

SUMMARY OF W/R/C DISCUSSION

The discussion proceeded from the two most frequently asked questions in the initial comments by the group: why was sexism instead of racism posed as the p.c. of the slave system, and why does the industrialization of housework strengthen sexism?

First,

The principal contradiction during the period of slavery was sexism because of the form that capital renewal took under slavery. Slave women were breeders, they produced more slaves, therefore more capital. The ideology of racism developed in the period after the civil war, when the capital formation changed. Capital was no longer embodied in the former slaves, they became workers in a capitalist economy.

It was in the interest of the capitalist class to emphasize difference between the former slaves and the rest of the working class - the white workers. The difference that was emphasized was color of skin - racism. The capitalist class used the ideology of racism as a justification for super exploitation of the former slaves. White people went along with it because the capitalist paid them a little more and told them they were better than the former slaves. The effect of the ideology was that the wages of the entire working class were suppressed, since white workers need only be paid a little more than former slaves. White workers had to be taught to be racists, capitalism thrives on divisions.

An example of the capitalist class's use of division as a political tactic to divide the working class is the myth of the black rapist. Before and during the civil war, blacks and progressive whites, especially white women formed a strong alliance. Blacks and women gained political and economic advances during this period. To oppose this, the capitalists seized on the charge that black men raped white women. This charge is used to this day. The capitalists used this charge to justify political repression of blacks through lynching. This had the effect of breaking blacks political and economic advances. The tactic was consciously designed as a political instrument to divide blacks and progressive whites. The charge of rape was calculated to inspire fear and distrust of blacks among white women, and break their alliance with blacks.

Second,

How industrialization of housework strengthens sexism can be understood by asking the question: if a woman coming from sexism can do the housework that used to take an hour in half an hour, then what does she do with the half hour saved? The answer is more housework. Without a change in outlook, industrialization of housework only increases the expectation (both internal and external to the woman) that more housework will be accomplished. This further consolidates her value as tied to the house, and reinforces sexism.

The ideologies of sexism and racism exist to justify capitalist exploitation. Domestic work is an example of underpaid or unpaid work. The super-exploitation associated with this work is justified because the majority of domestic workers are black. On the other hand, the exploitation of black domestic workers in turn reinforces sexism, since it reinforces the view of 'women's work' as having little value. The solution is to raise the level of domestic work through unionization of domestic workers. If domestic work was raised to the level of exchange of value between the capitalist and the workers, the work is dignified, and therefore racism and sexism as ideologies are undercut.

Many issues supported by women today can be, unless women are conscious, used by the capitalist as racist tactics. Examples -- women's struggle for abortion and reproduction rights vs. forced sterilization for blacks and other third world women, women's fear of rape and concern for safety vs. the use of the rape charge to politically suppress black men. Sexism and racism are used to keep the class divided, to exploit differences and create isolation and distrust among natural allies.

There is no women's movement today. There are issues concerning women, and issue oriented struggles. Since RR has become DA of the country, there has been an attack on the advancements made by blacks and women in the sixties and the seventies. Most of the political activity by women has been to hold on to what was gained then. Since the R's are likely to retain power for some time in the future we can look forward to more political repression of blacks and women.

In Davis' book, examples were given of Communist women. These women were never fooled by racist or sexist ideologies, they always maintained clarity of the class nature of the PC and how the capitalist class would try to divide the working class against each other. These women consistently struggled to unite the working class. They thus formed an opposition to the dividing tactics of the capitalist. They are our example for the future.

Second,
How industrialization of housework strengthens sexism can be understood by asking the question: if a woman doing ironing can do the housework that used to take an hour in half an hour, then what does she do with the half hour saved? The answer is more housework. Without a change in outlook, industrialization of housework only increases the expectation (both internal and external to the woman) that more housework will be accomplished. This further consolidates her value as tied to the house, and reinforces sexism.