) said, 'The investigation into the Kharkov Committee case is finished. All of the district, including members of the committee, have been released, but are being kept under surveillance until the trial. We have decided to detain you for some time, however. Kharchenko, the editor of the *Southern Worker* (the Bolshevik paper) has been arrested. According to the evidence, you had close connections with him.'

"To my question, 'Then what is the use of detaining me, you know that you won't learn anything from me anyway?' Norenberg answered, rolling out every word, 'Kharchenko is a strong man, arrested recently. You are a woman, your health has been undermined in prison. Your nerves are unstrung. That is why you are more likely to talk before Kharchenko talks.'

"It is difficult to describe my indignation at this insolent candor. I felt a burning desire to prove to him that I was not broken in spirit, that I still had the strength to protest. My only means of protesting was to declare a hunger strike. I decided to go on strike alone without Involving new comrades with whom I was personally unacquainted and who had been arrested recently. At that time the prison administration, the public prosecutor and the police were still very much afraid of hunger strikes. They feared that the other comrades would get wind of it and join me in the strike and the whole affair would become extremely serious.

"I kept the .strike up for three days. On the fourth day I almost collapsed and the turnkey, seeing my condition, did not put up my bed as usual. Soon I was called to the office where I was informed that I was to be released and that I must leave for my native town immediately under strict surveillance of the police and remain there until the trial. Thus I paid for a full year's work in Kharkov with less than a full year's imprisonment, which was considered a very cheap price at that time."



Cecilia went on to work in the revolutionary movement for many years, spending most of her time before the October Revolution of 1917 working underground and serving several periods in prison. Her memoirs offer a stirring history of the dedication and perseverance of this remarkable woman whose life was typical of that of thousands of other revolutionary women during that period.

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## Germany: Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg stands at the forefront of the proletarian emancipatory heritage. She was born into a middle-class Jewish family in a small city in Poland in 1871. She became politically active in the socialist movement in high school and had to leave the city to avoid arrest when she was 16 years old. She fled to Zurich where she began her socialist apprenticeship in earnest.

Rosa knew that the crying contradictions and terrible misery and injustice which she saw were the result of a social system which was in fact a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. She resolved to do whatever was necessary to bring about a socialist revolution and became very active in the German revolutionary working class movement. She knew that the proletarian dictatorship is not only an absolutely legitimate means of overthrowing the exploiters and suppressing their resistance, but is also absolutely necessary to the entire mass of working class people. She knew that the rule of the working class was the only defense against the bourgeois dictatorship which led to imperialist war and is today, still preparing for new wars. Barely five feet tall, full of fire and dauntless, Rosa quickly emerged as a leader in the socialist cause.



When the first imperialist world war broke out (World War I) most of the leadership of the international communist movement betrayed the workers of their countries and lined up with their own ruling class against the workers of other countries. The Bolshevik party in Russia, led by V.I. Lenin, fiercely condemned this opportunism and betrayal. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were among the few European socialist leaders who took a stand with the Bolsheviks and the international working class and called for the unity of the workers of all nations against the ruling class. Rosa called for the workers of Germany to turn their guns against their own government and fight for a socialist revolution.

In reprisal against her fiery agitation, the bourgeois government of Germany arrested Rosa in 1914 and sentenced her to prison for inciting the soldiers in the imperialist army to disobey orders. She spent most of the years between 1914 and 1918 in prison. In prison she suffered terribly from stomach problems and headaches. However, she never lost her commitment and dedication to the struggle; if anything, this persecution strengthened her resolve.

Upon her release she joined with other German revolutionaries and formed the Communist Party of Germany (Spartacus) on December 31, 1918. The name "Spartacus" came from a great leader who led a massive slave rebellion against the rulers of the Roman empire. It was this heritage of rebellion and dedication that Rosa Luxemburg and her comrades adopted when they formed the party.

In 1919 the workers of Germany rose up against the corrupt and brutal regime of the ruling class. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht and the newly formed communist party were leading this revolution.

On January 15, 1919, Rosa and Karl were assassinated in a foul and vicious manner. They were arrested and were turned over to the military, which was- headquartered in the elegant Eden Hotel, a hotbed of diehard monarchists and reactionaries of all ranks and persuasions. Karl was hit in the back of the head with a rifle butt, knocking him semi-conscious. He was dragged and hustled into a waiting car. He was later taken out of the car and shot in the back. His cause of death was classified as "shot while trying to escape." His body was delivered to a mortuary as a "John Doe" found lying on the roadside.

Rosa was surrounded in the lobby of the hotel by the soldiers. They began to harass and beat her. Half-dead, she was dragged to a waiting car, clubbed in the back of the head, and the car speeded away. The attack was quickly brought to an end by a gun shot to the head. The assassins then stopped on a bridge and threw her body in the murky waters, where it remained until it was found over 5 months later. The soldiers covered up her murder by saying that a mob had stopped the car and carried her off.

The murder of Rosa and Karl signaled the beginning of systematic terror against the revolutionaries and communists of Germany which terror gave rise to the Nazi movement. The military corps that murdered Rosa and Karl later became part of Hitler's storm troopers.

The murder of Rosa Luxemburg demonstrated to the whole world that "freedom" in a capitalist country means only freedom for the ruling class to arrest and murder leaders of the working class.

Rosa Luxemburg made mistakes on several important issues in the course of her revolutionary work, such as the issue of Polish independence (she opposed it), but she remains respected today as a great revolutionary leader. Lenin once answered Rosa's critics by quoting an old Russian fable: an eagle can sometimes fly lower than a chicken, but a chicken can never rise to the same heights as an eagle. Despite her mistakes, Rosa was an eagle and the memory of her life and dedication to the workers cause is held dear by revolutionaries all over the world.

Rosa wrote her last article while living underground in defense against the reprisals of the government troops. It was published the day before her assassination. In that article, she attacked and exposed the viciousness with which the German ruling class sought to suppress the proletarian revolution. She recognized that the defeat of the 1919 revolution was the seed of the future triumph. The closing line in that article sums up Rosa and her legacy to us today: "The revolution", she wrote, "will come back, any day, to announce, I was, I am, I shall be."

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# Albania: Nejmije Hoxha

Albania is the only genuine socialist country in the world today. The role of women has been a critical factor in the liberation of the country and the establishment and construction of socialism. One of the great women leaders of the Albanian people is Nejmije Xhuglini Hoxha.

Nejmije once used the pen name "Flaka", or, "the Flame", which was symbolic of the fire that was dormant in the Albanian women. This fire was released during the course of the Great National liberation War and the struggle to build socialism.

Albania was a country that had been brutally oppressed for 400 years by the Turkish empire. After a short period of Independence in the 20th century, it was invaded by the Italian fascists in 1939 and then by the German Nazis.

Before liberation the position of women in Albania was that of virtual slaves. As a symbol of woman's position in society a young girl received a "lash rope" at the time of her marriage. The lash rope was used to carry large bundles of firewood and other heavy loads. It signified that she was a beast of burden. It also was an instrument of punishment and signified that she was under the subjugation of the absolute word of her husband or father.

The laws of the country recognized the right of the husband or father to punish a woman, even to kill his wife or daughter. Child marriage was the rule. Young girls were betrothed in childhood to men they had not met. Quite often a young girl was sent to her in-laws' home to work as a servant. The women, as with the vast majority of the population, were illiterate. The women of the Muslim religion were forced to wear veils. Quite often they were confined in the home. When they were allowed out, it was always with the strictest supervision. Before liberation, only about 600 women in the entire country actually worked outside of the home.

It was from this background that Nejmije grew. She joined the call of the Communist Party of Albania\* to rise up and fight against the oppressors, to fight not only the fascist invaders, but also the landowners and the capitalists who were crushing the people.

When she was still a girl, Nejmije became a partisan fighter. With arms in hand she went to the mountains and fought against the Nazis. She joined the Communist Party and became a theoretical and organizational leader in the Party. She was an organizer of the anti-fascist youth and one of the founders of the women's anti-fascist organization which is now the Albania Women's Union and one of the major mass organizations in the country. Through her dedication to the cause of the working people she rose to the position of a leader of the party and of the country. Today she is a member of the People's Assembly, the highest organ of government in the country, and a member of the Central Committee of the Party. She is the head of the Marxist-



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\* Now the Party of Labor of Albania

Leninist Study Institute, a center for theoretical study. But despite her heroism, hers is not an individual, isolated achievement. Her position has been raised up as the position of all of the women in Albania has been elevated.

Today in Albania over one third of all elected posts are held by women. Nearly half of the work force is women. In technical jobs, for example, doctors, pharmacists, geologists, etc., anywhere from one-third to three-fourths of these jobs are held by women. All the vestiges of women's oppression are being torn out from what was one of the most backward countries in the world. Today Albania stands as a country which is the foremost champion of freedom for women and all of the oppressed people. Truly, Albania stands as a great beacon for all those who seek the complete emancipation of women.

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## Before The Dawn (excerpts) by Shevqet Musaraj

A vivid description of the close ties of the Communist Party with the oppressed women of Albania is presented in the Albanian novel, "Before the Dawn" by Shevqet Musaraj. This novel is set during the period of the National Liberation War in the 1940's. It shows how the Party was able to mobilize the people and why the people loved the Party and followed its leadership. In this excerpt, a young peasant woman has been asked to join the Party. The scene takes place at the meeting of the cell, which is one of the basic party organizations, where she is to be considered for membership. The term "bey" refers to a big landowner, very similar to plantation owners in the U.S. Before the revolution in Albania, the beys had servants and peasants working their land.

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"This is the situation, comrades," concluded Arta. "Very unfavorable for our work. But we shall get over the difficulties, we have the people with us, the people who have trusted their lives and their fate to the Party which protects them and defends them in all circumstances regardless of the sacrifices. On the other hand, as you must have read in the last Party tract, which exposes the deals the Ballists and the Social Democrats make with the Germans, the day when the noose will tighten around the neck of the Germans, is getting even nearer. The day of the liberation of the people is coming!" Arta very often used phrases like those to the other members of the District committee whom she envied for their fine way of speaking. "Our duty, comrades, is to remain loyal fighters for the freedom and welfare of the people, as it becomes true communists, to the end of our lives," she ended.



When the discussions were well under way, Netka noticed that even the fellows who were poorly dressed spoke clearly and fluently: one of them, who had large patches on the knees of his trousers and wore boots much too big for his feet that weighed at least four kilos, spoke even better than the girl Arta. "And what must I do?" the woman began to ask herself. "That girl told the comrades that I also am expected to speak. What can I say to them? I will surely stutter, drown myself in perspiration, and say nothing sensible. I am not sure I did well to get myself mixed in this affair..."

Deko, who was the last to speak, mentioned the proposal that Netka should be accepted as a party member. "Our cell," he said, "considers it an honour to admit to its ranks a woman from the working class, a woman who has suffered much and who is courageously giving her help to our struggle. I have known her myself. Of her own free will she has put her home at our disposal as a base for illegal comrades. Then... to cut it short, isn't our Party first and foremost a party of the workers?"

Arta nodded approvingly and, after waiting for Deko to finish, she began herself to speak:

"Comrade Deko is quite right. But the proposal must be put before the meeting for discussion. And since it seems we have finished with the first item, I think that the new comrade should say to us a few words about her past and present life, then we can discuss the proposal."

The woman lowered her eyes and began to play nervously with a button on the front of her carcaf, and though feeling she had so many things to tell them, she could not say a single word.

"You can take off your carcaf if you want to. Perhaps it is too hot here," said Arta as she reached to help her.

Netka raised her head, and she flushed scarlet as she stopped Arta's hand with a decisive "No, no!"

Arta thought it better to change the subject.

"Well, Netka, can't you tell us something about yourself? Maybe you do not feel at your ease since it is the first time. It is very natural and we have all passed through this experience. But little by little we have got over it and now, as you see, we can talk like lawyers. Did you suppose we came to the party learned? No, Netka, the most learned here are Deko and I, and do you know how much schooling we have had? I, who am the older, have finished two classes of the secondary school. Deko has five elementary grades. Bimi there, who speaks so nicely," she pointed at the boy with the big shoes, "has never been to school, but has had enough will and perseverance to learn to read and write... You must above all keep one thing in mind, that we are here at a party meeting where no discrimination is made between learned and not learned, between big and small, that we are all comrades and share the same rights."

Arta's words seemed to have lifted some of the woman's uneasiness. She began to see the comrades under a different light. She nodded with her head and smiled, implying that she understood what was said to her and it made her happy, but that she found it too difficult to speak.

"Tell us, what has made you be so close to the Party?" asked Arta unexpectedly. "A little while ago you said that you were body and soul with the Party, why?"

The woman's expression changed. Two deep lines appeared on her clean forehead which, together with the finely arched black eyebrows and the melancholy look of her eyes increased Artá's curiosity.

"With the Party?" the woman raised her shoulder, as if surprised at Artá's question. "I think it must have been my sufferings that have made me want to be as near to the Party as possible, what else? ...My sufferings and... perhaps my need for support... You know how one feels when one is alone... when you need support and everybody drives you off throwing stones at you, and you don't know which way to go... I don't know... Perhaps I am wrong."

"No sister, on the contrary, you are quite right," said Artá.

The woman looked around at the others. The eyes of all of them were fixed at her and seemed to be prompting her to continue.

And she continued:

"I have had nobody in my life since a child, no mother, no father. I grew up to the age of eighteen as a servant at a bey's house. I have suffered much there. He was right, the comrade who spoke before. Everybody in that house raised his hand to strike me, the bey, and his wife, and his guests... and there was also that Safet Bey Backa who had nothing else to do but run after women. Then there was the old lady, Galip Bey's mother. She was a real dragon. I had to endure everything because I could do nothing else, I had nobody to rely upon. At last things came to a point when I could not stand it any longer and I ran away... I ran where my eyes led me... But it cost me dear. For the last fifteen years my husband and I have been out on the road and haven't been able to settle down anywhere for fear of the bey, who had got so mad when he heard that Ferik had also run away together with me..."

"Who is Ferik?" asked the boy with the big shoes, interrupting her.

"My husband. He also was a servant of the bey. When he saw in what a dangerous situation I was, he took pity on me, put his hand on my shoulder and said: "Come, we will run away together, come what may. The worst that can happen is death; we owe it and we have to pay it sooner or later." That very day we married and ran away.

The comrades were looking at each other, strangely moved by the simple story. Artá was trying to write down everything the woman had said. When she had finished Artá pushed aside with her pencil the lock of hair that had fallen over her eyes and turned to the others:

"So, comrades; what do you say?"

"We have nothing to say. We all agree that the comrade should be admitted to the Party as a candidate member," said Deko with authority, as if speaking on behalf of all the others.

"Then let us put it to the vote," proposed Artá. "Who is in favour?"

They all raised their hands, looking at the woman with a peculiar expression of kindness.

# The National Revolutionary Movements

Wherever nations are oppressed by imperialism, there is resistance. Working women have always been courageous and indispensable fighters for the liberation of their countries and for the right of self-determination of oppressed nations.

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## Ireland: Constance de Markiewicz

Constance de Markiewicz was somewhat unusual and different from some of the other women revolutionary leaders, in that she was born, in 1868, into an aristocratic family. When she was 40 years old she repudiated her class privilege, dedicated her life to the revolutionary movement and maintained that dedication for the rest of her life.

Constance became very active in 1908 when Lord Baden Powell, who was a British Lord, announced the formation of the Boy Scouts. People in the United States have been taught to believe that the Boy Scouts are a fairly innocuous organization, but in fact Constance and her colleagues recognized them for what they- are. Ireland was invaded 800 years ago and occupied by the British. For these many years the Irish have been fighting for their independence. Constance realized the danger posed to the Irish liberation movement if the British Boy Scouts were to come in and brainwash young Irish boys into supporting British imperialism.



Recognizing the significance of this development, Constance immediately formed the Irish Boy Scouts, which was named Fianna Na hEireann, which means basically "youth fighters of Ireland". During the time that Lord Baden Powell was teaching his Boy Scouts how to tie knots and how to do woodcrafts and carvings, Constance taught her scouts how to drill and march, horseback riding and the use of firearms. In fact, she personally undertook the firearms training, because she was an expert shot. She lived to see her scouts fight in the Irish Rebellion in 1916 and become an important part of what eventually became the Irish Republican Army, or the I.R.A.

Constance put the scouts to good use in Dublin in 1913, when the owners of the railroads and factories did a massive lockout of the workers and caused terrible hardships. The employers demanded that the workers undergo cutbacks although they were already at starvation level. The workers resisted and the owners locked them out. Thousands of workers went on a sympathy strike until there were 27,000 workers out on strike. There were absolutely no social benefits. There was no food stamps, there was no welfare, there was nothing. They were on the street during a cold, bitter winter.

Constance organized what became known as Liberty Hall Kitchen and she personally cooked thousands of gallons of soup that saved the lives of thousands of working class children and workers' families. It was a familiar sight to the workers to see Constance, in her coveralls with rolled up sleeves, stirring for hours the big cauldrons of soup with a long, wooden paddle. Her soup saved many a man, woman and child from starvation.

The owners organized vicious attacks against the workers. They brought in the police, the military, and hired goons. The workers formed the Irish Citizens Army, which was a workers' militia to defend the strike and to protect the workers from the attacks of the owners. Constance had the honor of being one of only two women who were commissioned as officers in the Irish Citizen Army. She was a lieutenant and a military trainer in that army and she was right in the front ranks, defending the strike from the attacks of the owners.

She also had the distinction of being a member of the Irish Volunteers, which was a national revolutionary militia, which was formed for the express purpose of leading an armed uprising against the British. She was one of the few people in fact who had dual membership in those two organizations. It was partly because of Constance that these organizations merged together to join in what's known as the Easter Rising of 1916. During the Easter Rising, Constance was assigned as one of the military commanders. She was second in command at St. Stephen's Green, where some of the fiercest fighting took place. She was credited with killing 3 British soldiers. She always claimed more and was indignant that only three were verified.

The Rising was defeated. They had been betrayed by one of the leaders who refused to call his troops out and, at a critical moment, an arms shipment had been seized by the British. The rebels were forced to surrender. When word came to Constance, after a week of fighting, that they had to surrender, her reply was characteristic: "We can hold out for days. Let's die at our post!" She was told that the decision had been made by the commander to surrender and as a good revolutionary soldier she abided by the decision, gave up her arms and was taken prisoner by the British.

She was sent to be court martialed along with the other revolutionary leaders. When her court martial came up, Constance stood proud and defiant before the British officers, wearing her military uniform and said, "I plead guilty. I went out to fight for Ireland's freedom and it doesn't matter what happens to me. I did what I thought was right and I stand by it." The British sentenced her to death, realizing that this woman could never be silenced and that she was a dangerous enemy to British imperialism.

Over a period of several weeks, the British started a program of executing the leaders of the Rising, two, three a day, until they got to James Connolly, who was a socialist leader and had led the Irish Citizens Army. Connolly was so badly wounded in the fighting that they had to tie him to a chair in order to haul him out into the prison yard to kill him. There was a tremendous international outcry against the execution of these leaders and as a result of this clamor the British were forced to grant some concessions. They commuted the death sentence of Constance and stated that because she was a woman they would sentence her to life in prison instead. When Constance was told how Connolly was killed and that her own sentence had been commuted to life, she protested, saying, "Why can't they let me die with my comrades?" and demanded that she be allowed to die alongside Connolly, alongside Padraic Pearse, alongside the other leaders of the Rising. The British by that time were under tremendous pressure from worldwide protests



and demonstrations and refused to grant her that wish. She was very embittered and upset that she was not going to be able to join her comrades in their martyrdom.

The revolutionary movement grew rapidly after the executions, particularly after Connolly was killed, and- the British were forced to free Constance in 1918 as a result. Immediately upon gaining her freedom she took up arms again, went underground and began to fight for the liberation and independence of Ireland. A provisional government was set up and Constance had the honor of becoming the first woman in Europe to become a government minister. She was the Minister of Labor in the provisional revolutionary government of Ireland in 1919.

However, the majority of the leaders of the provisional government betrayed the Irish revolutionary cause. They signed a treaty with the British in 1922 that sold out 6 counties of Ireland and ceded those counties to the British. That section of the country is known today as the six counties, or, by the British, Northern Ireland, but in fact, it is an integral, historical part of the nation of Ireland. By agreeing to this treaty, Ireland was torn asunder.

Constance stood up against the sell-out leadership and opposed this treaty. She once again took up arms, this time against the Irish opportunist leaders who had sold out Ireland and agreed to the partition. Once again she was a key military leader, this time in the I.R.A., the Irish Republican Army. She was credited with wiping out an entire machine gun nest of snipers during street fighting in Dublin. Once again the rebellion was defeated and Constance was given orders to surrender. Again she protested saying, "Let's fight to the end." But again she obeyed her orders and agreed to lay down her arms and continue the struggle in other forms.

She then traveled all over Europe, England, and the United States, organizing and preparing for the day that she knew would come eventually when the Irish Republican Army would again take up arms and would obtain the liberation of Ireland. During that time she was tireless in her organizing and her activities.

She returned to Ireland, and in 1927 she was taken ill with appendicitis. When she became ill, there was immediately a clamor to get her to the best hospitals and the best physicians. Instead, Constance told her comrades to take her to the public hospital where the poor were, stating that whatever was good enough for the poor was enough for her. She was taken to a charity hospital in Dublin where she died on July 15, 1927.

After her death the government of the Free State of Ireland (the 26 counties) turned their back on her, for she was a rebel and a revolutionary. A funeral cortege was organized and demonstrations took place in her memory despite the government opposition. Her death was mourned by thousands of workers and national revolutionaries all over the country. A funeral guard was provided by her beloved Fianna Na hEireann who stood watch for days beside her coffin, as the workers came to pay their respects to a woman who had selflessly dedicated her life to the cause of Irish emancipation and revolution.

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# Nicaragua: A Mother's Letter to Her Daughter

by Idania Fernandez

Idania Fernandez was a young Nicaraguan fighter who was killed by the National Guard in Leon on April 16, 1979 just three months before Somoza was overthrown. She was 24 years old. A month before her death she wrote these lines to her daughter Claudia. They remain a legacy from all revolutionary mothers to all children.

To my dear daughter:

This is a very important time to people everywhere, today in Nicaragua, and later in other countries in Latin America and throughout the world. The Revolution demands all that each of us has to give, and our own consciousness demands that as individuals we act in an exemplary way, to be as useful as possible to this process.

I hope that someday, not too far off, you may be able to live in a free society where you can grow and develop as human beings should, where people are brothers and sisters, not enemies. I would like to be able to walk with you, holding hands, walk through the streets and see everyone smiling, the laughter of children, the parks and rivers. And we, ourselves, smile with joy as we see our people grow like a happy child and watch them become new human beings, conscious of their responsibility towards people everywhere.

You must learn the value of the paradise of peace and freedom you are going to be able to enjoy. I say this because the best of our brave people have given their precious blood and they've given it willingly, with great love for their people, for freedom and for peace, for the generations to come and for children like you. They've given their lives so children won't have to live under this repression, humiliation and misery so many men, women and children have suffered in our beautiful Nicaragua.

I'm telling you all this in case I'm not able to tell you personally or no one else tells you these things. A mother isn't just someone who gives birth and cares for her child; a mother feels the pain of all children, the pain of all peoples as if they had been born from her womb. My greatest desire is that one day you will become a true woman with a great love of humanity. And that you'll know how to defend justice, always defend it against whatever and whoever would trample it.



To become this kind of person, read and assimilate the works of the great leaders of our revolution and of the revolutions of other countries, take the best of each as example and put these into practice so that you will continue to grow always. I know you'll do this and that you can do it. And that gives me great peace.

I don't want to leave you words, promises or empty morals. I want to leave you an attitude to life, my own (although I know it isn't yet the best) and that of all my Sandinista brothers and sisters. I know you will learn how to use it.

Well, my plump one, if I have the privilege of being able to see you again--which is also a possibility – we'll have long talks about life and the revolution. We'll work hard carrying out the tasks we're given. We'll play the guitar and sing and play together. And through all this, we'll come to know each other better and learn from one another.

Come, show me your pretty face  
Lovely like flowers and freedom  
And give me energy to struggle  
Uniting your laughter and our reality  
Daily I think of you  
Imagining always how you are  
Always love our people, and humanity  
With all the love of your mother, Idania.  
    Until our victory, forever.  
    Free Homeland or Death.

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## Azanian Women

The women of Azania (South Africa) have played an important role in the struggle for the liberation of their country. Exploited as workers, oppressed as Africans, Azanian women bear the additional burden of sexual inequalities. In South Africa, women provide another source of readily available cheap Black labor so necessary for the system to survive. Yet these women, whose consciousness has spanned several dimensions of oppression, play a crucial role in the advancement of the working class struggle.

South African women played a leading role in the general political struggle of the 1950's and 1960's. Specific campaigns led by the women were those which attacked the basis of their particular oppression. In their campaigns against the extension of pass laws to Azanian women and in other struggles, the women represented a strong, united force to be reckoned with. Their strength and determination inspired the men who fought alongside them and they advanced the liberation struggle considerably during this period.

The history of the oppression of African women in South Africa is similar to that which characterized all colonized nations during the plunder of previous centuries. Expropriation of tribal lands, slavery, forced labor, destruction of indigenous culture – these were the effects of the onslaught of colonialism on the people of Africa and elsewhere.

In South Africa, the apartheid state has ruthlessly enforced the continuation of a system in which African women are oppressed on the basis of their skin color and their sex. Through the system of migrant labor, the pass laws and other special laws affecting African women, the regime has

created a particularly unique form of oppression, distinguishing it from other forms of female oppression within capitalist societies. In South Africa women are stripped of all those rights considered basic human rights throughout the world – the right to choose where to live and work, the right to live with their partners and husbands, the right to bring up and care for their own children.

It is the African women in particular – those who suffer from both national and sexual oppression – who sacrificed most in the struggle against the South African state's definition of them as 'superfluous appendages' of African male workers. From as far back as 1913 when Azanian women organized demonstrations against being forced to buy new residence permits each month, until today, countless women have been beaten, killed, arrested, detained and forced into banishment. This repression does not stop the women of South Africa. Azanian women are rising up against the state. A line in a song by South African women protesting the pass law reads:

"Now you have touched the women,  
you have struck rock,  
you have dislodged a boulder:  
You will be crushed!"



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## Wither Thou Goest by Willie Mae Brown

Oh, Great Africa, Strong One,  
Rise up in revolution.

Fight with the strength of a  
blacksmith's hammer,  
Pounding and molding with the  
spirit of the Bird Eagle.

Let the drums roll,  
and with each cadence  
Go forward with fists raised on high  
And cries of victory to the revolution.

You who have a vision of what  
tomorrow can be... Revolution!!  
The Revolution is being a free man,  
The Revolution is being 24 million free men  
-who are Strong.

Freedom – the word grips your  
conscience like a vise.  
For you know tomorrow will  
be different-

Tomorrow – there will be no  
whips, gas, jails, or rifle  
bullets to repress your ideals.

Tomorrow-the walls that the  
enemy have built around you  
depriving you of your freedom  
will crumble like shattered glass.

You will not be subdued  
You have a vision of what can be.

I hear your drums and with each cadence  
Your cries of freedom penetrate my soul.

I hear you say:  
Our cause will prevail,  
for it is the cause of justice.  
It is the cause of  
a struggling people.

I hear you Brothers and Sisters of Africa.  
Tell your oppressors:  
I will die in the Revolution,  
For it is better to die as rebels  
Than to live as slaves.

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## Rap Song: Sun City

In the past year, (1985-86) people around the world have been focusing on the struggle in South Africa. The Azanian peoples' heroic battle for freedom, liberation and national independence has captured the hearts and minds of revolutionary and progressive people throughout the world. Progressive and revolutionary musicians and entertainers have also joined this struggle and have refused to play or perform in the resort area in South Africa called Sun City. A collection of

rockers and rappers released a song about the boycott which is named "Sun City." In New Orleans three young, Afro-American girls have re-worked some of the words to "Sun City" as follows:

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We're rockers and rappers united and strong  
We're here to talk about South Africa,  
We don't like what's going on  
It's time for some justice  
It's time for the truth  
We've realized there's only one thing we can do

I AIN'T GONNA PLAY SUN CITY

Relocation to phony homelands  
Separation of families, I can't understand  
23 million can't vote because they are Black  
We're stabbing our brothers and sisters in the back

I AIN'T GONNA PLAY SUN CITY

The government tells us we're doing all we can  
"Constructive engagement" is Ronald Reagan's plan  
Meanwhile people are fighting and keeping their hope

This quiet diplomacy ain't nothing but a joke

I AIN'T GONNA PLAY SUN CITY

It's time to accept our responsibility  
Freedom is a privilege, nobody rides for free  
Look around the world it can't be denied  
The rich are always on the wrong side

I AIN'T GONNA PLAY SUN CITY

Boputhuswana is far away  
But we know it's in South Africa  
No matter what they say  
You can't buy me, I don't care what you pay  
Don't ask me Sun City,  
We will fight for a new day

I AIN'T GONNA PLAY SUN CITY

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An Azanian woman shot by government forces during a protest against the apartheid regime.

# Puerto Rico: Women in Prison

Puerto Rico is a nation that has been ruthlessly colonized, exploited and oppressed by U.S. imperialism. The struggle for Puerto Rican independence has gained the respect and support of millions of working class and oppressed peoples all over the world. Despite superior arms, fierce repression and relentless social and cultural pressures, the U.S. government has been unsuccessful in its efforts to crush this movement. Today, the jails and prisons of the U.S. hold scores of prisoners whose only "crime" was to fight for the independence and sovereignty of Puerto Rico. Among these prisoners are grand jury resisters, whose "offense" is that they have refused to collaborate with the U.S. government in its terror campaign against the independence movement.



Dylcia Pagan and Carmen Valentin,  
Puerto Rican prisoners of war.

Puerto Rican women have been at the forefront of the independence movement and have demonstrated their tremendous courage and dedication to the cause of their nation's liberation. They are an inspiration to working women everywhere and their lives reflect the power of women who have been transformed by their participation in revolutionary struggle.

**Dylcia Pagan Morales** and **Carmen Valentin** are both fighters for Puerto Rican independence who are currently being held in U.S. prisons. Though they could not attend, they each sent statements for our International Women's Day celebration in 1986:

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Good evening, dear friends. My name is Dylcia Pagan. I am one of the Puerto Rican prisoners of war that was captured in Evanston, Illinois, near Chicago, April 4, 1980. I, with my eleven other comrades, took the position of Puerto Rican prisoners of war.

You are probably asking yourselves, "Why P.O.W.'s?" Well, the situation of Puerto Rico requires us to have made that decision. According to international law, any country that is subjugated by colonialism has the right to take up arms to defend themselves. And any person captured or accused of such an act has the right to declare themselves, also according to the Geneva Convention, a prisoner of war.

Most people do not understand that there is a war between the United States and Puerto Rico, because it is not to the advantage of this country that the overall American population understand the true situation and the plight of the Puerto Rican nation. Puerto Rico is a country that was invaded militarily 86 years ago by the United States militia. What most of you witnessed in the Grenada invasion never came near to what our homeland went through 86

years ago. From that time to the present the U.S. government has had total control over our livelihood, our economy, our education, all of the aspects that make one a person, and, for us, to be Puerto Rican.

Many people ask us, "What about the question of violence? Why violence?" It is a very important issue. The question of violence is a necessity, simply because this government only respects violent acts. As Puerto Rican people we are probably the most peace-loving humans in the world. I can say for myself and my comrades, we are totally non-violent people. But it is the conditions that the United States government has created that has made us resort to revolutionary, armed struggle. And that is our ideology. We believe in protracted peoples war and we realize and fully understand that the only alternative for the Puerto Rican nation to be free is with the use of arms. There isn't a nation in the world that has gained its independence without the use of violence. This is true particularly when we are facing the most powerful country in the world and the most treacherous country in the world, who today sits and chooses to accelerate its budgetary allocation for military operations as opposed to maintaining and being concerned about the domestic plight of Americans in this country.

I am a Puerto Rican woman. I am 39 years old. I am a mother and a wife. My comrade is William Morales who was captured in 1978, who gloriously escaped in 1979 and unfortunately was re-captured in Mexico City in 1982. We have a beautiful son, Guillermo Sebastian Morales, who neither of us have seen since he was 13 months old. But yet, I do not despair, simply because I believe so much in our struggle and I know that we are correct and that history will exonerate us.

I am facing right now 55 years. Some of my comrades are facing 90 years. We do not see any difference in that amount of time because, as we all say, we came in together, we will be in freedom together. And we clearly know that history will exonerate us because our cause is a just cause.

Looking at the Puerto Rican nation, when we look at women in Puerto Rico, we realize that 48% of our women have been sterilized against their will. 38% of our men have had legal vasectomies, 12% of our land has been used for military operations and the U.S. government continues its plot, its genocidal plot against our people. By the year 2020 they wish to convert our island into a larger military bastion than it already is, by creating 18 military-industrial parks. For what benefit? Their own. They have discovered natural, elementary ores that will provide more elementary ores for the continuation of military warheads.

Again, internationally, the U.S. has violated the treaty of Tlatelolco by placing a nuclear base in Puerto Rico. Recently 50,000 people demonstrated against nuclear arms on the island. That in itself gives us the strength to continue forward, to be able to survive the conditions that this government has put us in prison.

For the past year and a half, the government has been moving me throughout the U.S. The government, I am sure, hoped and wished that my spirit would be broken. But it is very difficult to kill a revolutionary, when we solely believe in our principles, and in the liberation and socialism for our country.

I would like to share with you a poem that I wrote early on when I was captured and I hope you enjoy it.

My dear comrades, before closing and before my poem, I just want to remind you, to please, do work in solidarity for the Puerto Rican independence movement. It is important... If you are freedom-loving human beings, you must respect our position, and continue to struggle so that the level of consciousness of people may rise to the point where people begin to understand and



clearly, clearly understand why peace-loving people like ourselves make the decision to have to use arms.

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## Have You Seen "La Nueva Mujer Revolucionaria Puertorriqueña?"

by Dylcia Pagan Morales

She walks with the stride of her borinquen ancestry as a "Taina Clásica"  
She bears the child which will reap the benefits of our new society,  
She knows where she is headed, for her commitment is to her people.  
She speaks with dignity and defiance, for she knows that her principles are correct and reflect the oppression of her homeland and her people.  
She stands with fervor with arm in hand beside her compañeros.  
For she is prepared to meet whatever consequences arrives.  
The signal is given!  
She responds fearlessly for she is certain that victory will prevail.  
She is captured by the enemy  
But she does not despair, for she knows that her actions have been heard and her people will respond.  
The struggle continues until death.

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**Carmen Valentin** is one of 10 Puerto Rican Prisoners of War who received a 95 year sentence for seditious conspiracy against the U.S. government. Carmen received the longest sentence because the judge said that she showed no remorse. Carmen's statement after being convicted of seditious conspiracy clearly shows her revolutionary commitment to her people:

"Your press, your justice system, your repressive forces, your government, has branded us as terrorists. But the word 'terrorist' no longer means to the Puerto Rican nation what it used to. Instead of arousing fear or censure, 'terrorism' is a call to action. To be called a terrorist by our enemy is an honor to any citizen; for this means he or she is fighting with a gun in their hand against the monstrosity of the present government and the suffering it causes."

On March 8, 1986, she sent the following message of greetings for International Working Women's Day:

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My dear friends and comrades. My name is Carmen Valentin, one of the fifteen Puerto Rican prisoners of war in this country. I was captured, along with nine other comrades on April 4, 1980. Prior to that I was involved with all aspects of the development of the Puerto Rican community in the West Town of Chicago, Ill. I was primarily involved in the educational process where I am a high school teacher and worked as such for many years. During the illegal proceedings held in this country's courts, we were charged with possession of arms at the state level. Later we were tried for seditious conspiracy. I am presently serving a 98 year sentence.

From the inception, we proclaimed ourselves prisoners of war according to the protocols of the Geneva Convention. We have done this because history dictates it, as our country was militarily invaded in 1898 and since then has been occupied illegally by this country. Puerto Rico is not part of the United States, nor has it ever been. Therefore, to be accused of seditious conspiracy is the impossible crime.

We are fully recognized by a broad sector of our people, as well as by many progressive elements of the international arena, as prisoners of war, carrying on a war in an attempt to decolonialize our country. The use of arms was undertaken by us as a group and continues to be used today because all channels of peaceful protest have been ignored and are therefore null and void.

We truly believe that the only solution to our nation's plight is that of armed insurrection. We, as a nation, have been victimized by the violence of this country and as a consequence have turned violent means into avenues that will bring a peaceful future. We wish to urge all peace-loving, progressive people to study the struggle of the Puerto Rican people for only then can we hope to add your necessary support to the sacred cause of arms for the liberation for our Puerto Rico.

I would like to dedicate this poem to all of you that daily struggle to establish peace and justice. For it is exactly what we are seeking to establish. I would also like to dedicate this poem to my son, Antonio, who is 16 years old and a great example for the youth of today. To all I send my revolutionary love, for like the poem says, we are isolated from all and truly miss the pleasures of real life. But if this is necessary to reach our sacred objective, let it be until death. To all women who struggle we send our love.

Demonstration for Puerto Rican Independence, New York City, 1970



Demonstration for Puerto Rican independence,  
New York City, 1970

# I Will Never Be A Traitor

by Carmen Valentin

In the long process of liberation  
I can perhaps lose my life,  
I can spend days hungry and dismayed,  
I can be mistreated or destroyed,  
But I will never be a poisonous traitor.

During this long and anguished journey  
You can – Oh cruel enemy! –  
try to steal our homeland,  
to rape our culture,  
to fill your jails and dungeons daily  
with our young and fertile blood;  
You can terrorize the world  
with lies about our cause.  
But you will never be able to count on me.  
I will never be a poisonous traitor.

Oh, cruel enemy! you can rob me of the son of my life,  
deprive me of every loved one,  
isolate me entirely,  
humiliate me before the world –  
But I will never be a poisonous traitor.

Oh! Homeland of my life,  
For you I have lived and will know how to live.  
Without you I am nothing, it is better to die;  
Oh! Homeland of my soul  
I am joyous  
for I am yours  
and I am heading towards victory!

## Part 3

# The Role of Revolutionary Women Today

## Six Questions by an Afro-American Woman Worker

In conclusion to what's been said, what must be done?

1. Could all the women mentioned here in this struggle of the workers be stopped? Never. They are by no means alone in this struggle as long as the strength of the workers is behind them.

2. Why did I feel bad about my condition? Because I didn't know that I was among the most oppressed under the capitalist system.

3. What must be changed concerning those old laws that keep women in a position of inequality?

Class oppression; terrible working conditions; low wages; national oppression; racial barriers; inequality in employment; discrimination against pregnant working women; lack of child care facilities for working mothers; stereotypes of office personnel and drudgery in the household. All of this must be eliminated.

4. Who are the workers? We have found out that the workers are those who own only their ability to work, who slave for wages and, in the case of the women workers, also slave in the homes. We, all of us who are the workers, suffer because of the present system and it must be changed.

5. What must be done? We must take a stand against the oppression and exploitation of working class women.

6. Is socialism possible? Yes, it's possible. If the masses of working people, men and women, are educated in the spirit of such a struggle, then socialism is possible.

The role of the revolutionary woman today is that we can and must make a change. Down with capitalism! For the socialist revolution!

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# The Road to the Complete Emancipation of Women

Who is the revolutionary woman today and what is her role? The revolutionary woman is the woman who rebels at injustice. Not only injustice against herself and her family but injustice against the entire working class and injustice against all nations. But she must direct that spirit of rebellion. She must consciously study the revolutionary science of Marxism-Leninism and learn from the international and historical experience that is now made available to us.



She must understand the need for organization and direct her efforts towards building revolutionary organizations. We look at the lessons learned from the past and we see that capitalism is the source of our oppression. Capitalism is the base of all the evils that we have been talking about here and capitalism can only be removed through a socialist revolution.

But revolution is a complex task and must be led by a powerful organization. The revolutionary woman in the U.S. today must bend all of her efforts towards building a revolutionary, communist, Marxist-Leninist party. Working men and women, of all nationalities, together can become a powerful and invincible force for change, if we are organized and if we build such a party that will lead us to victory.

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## The Draft Party Program of the Revolutionary Political Organization (Marxist-Leninist)

(Excerpts regarding women and the family)

### IV. Socialism and Communism

The strategic goal of the U.S. proletariat is to overthrow the U.S. bourgeoisie and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the dictatorship of the vast majority. All the material conditions exist for the overthrow of capitalism and the direct transition to socialism...

The socialist constitution will guarantee women complete legal equality. Women will be drawn into production and into political life on an equal basis with men. Childcare will be provided free of charge and housework will be socialized. At the same time, men will share the responsibility for the care of children and for housework. The ideology of male supremacy and unequal relations in family life will be combated and eventually destroyed. The proletariat will use its

state power to combat the oppression of women and realize the complete social equality of women in all spheres of society.

### **VIII. Immediate Demands of the Proletariat**

In order to protect the well-being of the proletariat and to promote the class consciousness, organization and fighting capacity of the proletariat to emancipate itself, the Party raises the following immediate demands:

A. The Party fights to protect the political rights and fighting capacity of the proletariat and its allies and to oppose all forms of bourgeois violence, intimidation, terror and brutalization of the people. We demand and fight for:

...The right to equality of women in work, pay, holidays, education and all social and political activity. The Party fights against male supremacy in all its forms, including prostitution, pornography, bondage and violence against women.

– The equality of children born out of wedlock...

B. The Party fights to improve the economic and social well-being of the working people, to oppose all attempts to worsen the living conditions of the proletariat and its allies. We demand and fight for:

...Full compensation for maternity leave three months before and after childbirth. Non-hazardous work for pregnant women. Free childcare on a 24-hour basis.

– Free and safe abortion on request. Free distribution of safe methods of birth control and an end to forced sterilizations.

– An end to child labor. Full wages for all those employed, regardless of age, with special reduction of the workday for youth.

# The Internationale

Words by Eugene Pottier, 1871

Music by Pierre Degeyter, 8888

E G#m A C#m F#m



A- rise ye pris'ners of star- va-tion A-

B E E G#m



rise ye wret-ched of the earth For jus-tice thun-ders con-dem-

A C#m F#m B B7 E



na-tion A- bet- ter world's in birth No-

B F# B F#



more tra-di-tion's chains shall bind us A- rise ye slaves no more en-

E<sup>b</sup> B B7 E G#m C#m



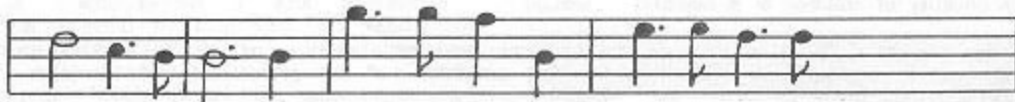
thrall The earth shall rise on new foun- da- tions We have been

B F#7 B E G#m A C#m F#m



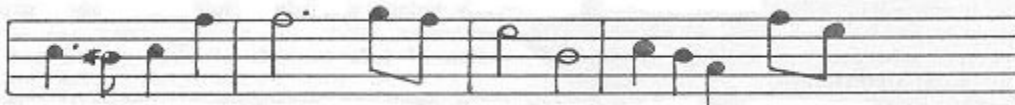
naught we shall be all 'Tis the fi- nal con-flict Let each

B E B7 E G#m C#m



stand in their place The in- ter- nation-al work-ing class shall

F# F#7 B B7 E G#m A C#m F#m



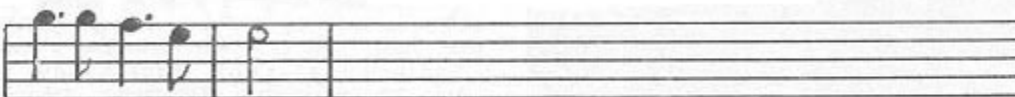
be the hu-man race 'Tis the fi- nal con-flict Let each

B B7 G# C# F#m Am



stand in their place The in-ter-nation-al work-ing class Shall

E B E



be the hum-man race