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A Marxist-feminist view of gender – Nadia De Mond

1. Outline
2. Friedrich Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, “Preface to the first edition”, 1884
3. Adrienne Rich, “Criticism of heterosexuality”, 1976
4. World March of Women, *Violence against women: the "other world" must act*, 2000
5. Fourth International, *On Lesbian/Gay Liberation*, 2003



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Outline of the lecture

Part 1

The origin of women's oppression. We reject a biological, essentialist explanation of inequality by situating female subordination and male supremacy in their historical, socio-economic and cultural context.

Women's oppression is not an eternal fact. But it exists since thousands of years, in the whole period of written history and all over the world.

Let's go back to a previous period.

1) What do we read in the fundamental Marxist writings:

Engels in 'The origin of the family, private property and the State': His hypothesis, based on the first ethnological studies, notably on the work of Morgan, is the existence of a primitive egalitarian society: primitive communism and matriarchy. This hypothesis has been refuted later. What is important, is the methodology, the rejection of the monogamous patriarchal family as a universal model.

2) What does current anthropology tell us?

The first human societies consisted of small informal groups living from gathering, fishing and hunting, an activity shared by everyone. They consumed what they produced. A first division of labour could have developed with the hunting of large animals whereby women remained nearer to the living place during pregnancy and breast feeding. This division was functional and did not attribute a different value to the sexes. This refutes the explanation of the subordination of women through the myth of "man the hunter" who developed superior skills. Most hunter gatherer societies have a matrilinear and matrilocal structure.

Debate on the causes of the evolution towards patrilocality, male dominance in kinship systems, the exchange of women (C.L. Strauss). Neolithic revolution: important changes in the living conditions of women, the beginnings of agriculture, animal husbandry and sedentary life. Creation of a surplus and of private property.

Control is now in the hand of the male leader of the kinship group.

Importance of seniority and of the control on procreative capacities of women in order to insure control over descendants.

Part 2

Patriarchy

= the system of domination by one sex over another, exists since at least 7-8000 years in all different class societies through history worldwide. This system applies to different modes of production. The position of women and the different family structures vary according to historical epochs and geographical latitudes.

Its essence consists of the appropriation, the use and the control by men over:

- women's labour (her work force and the products of it)
- reproduction and sexuality of women (women's bodies)

It penetrates all spheres of existence. We will limit ourselves to the analysis of the current epoch.

Imperfect insertion of women in the economy

- industrial reserve army – horizontal and vertical segregation – precariousness – “feminisation” of the labour market

Exploitation of social reproductive work done for free by women

Interesting idea of feminism of the care sector

Looking at the modern family

Beyond the fact that it is the space of female reproductive work, it is also the place of procreation and of control over sexuality, the birth place of gender identities

Training for masculine and feminine characteristics (no third choice!) for a functional role in society

The division of the world into two exclusive genders, who are opposed and complementary, is permeating all our thinking

The false neutrality of the masculine: (the body of) the male is the norm, (the body of) the female is a derivative product

Women’s oppression – economical, social, political, cultural, ideological – works inescapably through her body; this goes also for the struggles of the women’s movement.

Sexual differences or gender differences?

The so called ideal nuclear, monogamous, heterosexual family imposed on us ... and reality.

Do we really need “Romantic love” ?

Reich: no liberation of the human race without sexual revolution.

Oppression of women in the public domain

Recent access– but not universal – to education

The discovery of women’s role in history, arts, science, “Women’s Studies” are relatively recent

Sexism in the public sphere

The political sphere – the preserve of men – in content and in form

Part 3

The concept of gender again

= forging a sexual identity according to the dominant ideology

= a historic, social and cultural construction which varies in time and space

Introduction of this concept in academia, amongst NGO’s, usage as a “sweetener”.

Use by Marxists

Gender as a straitjacket, especially for LGBTQ persons

Heteronormativity/normality

Homophobia

Extreme oppression by monotheist religions

The perception of sexual identities varies in different cultures

Examples: the Arab world; African pre-colonisation societies; Indian peoples of the America’s

The refusal of gender
Queer theory
Judith Butler
Adrienne Rich

The LGBTQ movement

Frederick Engels
Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State
Preface to the First Edition, 1884

The following chapters are, in a sense, the execution of a bequest. No less a man than Karl Marx had made it one of his future tasks to present the results of Morgan's researches in the light of the conclusions of his own — within certain limits, I may say our — materialistic examination of history, and thus to make clear their full significance. For Morgan in his own way had discovered afresh in America the materialistic conception of history discovered by Marx forty years ago, and in his comparison of barbarism and civilization it had led him, in the main points, to the same conclusions as Marx. And just as the professional economists in Germany were for years as busy in plagiarizing Capital as they were persistent in attempting to kill it by silence, so Morgan's Ancient Society [1] received precisely the same treatment from the spokesmen of "prehistoric" science in England. My work can only provide a slight substitute for what my departed friend no longer had the time to do. But I have the critical notes which he made to his extensive extracts from Morgan, and as far as possible I reproduce them here.

According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of the immediate essentials of life. This, again, is of a twofold character. On the one side, the production of the means of existence, of articles of food and clothing, dwellings, and of the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social organization under which the people of a particular historical epoch and a particular country live is determined by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labor on the one hand and of the family on the other.

The lower the development of labor and the more limited the amount of its products, and consequently, the more limited also the wealth of the society, the more the social order is found to be dominated by kinship groups. However, within this structure of society based on kinship groups the productivity of labor increasingly develops, and with it private property and exchange, differences of wealth, the possibility of utilizing the labor power of others, and hence the basis of class antagonisms: new social elements, which in the course of generations strive to adapt the old social order to the new conditions, until at last their incompatibility brings about a complete upheaval. In the collision of the newly-developed social classes, the old society founded on kinship groups is broken up; in its place appears a new society, with its control centered in the state, the subordinate units of which are no longer kinship associations, but local associations; a society in which the system of the family is completely dominated by the system of property, and in which there now freely develop those class antagonisms and class struggles that have hitherto formed the content of all written history.

It is Morgan's great merit that he has discovered and reconstructed in its main lines this prehistoric basis of our written history, and that in the kinship groups of the North American Indians he has found the key to the most important and hitherto insoluble riddles of earliest Greek, Roman and German history. His book is not the work of a day. For nearly forty years he wrestled with his material, until he was completely master of it. But that also makes his book one of the few epoch-making works of our time.

In the following presentation, the reader will in general easily distinguish what comes from Morgan and what I have added. In the historical sections on Greece and Rome I have not confined myself to Morgan's evidence, but have added what was available to me. The sections on the Celts and the Germans are in the main my work; Morgan had to rely here almost entirely on secondary sources, and

for German conditions — apart from Tacitus — on the worthless and liberalistic falsifications of Mr. Freeman. The treatment of the economic aspects, which in Morgan's book was sufficient for his purpose but quite inadequate for mine, has been done afresh by myself. And, finally, I am, of course, responsible for all the conclusions drawn, in so far as Morgan is not expressly cited.

Footnotes

[1] *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilization*, by Lewis H. Morgan, London, Macmillan & Co., 1877. The book was printed in America and is peculiarly difficult to obtain in London. The author died some years ago. [For the purposes of this edition, all references to *Ancient Society* are from the Charles H. Kerr edition, Chicago. — Ed.]

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/preface.htm>

Adrienne Rich, criticism of heterosexuality

Summary Rich argues that heterosexuality is a violent political institution making way for the "male right of physical, economical, and emotional access" to women. She urges women to direct their energies towards other women rather than men, and portrays lesbianism as an extension of feminism. Rich challenges the notion of women's dependence on men as social and economic supports, as well as for adult sexuality and psychological completion. She calls for what she describes as a greater understanding of lesbian experience, and believes that once such an understanding is obtained, these boundaries will be widened and women will be able to experience the "erotic" in female terms.

In order to gain this physical, economical, and emotional access for women, Rich lays out a framework developed by Kathleen Gough (both a social anthropologist and feminist) that lists "eight characteristics of male power in archaic and contemporary societies". Along with the framework given, Rich sets to define the term lesbianism by giving two separate definitions for the term. Lesbian existence, she suggests, is "both the fact of the historical presence of lesbians and our continuing creation of the meaning of that existence. The other, lesbian continuum, refers to the overall "range – through each woman's life and throughout history – of woman-identified experiences, not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman". Below are the characteristics in which male power has demonstrated the suppression of female sexuality.

1. To deny women their own sexuality: destruction of sexuality displayed throughout history in sacred documents.
2. Forcing male sexuality upon women: rape, incest, torture, a constant message that men are better, and superior in society to women.
3. Exploiting their labour to control production: women have no control over choice of children, abortion, birth control and furthermore, no access to knowledge of such things.
4. Control over their children: lesbian mothers seen as unfit for motherhood, malpractice in society and the courts to further benefit the man.
5. Confinement: women unable to choose their own wardrobe (feminine dress seen as the only way), full economic dependence on the man, limited life in general.
6. Male transactions: women given away by fathers as gifts or hostesses by the husband for their own benefit, pimping women out.
7. Cramp women's creativeness: male seen as more assimilated in society (they can participate more, culturally more important).
8. Men withholding attainment of knowledge: "Great Silence" (never speaking about lesbian existence in history), discrimination against women professionals.

All of the characteristics show how the denial of sexuality for women is a means to control and suppress any transition, creativeness, and economic advancement of women. All of the above are forces that inhibit men to further ignore women as historically, culturally, and currently important. The characteristics show that society has forgotten that it is necessary (in order to function) to include women in both public and private spheres. Furthermore, the ignorance of a female's choice in sexuality has caused her position in society to be thought of as less, and more importantly, secondary to that of a man. A recurring point that Rich points out is the destruction of lesbian experiences in history (misplacement of documents, or destroying them in general) has led to a society in which having a lesbian experience, or being a lesbian all together is seen as 'the other' and unacceptable to most men and women.

Rich claims that women may not have a preference toward heterosexuality, but may find it imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by society. She holds that women receive

messages every day that promote heteronormativity in the form of myths and norms perpetuated by society. Rich argues that these myths have been accepted because of the historical lack of exposure that lesbians have received, being either stigmatized as diseased or ignored as non-existent. Indeed, Rich objects to the term lesbianism, which she sees as a stigmatized clinical term, instead advocating the terms lesbian existence for the historical and contemporary presence of lesbian creation and lesbian continuum to include the entire range of a woman-identified experience; she feels that new understanding and language must be created to counter the limited and clinical terms that society has historically used to describe those it views as deviant. Rich claims that once women see lesbian existence as more than mere sexuality, it is more likely that more forms of "primary intensity" between and among women will be embraced.

Rich argues that part of the lesbian experience is an act of resistance: specifically, a rejection of the patriarchy and the male right to women. She does not, however, deny the existence of "role-playing, self-hatred, breakdown, suicide, and 'intra-woman violence'", all of which have been caused by the realities of rejecting compulsory heterosexuality. Rich writes that lesbians have been denied a continuity of their personal and political history, and that when included in history, they have been simply the female versions of male homosexuals, with no distinctiveness. At certain points in history, homosexual men and lesbians have shared a social existence, and acknowledged a common fight against society; but Rich writes that to treat the lesbian experience as a version of male homosexuality is to discard it, denying the female experience and the realities it brings, falsifying lesbian history.

Rich proposes that all women should separate themselves from men and engage in some form of lesbian relationship, whether it leads to a mere lesbian expression at one time or another or an identified lesbian sexuality. Only then, will it be possible for a woman to truly decide if heterosexuality is the right thing for her. In other words, heterosexuality has been constructed by men historically and culturally to be the only way of existence to further the male need. Yet, if we forget about this ideology and experiment in order to see what one really needs, then it can truly be a woman's decision instead of a man's. On a more radical note, Rich describes the possibility that all women exist on a lesbian continuum, and we see each other moving in and out of this space throughout the lives of women. She gives the example of as female infants suck at their mother's breast in order to grow and obtain nutrients, the mother, experiences some orgasmic or pleasant sensation because of this act. Rich even goes to the extent to pose that women in the twelfth and fifteenth century, called the Beguines, shared living quarters, work and labour were even part of the lesbian continuum. Rich thinks of the word lesbian as meaning more than a sexual attraction and physical act, but an emotional and strong bond that women can share as they go through the same experiences. Furthermore, Rich explains that if heterosexuality is the natural way, as it was constructed over time, then women like in her examples would and were seen as deviants of society. Rich demonstrates that the debate over what is good, bad, right or wrong is a detailed and subjective one. She asserts that if one understands the term lesbian, as broken down into either the lesbian continuum or lesbian existence, a woman can further her understanding of her own sexuality and the construction of female sexuality throughout history. Rich explains, "historians need to ask at every point how heterosexuality as institution has been organized and maintained through the female wage scale, the enforcement of middle-class women's 'leisure', the glamorization of so-called sexual liberation, the withholding of education from women, the imagery of 'high art' and popular culture, the mystification of the 'personal sphere, and much else'".

Rich holds that compulsory heterosexuality denies women of their own sexuality and comfortability in exploring their bodies and those of others. She claims that compulsory heterosexuality produces such myths as that of the vaginal orgasm. That serves to imply that only a man can sexually satisfy a woman (by delivering a vaginal orgasm), and hence that serves to prevent women from having relationships

with other women.

In 1984, Rich wrote, “Reflections on Compulsory Heterosexuality” in order to address the criticism she received on her former essay, “Compulsory Heterosexuality”. Furthermore, Rich re-appropriates her argument and describes her initial intent for writing the essay. Rich states, “I undertook “Compulsory Heterosexuality” [...] to contribute to an issue on sexuality, from any perspective I chose. I thought I was writing an exploratory piece, an essay in the literal sense of “attempt”: a turning picture –the presumption of female heterosexuality—around to view it from different angles, a hazarding of unasked questions. That it should be read as a manifesto or doctrine never occurred to me.” Rich discloses that the purpose of “Compulsory Heterosexuality” was to complicate the proverbial, i.e. heterosexuality, in an attempt to include different realities, i.e. homosexuality. In no way was Rich seeking a lesbian revolution against heterosexuality.[1]

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THE “OTHER WORLD” MUST ACT

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WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THE “OTHER WORLD” MUST ACT

Introduction

It was decided that for the second meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre there would be a forum for reflection and debate on alternatives to the “culture of violence.” The World March of Women agreed to write the paper that will serve as the basis of discussion for this forum. We have deliberately chosen to talk about violence against women in order to illustrate how central this form of violence is to the so-called “culture of violence.” It could be said that this is the original form of violence, even the paradigm on which other forms of violence are modelled. We chose to talk about violence against women precisely because feminists have always been the ones to speak about this phenomenon. Apart from the contributions of feminists and the pressure we have brought to bear, the public discourse on this issue has been like violence against women itself: invisible.

It is somehow terrible to talk about a “culture of violence.” It seems paradoxical to casually pair the words culture and violence—one, with its positive connotations and the other, with all its negative associations. The use of the word culture suggests, to varying degrees, social endorsement, assent and transmission. This is exactly what happens with violence against women.

Without denying the importance of other forms of violence, we believe that if the causes and consequences of violence against women are thoroughly understood, the groundwork can be laid for alternatives to construct another world based on equality and respect of others.

The aim of this paper, then, is to demonstrate the universality of violence and its diverse forms and, especially, to pinpoint its causes in order to succeed in eradicating it. We denounce the patriarchy—a system which for thousands of years has imposed inequality, exploitation, privilege, discrimination, values, standards, and policies, based on the presumed natural inferiority of women as human beings and on a hierarchy of social roles assigned to women and men. It is this system that generates violence. We denounce neoliberal capital globalization that is supported by a sexual division of labour that creates additional inequality between men and women and concomitantly, the potential for increased violence. Our goal is to put an end to violence against women and we will enumerate the elements that must be changed in order to do so. Naturally, this directly concerns all who are active in the struggle against liberal globalization.

We hope that everyone who reads this paper will contribute to it with his or her thinking and proposals so that we will arrive in Porto Alegre in 2002 with a powerful text that invites action. We welcome your comments.

IN THE DAWN OF THE 21ST CENTURY: DEEPLY ROOTED TOLERANCE AND COMPLICITY WITH ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women: a transnational and transcultural reality

Violence against women takes different forms depending on the society or culture in question, but it is

a social phenomenon that cuts across all social classes, cultures, religions and geo-political situations. There are no exceptions, and the rule is unfortunately confirmed every day.

Indeed, every minute women are abused, humiliated, assaulted, raped, beaten, exploited and killed, most often by men close to them—and this has been true for thousands of years.

Violence occurs most often in the private realm (feminists have amply shown that the “private is political”): for example, within the family, in the form of incestuous rape, genital mutilation, infanticide, son preference, forced marriage, etc.; and within marriage or a sexual relationship, in the form of marital rape, blows, psychological control, pimping, “honour” crimes, femicide, etc. The public sphere is also the arena for violence against women in the form of sexual and psychological harassment in the workplace, sexual assault, gang rape, sex trafficking, pornography, organized procurement rings, slavery, forced sterilization, etc. Violence against women is most often an expression of one man’s domination, but it may also be practiced in an organized manner by several men or by a state (systematic rape in Bosnia and Haiti). Too often it is tolerated, excused or encouraged by silence, discrimination, women’s dependence on men, theoretical justifications and psychological approaches that support various stereotypes and myths: men are unable to control themselves, especially their sexual impulses; rapists are mentally ill; women love “real” men, etc.

The multiple manifestations of violence against women

Some global statistics on violence against women (taken from Sexism and Globalization, World March of Women, 2000):

- 20% to 50% of women are, to varying degrees, victims of wife assault.
- An estimated 5,000 women and girls in the world are victims of “honour” crimes every year.
- According to UNICEF, one in 10 women in the world is raped at least once in her lifetime.
- According to most published studies on the subject, women are most often raped by a man they know.
- There are an estimated 130 million women in the world who have suffered genital excision; every year nearly two million more women are subjected to this custom, at a rate of roughly 6,000 per day, or five girls per minute.
- Estimates of the number of women in the sex industry range from a low of nine million to as high as 40 million women throughout the world.
- It is estimated that the sex trade generates \$52 billion every year for organized criminal networks.
- It is evaluated that four million women and girls are bought and sold around the world every year, to future husbands, pimps or slave merchants.
- In the region of Southeast Asia alone, nearly 70 million women and children have been victims of sex trafficking over the last 10 years.
- Over 100 million girls are missing around the world because of son preference.
- In India, an average of five women are victims of dowry-related burnings every day, and many other cases are never reported.
- In 2000, a study conducted in the 15 member states of the European Union revealed that 2% of women workers (three million) have suffered sexual harassment at work and 9% of women and men workers have experienced psychological harassment.

Fundamentalist regimes: extreme examples of the institutionalization of violence against women

Fundamentalist regimes like that of the Taliban in Afghanistan have institutionalized violence against women, conferring on all men the divine right to employ it at any time. Over the centuries, the absolute control of women and appropriation of women’s bodies has manifested itself in different ways, ranging from outright horror to manipulation. The 20th century saw progress in women’s rights but no significant reduction in the violence of which women are the specific targets. We know about “honour” crimes, dowry-related crimes against young women, and the levirate: all practices that give men in the

family life and death power over the women and girls. Furthermore, in the West, despite broad recognition of women's rights, violence and diverse forms of control persist (a woman is raped every 6 minutes in the United States, non-recognition of marital rape and the right to abortion in Switzerland; expansion of sex trafficking; massacres of women like that of 1989 in Montréal). No society is free of violence against women because there is no society where women and men are equal, even where equality of rights or formal equality has been recognized.

On the international scene at the moment, the situation of Afghan women is probably the most striking example of the indifference or tolerance of the intolerable in societies claiming to respect fundamental human rights. Before October 7, few countries had actively called for the end of the Taliban's abuse of women that had gone on since 1996. Since the beginning of the war, however, it has become popular to justify the bombing by pointing to the non-respect of women's fundamental rights. According to Amnesty International, the number of women victims of armed conflict has risen from 5% during the First World War, to 50% during the Second World War, to almost 80% during the 1990s. There is no reason why the present war should be any different. Women in Afghanistan, like the rest of the population, want the bombing to end, and with the departure of the Taliban, to see the institution of equal rights. Afghan women's groups also want to be actively involved in peace negotiations and in the restoration of democracy in their country.

Rape as a weapon of war

Another manifestation of violence against women is the use of women's bodies as war booty or a weapon of war. In all armed conflict, from ancient times to the present, aggressors have used rape as a way of attacking their enemies. Rape camps were organized during the Balkan war, for example, as part of the "ethnic cleansing" campaign. It has now been revealed that during the Algerian war, French combatants committed rape on a massive scale. Between 1932 and the end of the Second World War, Japan set up camps so that its army could be "serviced" by sexual slaves. In these rape centres, termed "Recreation Centres," 200,000 women were forced into sexual slavery. The slaves, known as "comfort women," were kidnapped from neighbouring countries who were at war with Japan. Since the end of the war in Kosovo, women from Eastern Europe have been kidnapped, confined, terrorized and taken by organized crime networks into brothels in Pristina. Almost half of the men frequenting these brothels are international NGO workers and peacekeeping forces. The list goes on and on.

Women fight back and organize

Despite the suffering they have endured, women everywhere fight back against violence every day. They organize with each other and demonstrate to change laws, ensure their implementation, challenge the "customs" for which women pay the price, and to offer solidarity to women who are victims of violence, etc. Every day, women who have been violently attacked find the courage to rise up in loud and determined protest. They are the principal fighters against this social scourge. Here are just a few examples: the Maurician women who mobilized against wife assault and had a law passed in 1997; the plays created by Filipina women to prevent sex trafficking; Women in Black in Serbia, who protested Milosevic's militarist and nationalistic policy and supported women refugees in Kosovo; and associations in Burkina Faso who work with adolescent girls to prevent genital mutilation and forced or early marriage.

THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is rooted in the hatred of otherness and the belief that domination is a viable

means of survival. The patriarchy instituted a system of masculine domination (social, economic and political) over women. Despite the progress of feminism in the last few years, men and boys in all societies and social classes derive large benefits and concrete privileges from this system of domination: for example, domestic work and the raising of children are everywhere the almost exclusive domain of women and girls, who do it for free. Boys and men everywhere are accorded more value than women and girls. In order to impose and to maintain what is the oldest and most persistent system of exploitation and oppression, violence, or the threat of violence, is used as a tool of control and punishment for disregarding the patriarchy's established rules (hierarchy, submission, obedience, etc.). Our societies have developed (and continue to develop) from a foundation that espouses a hierarchy of individuals according to sex. In this context, otherness is seen and constructed as a threat rather than as an advantage. From this springs the need to dominate in order to survive that is the basis of the patriarchy. The desire to preserve the privilege inherent in the status of the oppressor leads to the use of violence as an affirmation of masculinity and as a tool for maintaining dominance. A bond of solidarity is thus constructed among men to assure the continuity of this situation. As long as we refuse to challenge these realities, we will not succeed in eliminating violence against women.

Patriarchal domination generally models itself on the dominant economic system or existing mode of production. The mode of capitalist production therefore coexists with its forerunner, patriarchal domination, and uses it to great profit. Regimes that were supposedly socialist have also operated hand in glove with patriarchy and women's historical experience with these types of societies has convinced us that a "progressive" regime will not automatically guarantee women's equality and be resolved to eradicate sexist violence. Women are obviously present in all social classes. It is women, however, who constitute the majority of workers in the informal economy, the free economic zones, and those without paid work in the South. In the North, women form the majority in the ranks of the unemployed and of those with unstable, flexible and part-time jobs. Women—in the South and the North—still perform virtually all domestic labour for free. These areas of heightened vulnerability may also present the risk of increased violence and make it harder for women to escape violence.

Women are further rendered vulnerable by racist discrimination. These different modes of oppression intersect, interpenetrate and mutually reinforce one another. A disability, youth or old age, lesbianism and prostitution are additional factors that increase the likelihood of women being targeted.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The repercussions of sexist violence on the lives of women victims are never negligible. The entire being is profoundly shaken, with everything that was previously taken for granted now thrown into question. Paradoxically, whatever the circumstances or forms of violence we have suffered, we feel ashamed and guilty. We feel shame for the invasion of our intimate beings, for being robbed of control and of our physical and psychological integrity. We feel guilty for our supposed failure to offer resistance (the reality is always more complex than it appears). This is true in every part of the world—South and North, East and West.

The repercussions of violence are most obvious in women's health: physical consequences of genital mutilation such as repeated hemorrhages and even septicemia; multiple contusions, broken bones, etc. from repeated blows.

By definition, violence can also result in death: the murder of newborn girls in China, "honour" crimes in Jordan and Morocco, the murder of women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. But death can also result from wife assault: a blow struck a little harder than usual by a husband, in a particularly vulnerable spot.

Even the World Bank has to admit that violence against women, as much as cancer, is responsible for death and incapacity in women of reproductive age, and causes more health problems than road accidents and malaria combined.

The consequences are also psychological: loss of self-esteem, depression, suicidal feelings, nightmares, anxiety attacks, psychosis, fear of sexual relations, vulnerability to sexual exploitation (prostitution), etc.

Consequences are often material in nature: forced move, job loss, termination of studies, etc. Relations with intimates may be upset: separation with spouse, distancing from erstwhile friends, etc.

The primary consequence of violence against women, even the threat of violence, is that it maintains women in a state of constant fear and vulnerability and restricts our movements (especially in the evening or nighttime), access to public spaces where we can feel safe, social participation, and autonomy. Women are thereby denied access to full citizenship. Violence fulfills a role of social control of women. Furthermore, these consequences also manifest themselves as economic costs.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND LIBERAL GLOBALIZATION

One of the results of liberal globalization is the relocation of businesses from the North to the South in the quest for cheaper labour. The labour market is thereby opened up to women, but under the most severe conditions: pay that is not adequate to live on, intolerable working conditions presenting grave health risks, non-existent labour rights, prohibition of unionization. The precariousness of their situation in the labour market renders these women extremely vulnerable: for example, during hiring interviews in the maquiladoras of Mexico, women workers must answer questions concerning their sexual practice, menstrual cycle, and birth control measures. Companies also demand pregnancy tests. Because most of these women are single mothers or are the main source of income for their family, they submit to these humiliating controls over their bodies. In plants that have been relocated to Bangladesh, women workers have two big fears: fire and rape. In June 1996, 32 women were burned in Dacca because the factory had no emergency exit or fire extinguishers. News spread fast. Inversely, when it comes to rape, the law of silence prevails. Women routinely suffer sexual harassment and are threatened with dismissal if they do not submit to their male bosses.

In the North, changes in work organization (increased duties, accelerated work pace, more pressure on employees, etc.) and the development of all kinds of unstable and atypical jobs have led to rising psychological harassment, with women being the principal victims because they form the majority of the people in these jobs.

As capitalist globalization evolves, we see a growing feminization of migration, for the most part toward industrialized countries. These women are forced to emigrate because they can no longer support themselves at home and must help their family with regular shipments of money back home. Some countries, like the Philippines, even encourage this migration. Women are often employed in the home where they may be forced to endure sexual harassment and rape by their employers in addition to being dependent because of their undocumented status. This was the case of the Filipina Sarah Balabagan (14 years old) in Saudi Arabia, and Véronique Akobé from Ivory Coast. Both were tried and sentenced for attempted murder or murder of employers who had raped them.

The international financial institutions (IMF and World Bank) impose structural adjustment programs on indebted countries in order to “restore” their economies. These programs prescribe the destruction

of public services, drastic reduction of the civil service, major increases in the prices of essential goods, etc. They force women to even higher levels of unpaid work to compensate for the newly non-existent services, throw thousands of women and men on unemployment, and impoverish and starve entire populations. These pernicious actions destroy the social fabric, thereby setting the stage for the emergence of additional violence against women, in particular within intimate relationships. They promote the merchandizing of women's and children's (mainly girls') bodies—the only thing they have left to sell—in prostitution, domestic slavery, organ trafficking, etc.

The sex trade: a vastly profitable industry

Liberal globalization has bestowed a planetary dimension on the sex trade, which had already morphed from a neighbourhood phenomenon into an industry. Internationalization has generated a huge market for sexual commerce where women and children have become consumer items to meet the male “demand.” Prostitution has expanded considerably in the Southern hemisphere during the past three decades, and in Eastern Europe, since the fall of the Berlin Wall. It appears in different forms. There is rising domestic prostitution linked with the movement from the countryside to the cities. Women and children are prostituted in the “red-light” districts of metropolises in their own countries: Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, India, etc. Spurred by the ease of transportation and communications, the attraction of the “exotic,” the search for ever-younger prostitutes who are supposedly not HIV-positive, sex tourism is steadily growing. Some countries even depend on the income from prostitution to assure their development. Sex tourism is not only a phenomenon of countries in the South. It is also practiced in Europe, in Berlin, Hamburg and Amsterdam, which have become major destinations. These cities also happen to be in countries that have recognized prostitution as “sex work.”

Parallel to this local prostitution, the international traffic in women and children has exploded. In the cities of Japan, Western Europe and North America we now see hundreds of thousands of young women who have been “displaced” into prostitution. The largest contingent comes from countries in South and Southeast Asia: roughly 400,000 per year. Next is the former Soviet Union, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean. These women and children are sometimes kidnapped and sold from middleman to middleman until they reach the ultimate destination. Other women are forced out of desperation to leave their country, and subsequently fall prey to organized crime networks that assure the passage over borders, and promise well-paid work in a bar, or marriage with a man from the West. The Constitution of “Fortress Europe,” which drastically restricts the free movement of persons, the vision of Eldorado in the West, and the desire to flee war are some of the reasons women resort to these strategies.

In the crime networks, women are “conditioned” into prostitution by the use of violence to force them into obedience and submission: blows, humiliation, repeated rapes, etc. These networks generate huge profits. Interpol has calculated that the income of a pimp living in Europe is roughly 108,000 euros per year. Trafficking women for the purposes of prostitution is now more profitable than drugs: drugs generate one-time profits, while a prostituted woman is a year-long source of income to the pimp.

Prostitution networks are supported by the unrivalled and completely unchallenged growth of pornography: sex-shops, pornographic Web sites, videos, etc. These businesses transmit commercialized, degrading and violent images of women's bodies, most of the time in complete legality. They do the same, this time illegally, with children. Women appearing in these films are often themselves victims of rape, violence and murder, as the demand for “hardcore” films and “reality shows” skyrockets.

ALTERNATIVES, PERSPECTIVES AND DIRECTIONS TO TAKE TOWARDS THE COMPLETE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

How do we stop it? What needs to be done so that this age-old violence is eradicated?

Discriminatory practices and sexual inequality are often, even today, entrenched and institutionalized in the laws of numerous countries. Throughout the 20th century and up to the present day, feminists have been struggling for recognition of our fundamental rights. We have demanded and pressured to have our gains formally written into law. Recognition of our formal rights is indeed the first battle to be won, whether at the national or international level. Our first demand, then, is that violence against women be prohibited by law in every country and that the content of international and regional Conventions (where they exist) be transposed into domestic legislation (see demands of the World March of Women in the Appendix).

Next, ensure that these laws prohibit all forms of violence. There are still some countries where marital rape is not a crime: for example, in India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and Serbia. There are countries, like Haiti, where wife assault, both psychological and physical, is not recognized. There are still countries where the criminal code stipulates that if a rapist marries the woman he raped, he will not be prosecuted, for example: Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Peru, Uruguay. There are still countries, France, for example, where only a superior, not a colleague, can commit sexual harassment in the workplace.

Next, we must continue to ensure that these laws are actually implemented. In almost all countries, laws prohibiting violence against women are poorly implemented due to the absence of a clear political will to ensure their enforcement. In reality, in those countries where women have the possibility of doing so, very few report their assaults out of fear of reprisal or simply out of fear of not being believed. The violence thus remains invisible. In all the countries of the world, it is feminists who have made it visible.

Some Western countries are old hands at double talk: shedding a few tears of compassion, they sincerely deplore violence against women; at the same time—in the name of freedom of expression—they allow the walls of their cities to be plastered with advertisements that degrade and debase the public image of women and incite and give permission to men to rape.

But laws do not solve everything. It is the responsibility of the state in all countries of the world to create a climate where violence against women is unacceptable to all citizens.

It is the responsibility of the state in all countries of the world to educate their population by every means possible toward this goal, starting with the youngest children.

It is the responsibility of the state in all countries of the world to sensitize professionals who will have contact with victims (social services, health, education, law enforcement, and the justice system) to the reality of this particular form of violence.

It is the responsibility of the state in all countries to recognize and promote sexual equality and women's fundamental rights.

We have a long way to go, to be sure, when some states have even institutionalized violence against women. But we are here, after all, to press for utopia.

It is not only up to the states to assume responsibility

All social movements—anti-neoliberal globalization associations, trade unions and political organizations—must actively denounce violence against women. Unions, for example, must condemn sexual harassment at work and support any woman who has been the victim of wife assault and is facing the necessity of quitting her job because her spouse follows her to the workplace (this happens both in the North and South).

It is our individual and collective responsibility as women and men to speak out against violence wherever we see it, including within our own mixed activist organizations. We must work to prevent its occurrence. We must not repeat the behaviour of the people who, at 6 o'clock one evening in 1986, stood on the Paris métro platform and watched a young girl being raped and did not move to help her.

It is the responsibility of our male colleagues in social movements to publicly show their solidarity with feminists' struggle against violence against women, in the name of the other society we want to build together. How about a solemn declaration by social movements and the World March of Women in which we commit to a common struggle? Why not organize an international tribunal on violence against women for the third meeting of the World Social Forum?

Violence of all kinds deprives women of our autonomy and undermines our physical, psychological, and intellectual integrity. It prevents us from working, from being politically active, from having fun—in short, from living. This must be heard and understood.

Violence against women is legitimized and generated by all forms of inequality, fanaticism, sexist discrimination, and the condition of inferiority and marginality in which society attempts to maintain us. Violence is the ultimate guarantee of women's oppression; at the same time, our unequal societies are the breeding grounds of sexist violence. The struggle against inequality is also a struggle against the legitimization of violence.

Men will certainly lose a little privilege in the struggle against sexual inequality. But are we not gathering together to rid society of privilege, ALL privilege? Men, like women, stand to gain human relations based on reciprocal trust and respect. They, like women, stand to gain new individuals who have shed the garb of outdated tradition. Men, like women, will gain a society that is genuinely egalitarian, for which we are struggling in all other areas: racism, anti-colonialism, etc.

Many authors refer to the innate nature of violence, and its "natural" aspect. Freud proposes the existence of a death wish. Some even believe there is a "violence" gene. None of that has been proven, in our opinion. We might also suggest that violence is a social construction. Free of all harmful influences, it is quite simple to educate a child to non-violence. Those arguing that violence is "natural" would seem to be looking for ideological justifications or a way to legitimize it.

What is clear, meanwhile, is that violence is used to dominate. One cannot exert domination over another without violence. It need not always be explicit: ideology also serves to maintain the hierarchy of dominance.

One of the things that makes it possible to really live, as a human being, is the ability to relax in peace and not constantly be on one's guard. A permanent state of war is intolerable. But that presupposes a minimum of trust in the Other—the basis of any "normal" human relationship. Some women do not

even know what it is to trust in this way. For them, life consists of dealing with the unexpected: the violence of their partner or their superior at work. LIVING is virtually impossible. Their lives are reduced to mere survival and a slow psychic death.

WHEN WE WILL BE ABLE TO STOP IT? “A people who oppresses another people is not a free people.” To paraphrase: “A person who oppresses another is not a free person.”

Our capacity to build another world is also dependent on this: social movements must commit to challenging the unequal relations between women and men; they must undertake to incorporate in their analysis the links between capitalism, sexism and racism; demand the respect of women’s rights; commit to challenging the “culture of violence”— in both individual and collective practice. It is only by so doing that we have a chance of shaking the foundations of patriarchy and liberal globalization.

World March of Women www.ffq.qc.ca/marche2000

World Congress resolution, extracts
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On Lesbian/Gay Liberation

Lesbian/gay movements have grown considerably in numbers and spread to every continent since the late 1960s. They have managed to win significant reforms in some countries while many other movements have been on the defensive. Since the 1980s lesbian/gay movements have emerged in many Asian, African and Eastern European countries where they did not exist before; regained strength in key Latin American countries (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina) where they had experienced setbacks; and on several occasions mobilized hundreds of thousands of people in Western Europe and North America. The key lessons that we have learned during our participation in these movements and that are expressed in this text are:

1. The oppression faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people is a reality in all countries of the world. The association of HIV with homosexuality has led to global stigmatization of sex between men and of sexual acts outside the monogamous heterosexual family. Sexuality in general is a political issue
2. The link between the oppression of LGBT people and women's oppression is key to our understanding and the struggles for liberation are consequently closely linked.
3. We defend the necessity of autonomous movements of LGBT people, understanding that oppression cannot be overcome without self-organization.
4. We fight for an understanding of the link between the lesbian/gay struggle and the workers' movement, while avoiding subordinating the lesbian/gay struggle to some other movement.
5. We fight for an internationalist approach to this question. LGBT people are oppressed everywhere, albeit in different ways. The movement needs to organize internationally and in solidarity with the most oppressed.
6. In order to carry out these tasks we have to put our own house – the revolutionary left – in order. This requires changing our organizations in many ways.

Lesbian/gay leftists' fight for understanding and support in the workers' movement has been a long, hard one. They have had to contend with opposition and prejudice from every current of the left, into the 1970s and beyond. Social-democratic parties and labour movements for example have not in general responded well to issues of sexual freedom. But attempts to build links with the workers' movement have also led to successes, almost from the time of the lesbian/gay movement's birth at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the first decades of the twentieth century the demands of the German Scientific- Humanitarian Committee (founded in 1897) and other European 'sex reform' organizations were often supported by social democratic and communist parties, rarely by bourgeois parties, and by the Bolshevik government of Soviet Russia alone of the then existing governments. Even under the Bolsheviks support for sexual freedom could not be taken for granted, as can be seen from the works of Kollontai. The triumph of Stalinism in the Soviet Union led to the overturning of many gains for women's and sexual emancipation, and spread antigay prejudice among almost all Stalinist and Mao-Stalinist currents from the 1930s to the 1980s. But the emergence of the lesbian/gay liberation movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Western Europe and North and Latin America coincided with a new rise of the radical and revolutionary left. Feminism and particularly socialist feminism were crucial to the rise of lesbian/gay liberation, in the context of a global challenge to society.

This text (i) defines the basis for revolutionary Marxists' support for lesbian/gay liberation; (ii) lays out the Fourth International's stands on some major issues; (iii) defines our tactics in building lesbian/gay movements; and (iv) suggests how lesbian/gay liberation can and should be reflected in our organizations' public profile and internal life.

PART I - FUNDAMENTALS OF OPPRESSION

1. Although degrees of persecution and toleration vary widely, nowhere in capitalist societies today is there complete equality or freedom for lesbians, gay males, bisexuals, or transgendered people [see the definition in point 18]. Heterosexism, the oppression that they are subjected to, is like sexism 'expressed in all spheres – from politics, employment, and education to the most intimate aspects of daily life', in the words of the resolution on women's liberation adopted by the Fourth International in 1979.
2. Heterosexism is rooted in the heterosexual, patriarchal family institution characteristic of capitalism. The family is the 'primary socioeconomic institution for perpetuating the class divisions of society from one generation to the next', in the words of the 1979 resolution on women's liberation. In the form it has developed under capitalism, it 'provides the most inexpensive and ideologically acceptable mechanism for reproducing human labour' – by using unpaid, largely female labour to care for the young and old as well as working-age adults – and 'reproduces within itself the hierarchical, authoritarian relationships necessary to the maintenance of class society as a whole'. This family form is particularly oppressive to women and children. Central to the relationships that the family reproduces more or less adequately in capitalist society from generation to generation are monogamous, heterosexual love, which is ultimately supposed to be the basis of marriage and the creation of new families, and parental love, which is supposed to bind adults to their biological children in a connection combining affection, responsibility and authority. The state and medical and psychiatric establishments are structured so as to promote stable, procreative heterosexuality, and to stigmatize, discourage or even suppress other forms of sexuality, often defined as abnormal, pathological or irresponsible. As long as society is organized in a way which assumes that many basic needs will be met within the family, all those who are marginalized from it or choose not to live in it will have difficulty in meeting their needs. This family form under capitalism presupposes and reproduces a heterosexual norm, which pervades the state and society and is oppressive to anyone who deviates from it. As long as heterosexual love is the basis for forming a family, people whose emotional and sexual lives revolve largely around same-sex love are marginalized from family life. As long as the family is a central place where children are raised, lesbian/gay/ bisexual/transgendered (LGBT) children will grow up alienated - even more than children and young people in general are alienated in the family; and children's access to adults, especially unmarried adults, and other children to whom they are not biologically related will often be limited. As long as only heterosexual desire and romance permeate capitalist consumer culture, LGBT people will feel invisible. As long as heterosexuality is defined as the norm by the state and medical and psychiatric establishments, LGBT people will be explicitly or implicitly discriminated against and marginalized. Repressive laws and widespread social discrimination intensify this oppression in most parts of the world, but repealing repressive laws and combating social discrimination will not by themselves eliminate it.
3. For millions of people around the world today, particularly but far from exclusively in dependent countries, same-sex eroticism can only be lived out episodically, in the margins of their family lives, often concealed from parents they still live with or spouses of the other sex. Millions of women marry in order to survive, given the extremely limited social and economic options available to them; these pressures also operate to a lesser extent on men. For many thousands of men and women, failure to conform to the heterosexual norm goes together with blatant failure to conform to norms of masculinity and femininity, which makes playing heterosexual roles difficult or impossible. Thousands of transgendered people unable or unwilling to fit into socially recognized families, unable or unwilling to live as 'proper men' or 'proper women', are banished to the furthest reaches of the labour market and of society, often supporting themselves in the sex trade or other stigmatized occupations, faced with general contempt and even violent attacks. Many LGBT people around the world contend with

repression as a daily reality: prison, rape, torture and murder.

4. Heterosexism takes on specific and sometimes particularly virulent forms in dependent countries. European conquerors from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries often used rooting out 'sodomy' as an ideological justification for conquering and ruling other peoples. Many countries that are now formally or politically independent still have laws against homosexuality that were imposed by former colonial rulers.

Maintenance of oppressive laws, policies and customs is often defended on the basis of religion – in dependent as in imperialist countries – including Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, and perpetuated through legally established religious or communal jurisdiction over family and personal life in countries where separation of religion and state has not been won. Often the religious right and fundamentalists argue that the 'moral' code they defend is a deep part of the traditional fabric of the society in which they organize.

Often in fact many of the most reactionary practices they follow, particularly those directed against women and against sexual 'deviance', do not have such roots but are thoroughly modern as well as thoroughly reactionary. A second crucial ideological myth is the idea that homosexuality in these societies is another negative legacy of imperialism. While arguing for a materialist understanding of the rise of mass lesbian and gay identities in the context they are held today as a product of industrialization and urbanization, we also promote an understanding of the history of same-sex relationships of different types within traditional cultures.

The absence or underdevelopment of welfare states and low wage levels in the dependent countries reinforce dependence on traditional families. Particularly in rural areas, the lack of non-traditional social or political organizations or cultural alternatives make nonconformity difficult.

People in dependent countries are also particularly vulnerable to the most exploitative forms of the domestic sex trade and international sex tourism. The Fourth International sees LGBT organizing in such conditions as an important part of an overall project of national liberation, which necessarily involves challenging national and religious power structures as well as imperialism. Open LGBT participation in mass democratic upsurges in several Latin American, Southern African and Southeast Asian countries have shown how lesbian/gay liberation and national liberation can go together.

5. Only substantially higher wages and the development of welfare states in the course of the twentieth century have made it possible for working class people on a mass scale to live independently of the families they were born in without marrying and founding new ones; to sustain long-term, primary emotional and sexual partnerships with people of the same sex; and to join and identify with open, enduring lesbian and gay male communities. At the same time, heterosexual marriage has increasingly come to be based on sexual attraction and romantic love, although there are still strong material pressures to marry, and arranged marriages are still the norm in many countries.

Particularly in the imperialist countries and particularly among men, gay lives are lived to some extent in the commercial scene that is capitalism's way of responding to LGBT people's needs for places to meet and socialize. Where the commercial scene has expanded and room for LGBT people to live freely in the surrounding society has remained limited, the result is contradictory. It is a step forward that LGBT people have the possibility of being open about their sexuality in this context - but not acceptable that this is not the case in the broader society. The existence of the scene has in many cases given the impetus for the lesbian/gay movement to develop.

There is a further issue in that the scene itself is very limited in the way in which it permits people to relate, even though it has become more diverse as it has expanded. In general it remains male-dominated, and perpetuates images of sexual attractiveness that are ageist and racist - in short it projects sex as a commodity and does not provide an environment in which people can relate very easily as full human beings. Informal networks, clubs, community centres and activist groups that are the result of LGBT self-organization provide some alternatives to the alienation of the commercial scene, but often lack the visibility, glitz and resources that the commercial scene has.

Lesbian/gay communities, which include all women and men of all classes who identify as lesbian or gay, along with the identities and subcultures that have grown up within them, have been the basis on which lesbian/gay movements have arisen. Much of the lesbian/gay subculture has been attacked on the basis that it is very alienated, but when this criticism comes from the media or the right it ignores the fact that all sexuality is increasingly presented as a commodity under capitalism.

Lesbian/gay movements have mostly been directed against specific laws or policies repressing same-sex sexuality or LGBT people; towards laws that would ban various forms of social discrimination; and towards laws granting same-sex relationships equal recognition and treatment under existing laws and policies.

6. Since the 1970s young people's relationship to their sexuality has changed in many countries, in contradictory ways. Youth sexuality has become less of an absolute taboo; young people's bodies and sexuality have become more visible in the media, and commercial publicity increasingly uses and abuses them to sell products. The setbacks caused by AIDS and the rise of a new moralism have not stopped this trend. But young people's sexuality is still repressed, particularly young women's and young LGBTs' sexuality. Children and teenagers are still pressured at home and in school to conform to approved gender roles; prejudice, being ashamed of their bodies, and fear of transgression are essential parts of the lesson that is taught.

And as much or more than ever, young people lack the material conditions to live their sexuality freely. Young people's economic dependence on their families has increased with attacks on social programmes. Lesbian/ gay gathering places are often strictly commercial, thus excluding many young people who have little money. There are also still limits on young people's access to information about sexuality and to their access to contraceptives and information about them.

Lack of access to condoms and to information about sexuality is a particular issue in terms of the transmission of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. While images of homosexuality are more common in the media in many countries, the images are often distorted or stereotyped. While young people are often more open-minded and less homophobic than in earlier generations, coming out is still a painful process for many young people even in ostensibly tolerant cultures, as is shown in the very high suicide rates among young lesbians and gay men.

7. "Today", the resolution on women's liberation noted over twenty years ago, "faced with deepening economic problems, the ruling class is slashing social expenditures and trying to shift the burden back onto the individual family". The intervening decades have only made the situation worse. Together with stagnant or declining wages and growing unemployment, these cutbacks threaten basic prerequisites, in terms of housing, health care, child care and other forms of social support, for LGBT people to live decently apart from heterosexual families and to sustain their communities. The effects have been particularly devastating for newly emergent communities in dependent countries, as seen particularly since 1982 in Latin America and since 1997 in Southeast and East Asia, and tend to reinforce pro-family ideology. Where lesbian/gay movements exist, they should participate openly in fight-backs against capitalist austerity; in any case, such fight-backs should take up the specific demands of LGBT people for specific services or their inclusion in the existing ones.

The movement for a different globalization that has grown up from Seattle to Porto Alegre is joining together many fight-backs against capitalist austerity, making them broader, more participatory and more democratic, and providing a new opportunity to recompose the left and internationalize struggles. It confronts all progressive social movements, including LGBT movements, with the need to go in new directions and redefine themselves socially and politically. The inclusive, participatory spaces opened up by the evolution of the World Social Forum into continental and national social forums give LGBT movements a chance to look for new allies, point out the importance of LGBT issues to movements like the workers' movement that have often neglected them, and integrate other radical social demands into LGBT movements' own programmes.

In a time when 'LGBT markets' are putting new normalizing and divisive pressures on LGBT

communities, and when most LGBT political currents internationally have focussed increasingly on institutional and lobbying work, it is essential that LGBT movements be part of the wider social debate and contribute to mobilizations against neo-liberal globalization.

They must introduce LGBT perspectives into different struggles for political, social and economical change, rejecting pressures to postpone specific LGBT struggles in the name of any 'structural issue'. No structural change will be complete if the structures of sexual oppression, which affect all human beings, are left untouched.

PART II - OUR STANDPOINTS

8. Beginning with the radicalization of the late 1960s, activists have called for going beyond struggles for lesbian/ gay rights in order to demand full lesbian/gay liberation, which implies a withering away of the capitalist family as an institution and challenging the heterosexual norm imposed by the capitalist state. Although this call has become less prominent in the movements since the 1980s, the Fourth International sees complete equality and freedom for both women and LGBT people as requiring socializing the functions of the family, which can be fully achieved only with the overthrow of capitalism. In supporting struggles for lesbian/gay rights we seek to build bridges between current demands and the ultimate goal of lesbian/ gay liberation, which we see as linked to the ultimate goal of socialist revolution.

As we deepen our vision of the socialist society we are fighting for, we will strive to integrate the vision of lesbian/gay liberation with it. In opposing oppressive, limited conceptions of masculinity, femininity and sexuality, we work towards a society in which gender will no longer be a central category for the organization of social life, and in which the concepts of 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality', to the extent they exist, will not have any legal or economic consequences. We work towards a socialization of the different functions currently served by the family: diverse forms of collective, community responsibility for care of children and the infirm; an economy which does not force people to migrate from their local communities; diverse forms of households and of cooperation within local communities; and diverse forms of friendship, solidarity and sexual relations.

9. In most cultures sexuality and sexual activity are still aspects of our being as humans which are treated as dangerous or as the 'property' of the society, not the individual. But revolutionary advances in reproductive technology in the 1950s and 1960s contributed greatly to the emergence of aspirations for sexual liberation and further separated sexuality from reproduction. A cultural radicalization emerged in the 1950s and 1960s among young people and students in the imperialist countries which began to challenge, among other things, the traditional classification of gender. These new challenges to the traditional culture included new approaches to sex.

The struggles for abortion rights and accessible birth control, like the struggle for lesbian/gay rights, directly challenged the traditional notion that equated acceptable sex with reproduction, marriage and the family. New perspectives on sex and sexuality promoted a new valorisation of sexual pleasure in general, but especially for women. When the women's movement advanced demands for women's sexual health and information, it did so with the fundamental idea that women are sexual beings, and have the right to the sexual pleasure and control of their sexual relationships men have historically enjoyed. One of the main messages promoted in this struggle for women's sexual autonomy was that there was no one right way to sexual enjoyment, but in fact there were a plurality of possibilities. Lesbian/gay liberation is part of a broader, human sexual liberation we are fighting for. We seek to free human sexuality from what the 1979 resolution on women's liberation called 'the framework of economic compulsion, personal dependence, and sexual repression' in which it is now too often confined. Sexual activity that is freely consented and pleasurable to all those taking part in it is its own sufficient justification. We work towards a society in which our bodies, desires and emotions are no longer things to be bought and sold, in which the range of choices for all people - as women, men,

sexual beings, young people, old people - is greatly expanded, and people can develop new ways to relate sexually, live, work and raise children together. It is impossible for us, who have been formed by the alienated society in which we live, to envisage how sexuality will develop in this context, and therefore it is important to avoid making predictions based on our own individual aspirations.

10. The first battles that gays and lesbians fought and are fighting, which have often provided the impetus for the formation of politically active lesbian/ gay movements, are actions against the criminalization of homosexuality. The 1969 Stonewall rebellion in New York, a reference point for the whole Western lesbian/ gay movement, consisted of physical resistance to police raids on bars where lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people went to meet each other. Today there are still many countries where homosexuality is forbidden by law. In the Middle East, Africa and Asia, countries that do not forbid homosexuality are more the exception than the rule. Several states in the US forbid heterosexual as well as same-sex anal and oral sex; other US states forbid only same-sex anal and oral sex. Many other countries, including many Latin American and European countries, do not explicitly ban homosexuality but use terms like 'public scandal' as a basis for imprisoning people, or have laws against 'promoting homosexuality' or 'soliciting homosexual contacts'. The vaguest concept in laws that are used to criminalize LGBTs is 'indecent': experience shows that judges see 'indecent' more often between people of the same sex than between people of different sexes. We support the demand for repeal of all such anti-gay laws and the discriminatory policing policies and practices that accompany them.

Even when the initial battle for legalization of homosexuality has been won, other discriminatory criminal laws often still need to be challenged. Many countries have enacted special laws to 'protect' minors from homosexuality, for example. Starting from the dogma that young people can be 'influenced' and 'seduced' by homosexuals, they established a higher legal age of consent for same-sex contacts than for heterosexual contacts. In the European Union today, Austria, Britain and Ireland still have higher legal ages of consent for same-sex contacts. We support the lesbian/gay movement's demand that the age of consent for same-sex sex be lowered to the age of consent for heterosexual sex wherever this legal discrimination exists.

11. Alongside the fight against criminalizing laws, many lesbian/gay movements in different countries are struggling for laws explicitly forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. South Africa occupies a striking place in an overview of countries: since the adoption of its new constitution, it is one of the few countries in the world (along with Ecuador and Fiji) to include protection from discrimination against sexual orientation in their constitutions. We support the battle for legal and constitutional bans on anti-gay discrimination.

The political importance of this struggle must not be underestimated. The battle to win legal protection against discrimination opens up major opportunities to challenge the second-class and marginal status of LGBT people. It makes the argument for equality in the most forceful way, because resistance to it has to be rooted in an attempt to justify discrimination. It also focuses campaigning on the political process.

While supporting and advocating such campaigns, socialists also understand that achieving legal protection will not itself remove discrimination and prejudice. These campaigns provide an opportunity to explain the social foundation of oppression and the need to change society, not just laws, to bring about such change. But there is a connection between changing law and challenging social attitudes. It is important to understand the impact of achieving legal protection and the consequent increase in LGBT people's confidence, with increasing openness about sexual issues, for example at work. This will have a significant impact over time in changing public prejudices and changing the perception of other issues of discrimination against LGBTs. There also appears to be a clear connection between the existence of strong women's movements, rights won by women, and equal rights for LGBTs. When legal change is secured, it is then necessary to campaign for effective implementation. This can be done by monitoring the effectiveness of the law, and focussing campaigns on areas of resistance which are

identified.

12. One of the key areas where progress in achieving lesbian/gay rights has been made, and a vital arena for revolutionaries, has been the struggle to secure recognition that lesbian/gay equality is an issue for the labour movement, in particular the trade unions. The campaigns of the lesbian/gay movements have found their reflection in the trade unions. At different times and in various ways, lesbian/gay workers have organized to challenge their trade unions to recognize their specific demands, and have now secured a place on the agenda of the most progressive unions. Two related sets of demands have been most significant: winning union recognition for lesbian/gay rights at work; and securing union recognition of the right for lesbian/gay workers to have their own structures (self-organization) within the union. Success in the second has often been necessary before real progress can be made with the first. Alliances have often been made with other workers whose needs have been traditionally ignored by reformist leaderships: women, the disabled, and minority communities. The struggle has particular importance for revolutionaries, in that it challenges the divide between 'economic and political issues', and can 'help the working class to think in broad social terms' (1979 resolution). The demand for the right to self-organization has often been resisted by both the right and the reformist left on the grounds that it divides the movement. We should be arguing that on the contrary, it is the exclusion and marginalization of lesbian/gay workers which causes the division, and that recognition of self organization is an essential step towards the integration of all sections of the members.

The particular demands for rights at work will vary according to the country, the legal status of homosexuality, and conditions in each particular industry. Some of the main demands are likely to be:

- protection against unfair dismissal, discriminatory recruitment, failure to promote etc;
- protection against harassment by management or fellow workers on grounds of sexuality;
- access to benefits provided for heterosexual workers, for example, partnership leave and concessions granted to workers' partners such as travel in the transport industries;
- equal access to benefits such as pension and insurance schemes;
- recognition that lesbians and gay men may also have childcare responsibilities.

It will also be necessary to link such demands with the demand that the union give its active support to the struggle for lesbian/gay equal rights in society more broadly. This means, for example, having the union mobilize in support of lesbian/gay rights campaigns, and support activities of the lesbian/gay community such as Pride Marches.

An essential part of the struggle is to move beyond the acceptance of a self-organized structure, to the integration of these demands into the concerns of the union as a whole. This will require long-term and consistent work to transform the dominant cultures of many unions, and usually will only succeed by securing firm allies for this process among other groups of workers.

We must also remain alert to the permanent possibility that the winning of such demands, which of themselves are not revolutionary, can be accomplished within a reformist framework. The most conscious union leaders have often managed to accept integration but in reality to co-opt or disarm, or manage to establish a bureaucratic stranglehold. The remedy for this is to press uncompromisingly for the union to take an active campaigning role on lesbian/gay rights issues, which will keep it engaged in mass activity, and to continue to encourage lesbian/gay workers to mobilize to advance their own demands, not allowing 'friendly' bureaucracies to take over, and using success in one as a stepping stone to the next.

13. In opposition to the growing chorus of voices calling for young people's protection from the dangers of sex and from sexual images and information, we believe that more information and autonomy, not less, are the best tools to 'protect' young people. They are indispensable to young people's sexual liberation, consciousness and free choice. They can also help young LGBTs to find the sexual identity and way of life that suits them best, and to resist pressure to conform to existing lesbian/gay lifestyles. Sexual education at school that fully includes same-sex options, with an

emphasis on pleasure and diversity; reinforcement rather than destruction of welfare programmes; free access to contraception; and conditions for the economic emancipation of youth - these are all immediate demands that must be made on the state, in both imperialist and dependent countries. At the same time that we demand an equal age of consent for same-sex and different-sex sex, we oppose any repression of consenting sexual exploration among young people of approximately the same age.

14. Immigrants and black people need to be welcomed and included in lesbian/gay organizations in imperialist countries. This will require a conscious fight against racism in these organizations. In addition we support black and immigrant LGBTs' own, autonomous self-organization within minority communities characterized by particular, multiple forms of oppression and discrimination. We will permanently seek alliances with them without seeking to impose a model of emancipation on them. We will oppose the use of the issue of lesbian/gay rights to stigmatize Muslim immigrants in the context of the 'war on terrorism', emphasizing the rise of self-organization among LGBTs of Muslim origin and the indigenous homoerotic traditions of the Islamic world.

The existence of links between LGBT immigrant groups and their members' countries of origin (through Internet, visits, etc.) has also made possible concrete, international solidarity actions, and can sometimes facilitate the creation of LGBT groups in dependent countries.

15. The mid-1970s saw the rise in much of the developed world, particularly in the US, of a right-wing backlash directed against the gains of the women's movement, as well as the lesbian/gay movement. Extremely conservative, well-financed and strongly militant religious organizations have developed political agendas against sexual issues affecting women, the gay and lesbian community, and youth. Many of these rightwing organizations and their sympathizers have also made LGBT people targets of physical intimidation and, in some cases, extreme violence, often instigated by a vicious, homophobic rhetoric of hate. The strength of this rightwing backlash, which has since extended its influence to much of the underdeveloped world as well, against the gains of the social movements of the 1960s must not be underestimated. More recently in some countries of imperialist Europe, parties of the populist or neo-liberal right have attacked immigrant communities on the grounds of their oppression of women and gays, which is supposedly contrary to 'Western values'.

Along with their strong condemnation of racism and xenophobia, anti-fascist movements must also vehemently denounce and militantly organize against the anti-gay violence that is present in society.

We support LGBT self-defence against the violence of the organized right or unorganized bigots.

Similarly, lesbian/gay movements must seek allies in other sectors of society attacked by the far right, such as immigrants, youth, people of colour, Jews and the political left, in order to more effectively fight the common enemy, the religious right and fascism. At the same time lesbian/gay movements must expose the hypocrisy and contradictions of the neo-liberal and populist right. In challenging the political power and anti-gay campaigns of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches and Protestant evangelical groups, as well as Islamic, Hindu and Jewish fundamentalists, lesbian/gay movements should ally with others to fight for complete separation of religion and state.

Particularly in countries where LGBTs are harshly repressed, making links with general human rights organizations and raising LGBT issues inside them can be a useful way to begin lesbian/gay organizing. Given the level of repression LGBTs face in many countries, we support the right of asylum for LGBTs from countries of origin where LGBTs are persecuted, threatened or simply cannot live because of their sexual orientation.

16. Since AIDS was first identified among gay men in the USA in 1981, the association of HIV has led to global stigmatization of sex between men, and a repathologizing of homosexuality. Lesbian/gay activists have sometimes dropped other lesbian/gay political work in face of the urgency of the epidemic or succumbed to pressures towards institutionalization or professionalization. But also the necessary responses to HIV in many countries have allowed a new social and political space, which has been expressed in particular by a challenge to the power of the medical establishment, a questioning of the way the authorities fulfil their responsibilities with regard to public health and the demand that

people with AIDS themselves exercise control over public health measures. This also makes possible increased resources for the development of gay organizations and more open public discussion of sexuality and sexual practices. In many countries a new generation of lesbian/gay activists, both in terms of their age and their process of radicalization, have taken leadership in AIDS advocacy, education and service organizations while gay communities have borne heavy loads of care-giving and grieving. The experience of gay activism has often been channelled into the leadership of the peer organizations of people with HIV, and lesbian and gay organizations have found themselves in activist alliances with drug injectors and people who make their living in the sex trade. AIDS is now the fourth leading cause of death in the world; in Africa it is the leading cause of death. In the African and Asian countries where the AIDS epidemic is the most intense, unprotected heterosexual sex, not unprotected sex between men, is responsible for the greatest majority of infections. Yet in Southern and Western Africa, in Latin America and in Southern Asia, gay communities are experiencing very high levels of infection, illness and mortality.

The global fight against HIV requires the linkage of several dynamics of struggle:

- against stigma, discrimination and isolation
- against heterosexism and sexism
- against racism and imperialism
- for democratic rights and the right of oppressed groups to organize autonomously
- against censorship and religious control of education, welfare and health services
- for the defeat of the 'war on drugs'
- for free and effective health care
- against the super-profits of the international pharmaceutical companies.

In particular we stand in solidarity with those who are battling against drug companies who are barring access to drugs in the Third World at more affordable prices. The success of the campaign against the pharmaceutical companies in South Africa has many important implications. The battle brought together AIDS activists, trade unionists and anti-globalization activists in a broad and successful alliance. Most of those involved, notably COSATU and the Treatment Action Campaign, have subsequently recognized that the battle now needs to be joined on two new fronts: (1) to demand that the South African government - and also the employers - provide drugs; and (2) to build opposition to the US government's actions in taking Brazil to the WTO over the question of generics.

All this has meant that the fight against HIV has become integrated in the minds of millions with the fight against globalization. In addition to the intrinsic, human importance and urgency of the struggle against AIDS, doing AIDS work among men who have sex with men can be a useful way to begin work for lesbian/gay liberation in countries that do not yet have lesbian/gay organizations.

17. In countries around the world there are growing demands for the legal recognition of same-sex relationships. The Fourth International's starting point on this issue is equal rights – for women and men, for married and unmarried people, for LGBT people with heterosexuals. Currently people acquire a number of rights by marrying – and some of these rights devolve only or primarily to men. So we are for example in favour of the right of all people whatever their sexuality or partnership status to be able to adopt children or gain custody of children. All decisions about custody, access and adoption should be made in the real interests of the children involved rather than on the basis that a nuclear family, however violent or unpleasant, is always in their interests. Neither do we support the idea that children should be treated as the property of adults; children should be given a real voice in such decisions. We are also against tax laws that benefit people who are married or in long term sexual partnerships.

While fighting against those laws and regulations that privilege married people, we recognize that the demand for partnership rights and in some contexts for the right to marry is one that is mobilizing large numbers of LGBT people. This does not surprise us, both because discriminatory practices against unmarried people still exist and because we know that ideology has its own dynamic. In the alienated world of capitalist society marriage not only brings material benefits but promises emotional security

(whether this is delivered or not in practice). We support the demand for fully equal same-sex marriage. We also demand better legal rights for couples - same-sex or different-sex - who do not want to marry. Couples should be able to establish and secure recognition for mutual rights and responsibilities in a variety of ways, not just through the single model of marriage. Every option must be equally accessible for same-sex and different-sex couples.

For example, where existing law automatically recognizes a birth mother's husband as a parent or allows a birth mother's male partner to 'recognize' her child as his, a birth mother's same-sex partner must have those same rights. We also fight against differential waiting times for legal registration for same-sex partnerships and the denial of (or greater hurdles to obtain) residence permits to immigrant partners in same-sex couples. It is also important to increase individuals' rights regardless of whether people are coupled or single. Women's individual rights in particular should not be dependent on their relationships with men. Real individual rights require social support. Neo-liberal austerity policies have cut social support to ribbons, privatizing what should be social responsibilities and imposing them once more on the family. Governments prefer to make wives and husbands, parents and children care for the sick, old, young, disabled or unemployed rather than shouldering their rightful burden. Lesbian/gay movements should try to avoid trapping even more people in these humiliating forms of dependency. Instead they should try to ally with women's groups and trade unions to change this situation.

Current debates on same-sex partnership and marriage are an opportunity for revolutionary LGBTs to work together with currents in lesbian/gay movements that seek to resurrect the movement's original call for genuine liberation. Together we can work to undermine the perceived 'naturalness' of heterosexuality, challenge gender roles, and question whether authority over children and rights of inheritance should be based so much on biological parenthood. We will work to open a door through which new possibilities can be glimpsed: new kinds of social and emotional relations beyond alienation and dependency, new patterns of ones, twos and mores that could flourish in diversity and freedom.

18. Transgender people – those who do not fit into the hegemonic two-gender system, including cross-dressers, drag kings and queens, transsexuals, people who do not identify with a gender, and many others whose identities are rooted in indigenous cultures – are often among the most oppressed people with same-sex sexualities. In fact many people, whatever their sexuality, are oppressed because they do not fully conform to gender norms; in particular, men who are seen as 'effeminate' sometimes experience forms of discrimination common to women. Transgender people also have a long history of fighting back against their oppression. 'Hijras' in Pakistan and 'waria' in Indonesia organized for their rights in the 1960s before European and North American lesbian/ gay liberation movements were founded. Puerto Rican 'drag queens' ('locas') were among the first to fight back against the police in the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion in New York. As movements for lesbian/gay rights have gained respectability and consolidated reformist perspectives, however, transgendered people have been excluded, ignored, marginalized and treated as an embarrassment. We support the efforts of transgendered people to resist their marginalization, organize themselves independently, and win full inclusion in lesbian/ gay movements.

Transgendered people have needs and demands of specific importance to them, which lesbian/gay movements should take up. They are often particularly likely to earn their living in the sex trade, be discriminated against when they look for other kinds of work, and be harassed and attacked by police and thugs. We defend their rights to respect, safety, and equal rights to housing and employment. They also suffer from the refusal of the authorities to recognize their gender identity in a very wide range of circumstances. While we recognize the need to classify people at times according to sex so that women can organize against their own oppression, we question the impulse to register people's sex routinely on every form and for every irrelevant purpose. We reject the forced subjection of transgendered people as well as of men and women in general to socially and biologically stereotyped categories of masculinity and femininity (manifest for example in school/job dress codes, mutilation of hermaphroditic babies, hormone treatments for teenagers with so-called 'gender-inappropriate behaviour', and formal lessons

in sex-stereotyped behaviour for transsexuals). We defend the right of every person to fully develop her/his individual personality.

Transgender people should have the right to such medical care as they deem appropriate, including so-called 'sex reassignment surgeries', hormone treatments and psychotherapy. They should have the right to health insurance coverage for such treatment, and to obtain appropriate changes in their documentation with or without surgery.

19. We conceive of lesbian/ gay movements as broadly inclusive movements bringing together all those who wish to live freely their same-sex sexualities and love. In different countries and cultures they may include people involved in a great variety of relationships and ways of life who may identify in any number of ways. We are opposed to any conception of lesbian/gay movements that limits or conditions participation in them according to some standard of exclusive homosexuality.

In many countries and cultures men in particular often have sexual contacts with other men while outwardly conforming to cultural expectations of masculinity, fulfilling the family roles expected of men, and not identifying publicly or even privately as gay or as bisexual. In AIDS organizing in some countries such men are identified simply as 'Men who have Sex with Men'. One issue in this situation that has led to much tension is when people who do not identify as LGBT but have same-sex relationships treat their same-sex partners with disrespect as a result of their internalization of heterosexism. An important first step towards sexual liberation in this situation is for such men - or women - to treat their sexual partners who do identify as lesbian, gay or transgendered with respect and solidarity. A further positive step is for such people to support or even join lesbian/gay movements, however they may define their sexual identities in the process.

In some countries and circumstances bisexuals or other sexual minorities may choose to organize themselves autonomously, either inside or outside lesbian/gay movements, either around issues of specific interest to them or around broader issues such as AIDS, violence or diversity. We support their right and respect their choice to do so, while continuing to work towards the broadest possible alliance of all the sexually oppressed. Bisexuals can find themselves isolated inside heterosexual society as well as lesbian/gay communities. Their sexual orientation often permits them to go unnoticed or appear 'normal' to society in general, and for their same-sex sexuality not to be apparent or to be considered merely 'experimental'. It is a step forward when bisexuals try to break with this invisibility - to 'come out' as bisexual - and to have their sexual orientation recognized and accepted as a legitimate expression of the diversity that exists in lesbian/gay communities and in human sexuality. This view that coming out is a positive stance is the same that we take for lesbians and gay men. Tensions that exist in the movement between people with different sexual identities can best be overcome by the building of an inclusive movement and the fight against heterosexism.

20. We support campaigns against psychiatric definitions of homosexuality and transgenderism as pathologies and against barbaric attempts to medicalize and 'cure' LGBT people (through psychotherapy, aversion therapy and psychosurgery).

21. The ideological legacy of Stalinism, which recriminalized homosexuality in 1934 in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik revolution had decriminalized it, is still reflected today in discrimination against LGBT people in China, Vietnam, Cuba and other transitional societies. While the worst persecution is in the past and tolerance has increased in recent years, full equality has still not been achieved. The Chinese regime has so far not permitted any open lesbian/ gay organizing.

The Fourth International supports organizing for lesbian/gay rights in China, Vietnam, Cuba and other transitional societies as we do everywhere. We hope to see lesbian/gay movements there ally with workers', women's and others' opposition to the bureaucratic regimes and grow into movements for socialist democracy. Alliances with feminists will be particularly important in challenging sexist and heterosexist ideologies and policies that rely on the family. This will be a utopia, however, unless democratic and feminist movements support lesbian/gay struggles and do internal work against anti-gay prejudice and unless gay movements do work against male chauvinism.

22. As socialists our struggle against sexism must include the struggle to change the role that sex and sexuality play in our sexist culture, to struggle for a freer, more conscious sexuality. This requires us to adopt a more critical and transforming attitude toward our existing definitions of sexuality. The basic premise for doing this should be that our definitions of sex and sexuality, our gender identifications, our sexual identities as lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual, are fundamentally social, historical-cultural and sometimes even political constructions, which are therefore changeable. Thus, people can and do misunderstand their own sexuality. False consciousness, alienation, internalization of relationships of oppression, normalization of sexist cultural forms and repressive guilt feelings are real obstacles in seeking to understand and redefine our sexuality. This is what makes wider debate and criticism, not censorship, of the sexism in culture so vital in the struggle to understand and change that culture to benefit human sexuality. We support efforts to give LGBT people more means of cultural expression, including through the mass media.

A new sexuality, freed of sexism, can only emerge through a long process of open debate and exploration, above all within feminism. We have few guidelines or indicators of what the results will be. There is no enlightened vanguard or minority that can claim to know what the 'correct', 'feminist' sexuality is and we should reject any attempts either from the religious right-wing forces or the various tendencies within feminism, such as the difference feminists, to impose a 'correct' sexual line. In many parts of the world, these forces of religious fundamentalism and conservative feminism have sought to legislate sexual codes of conduct which include criminalization of homosexuality and censorship of sexually explicit materials. Revolutionary Marxists should propose instead a path towards sexual self-emancipation which is critical, but democratic, participatory and tolerant of the diversity of our sexual desires.

The first demand for opening the path to such a process of sexual self-emancipation is the defence of consensuality and self-autonomy. Thus, an intrinsic part of our struggle for sexual autonomy must also articulate a struggle against all legal restrictions on consensual sex and the struggle against all forms of sexual discrimination. It must also include the struggle to enhance material conditions that would make it possible for all members of society (women, as well as children and men) to resist the impositions of those who would violate their rights and their sexual autonomy through unwanted sexual and/or emotional relationships or encounters. Thus, the fundamental demands for full employment, affirmative action programs for women and minorities, guaranteed income, reliable and quality child care, housing, health services and reproductive rights including abortion are essential underpinnings for sexual self-autonomy. The need to combine the struggle for a freer sexuality with the struggle to defend the social safety net and full employment is the key to confronting the right-wing backlash against women and the gay and lesbian community.