

WOMEN, RACE AND CLASS

DISCUSSION

"To know your history and act accordingly is to be revolutionary"
--Ralph Fetherstone

I. OVERVIEW

A. Functional definition:

Deepen conceptualization of historical lessons and methods of struggle for revolutionary movement in forging principled and effective alliance between white women and women of color.

B. The objective and subjective factors:

1. Objective factor: the social system.

a. Slave system -- defined and was served by particular social relationships. Specifically, under the slave system, there was equality between men and women.

b. Capitalist system -- perpetuates and is served by bourgeois ideology (white chauvinism and male chauvinism, racism and sexism).

2. Subjective factor: the revolutionary movement.

People of color and women of the working class are the rising forces.

a. What are the basic contradictions which have emerged in the historical development of the relation between these forces?

b. What is the principal contradiction which must be resolved in the process of forging an effective revolutionary alliance between these forces? What is the character and nature of this contradiction?

II. STUDY QUESTIONS

A. Compare the relations between men and women of the laboring classes under the slave system with those under the capitalist system.

1. What is the material basis for the difference?
2. Describe differences in the family of the laboring classes under the slave system between that under the capitalist system, and the material basis for the differences.

B. Compare the standards of womanhood developed in the conditions of slavery with the standards of womanhood developed under the conditions of capitalism. Then, distinguish the standards of womanhood under capitalism between:

- see pp. 165-173 Urban Survival*
fight for your rights - stand by your ^{mate} ~~mate~~ Live off your husband
1. Working class women v. petty bourgeois women;
Family Solidarity (compromise - self sacrifice) Individualism
 2. White women v. Black women. *p. 5*

C. What were the historical material conditions that gave rise to the birth of the women's rights movement?

D. Describe the material basis of the unity between the early women's rights movement and the anti-slavery movement. *p. 39-42, 47*

1. Describe the dialectical relationship between the two movements.
2. What was the predominant character of white women's support of the anti-slavery movement?

71 (p. 52)
E. Identify the turning point when the women's rights movement became unable to make the transition in conformity with the qualitatively changed objective condition. *Civil War*

1. What was the qualitative change in the objective condition, and what transition was required for the women's rights movement to sustain its leading role in history?
2. What is meant by Davis' statement that "the abolitionist movement's failure to promote a broad anti-racist consciousness carried over into the women's rights movement"? *p. 13 (Vict. Nam on "male" issue)*
3. What was the material basis for the abolitionist movement's failure to promote a broad anti-racist consciousness?

F. The women's suffragist movement.

1. What was its source, and how did it emerge?
2. Describe the women's suffragist movement's development.
3. How did it turn into its opposite to become a reactionary force? What was the internal basis for this?
4. Opportunism: how was this manifested in the practice of the women's suffragist movement? What was the resultant?
5. Describe the two different class perspectives on the issue of women's suffrage.

G. Bourgeois policy: the cult of true womanhood/motherhood.

1. What was the function of this policy?
2. How was this policy viewed by:
 - a. Petty bourgeois women
 - b. Working class women
 - c. Black women

*at the Philadelphia Convention
colored freedom*
*By 1820's & 1840's (Sewer Falls) farm women were replaced
by immigrant workers in the mills*

H. "Racism and sexism frequently converge."

1. What does Davis mean by this statement?
2. Identify examples of this convergence.

I. Education.

1. "Knowledge unfits a child to be a slave." (Douglass)
 - a. What does this mean?
 - b. Why was education not available to slaves?
2. Under capitalism, education became available to Black people, especially children. Why?
3. What was the material basis for the fact that a large proportion of those who came to the South during Reconstruction to set up schools were white women?
4. What is the relation between the drive for education of Black people after emancipation from slavery and the push by petty bourgeois women before and after that time for their own education?

J. The club movement.

1. What gave rise to women's clubs at the turn of the century?
2. Compare white women's clubs with Black women's clubs:
 - a. Class content;
 - b. Clubs' purpose, and the basis for the difference in purposes.

K. Describe the process of development of the leadership in the women's movement after the Civil War, during the consolidation of monopoly capitalism.

1. Quantify the leadership elements.
2. Identify at what point, if any, there was a qualitative change in the leadership of the women's movement.

L. "Socialist women carry a special responsibility toward Black women."

1. What does Davis mean by this?
2. What is the material basis for such responsibility?
3. What is the significance to the revolutionary movement of this "special responsibility"?

M. Davis discusses several contemporary social issues, in the spirit of constructive criticism of the feminists' positions. For each of the following issues, delineate the opposing viewpoints and the methods of struggle to resolve the contradiction between the bourgeois feminist approach and a proletarian class stand.

1. Rape.
2. Reproductive rights (abortion and sterilization).
3. Housework.
4. Other issues:

a. Domestic abuse..

b. Family issues.

- 1) Compare the historical conditions and development of Black families under the slave system with those under the capitalist system.
- 2) Identify the explanations of the plight of Black families in poverty which have been advanced by capitalist apologists.
- 3) What political position have feminists taken in regard to family issues and the issue of domestic abuse, and how does this position relate to the material experience and interests of contemporary Black families?
- 4) Analyze the family issues, as Davis has analyzed other political issues, vis-a-vis the feminists' political stand and the appropriate MOS.

ADDITIONAL STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Define sexual rape.

2. A recent study concluded American women are 10 times likely to be sexually assaulted than European women.

Under this assumption, state why it is misleading for any one to focus primary attention on black and minority men raping white women, when under our assumption, rape and sexual abuse of children in the USA is a societal problem?

3. Does gay rights support sexism?

4. What are some outstanding characteristics of racism and sexism in Chi, as contrasted to racism and sexism in the TC?

5. How does ideological struggle fit into household work and family life?

6. Give examples of how commercial and industrialized households intensifies labor and perpetuate sexism?

7. What are the key elements that make socialist women qualitatively different from other women who are in the struggle for eradicating sexism and racism?