**OWAAD PAMPHLET**

All oppressed people suffer, whether they live in the Third World or the industrialised West. But women suffer the most.

Even though the problems experienced by women are part and parcel of the general social problems created by Imperialism, they nevertheless have certain original features of their own. Oppressed women find themselves, both in society and under the state, in an exclusively helpless position. In politics, in the family and in the work situation, women are always allotted second place. They are denied equality of opportunity with men in education and in employment and are generally paid less than men when engaged in social production. But usually they do not even get the opportunity most of them being kept in the position of household slaves, and deprived of an independent existence both economically and socially and politically.

Women in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean and other Third World countries must, in addition to this, contend with all the miseries of the neo-colonial underdevelopment. They are the most exploited of all domestic slaves to compensate for the lack of basic essentials such as water and electricity supplies, with their own back-breaking labour. They are victims of reactionary feudal practices, designed to keep them in subjugation and are viciously exploited as a cheap source of labour.

The same system which oppresses women as a sex and discriminates against the psychologically, legally, politically at work and in education, also oppresses black people as race. Racism has always been necessary to Imperialism. It is a divide-and-rule tactic of the capitalists, the greater burden of which is shouldered by black women.

Racist housing policies have forced black people, in this country, into substandard housing and it is the women who have to bear the brunt of these appalling conditions. Racial and sexual discrimination have forced black women into the lowest paid, most menial jobs. Her children, for whom she has traditionally always borne the major responsibility are provided with the poorest equipped schools and the lowest standards of education. It is the black women who suffer most when her children are picked up by racist police. It is black woman who suffers most when her people are made the scapegoats for a failing capitalist economy.

Women in general are victims of class and sex oppression. But black women in addition to this, are oppressed because of their race.

At the root of the class, sex and race oppression which we experience today is the system of Imperialism, which opposes all people. It is for this reason that anti-imperialist struggles are taking place now in every corner of the world. Black women, who under Imperialism are triply oppressed, cannot afford to remain isolated from these struggles. The anti-imperialist struggle is OUR STRUGGLE. The need for us to organise, therefore, has never been greater, both to fight against our specific oppression and to give full support to those who share our common oppressor.

The Organisation of Women of Asian and African descent was formed at an anti-imperialist, black women’s organisation, by a small group of African and Afro-Caribbean sisters, many of whom have been involved in the work of the African Students’ Union (UK) since its formation. Our experience both of the ASU and elsewhere, showed us that there was a great need for black women to get organised in this country.

We saw that very few sisters attended political meetings and that the majority of black women; both students, workers and those who work in the home, appeared to be apathetic towards political issues. We recognised, however, that this apparent lack of interest was not the fault of the women who have for centuries been excluded from decision-making and involvement in politics. Thus we find that, although we women constitute one half of society, those issues and decisions which control are lives are made by men. Centuries of exclusion have created a vicious circle, whereby those of us who now have the chance to participate are reluctant to do so. We are not used to expressing our view publicly, and many of us still believe that we are incapable of taking part in those day to day decisions which affect our lives.

It was for these reasons that some of us met in Coventry, in February 1978, to discuss how we could overcome these problems and mobilise our sisters. We realised that if we are to attract black women and get them involved, we have to take up those issues which particularly affect them. We realised, too, that this could not be done by working through a general organisation, such as ASU, but only by setting up a separate, autonomous, and independent organisation of black women, in which we ourselves became responsible for carrying out those tasks which have traditionally been done by men. This experience would not only help sisters to overcome their psychological oppression – their self-consciousness, and lack of self-confidence but also enable them to become aware of their particular oppression, as black women, and to find the solutions.

O.W.A.A.D,

**I MUST BECOME A MENACE TO MY ENEMIES** / **JUNE JORDAN**

1
I will no longer lightly walk behind
a one of you who fear me:
                                     Be afraid.
I plan to give you reasons for your jumpy fits
and facial tics
I will not walk politely on the pavements anymore
and this is dedicated in particular
to those who hear my footsteps
or the insubstantial rattling of my grocery
cart
then turn around
see me
and hurry on
away from this impressive terror I must be:
I plan to blossom bloody on an afternoon
surrounded by my comrades singing
terrible revenge in merciless
accelerating
rhythms
But
I have watched a blind man studying his face.
I have set the table in the evening and sat down
to eat the news.
Regularly
I have gone to sleep.
There is no one to forgive me.
The dead do not give a damn.
I live like a lover
who drops her dime into the phone
just as the subway shakes into the station
wasting her message
canceling the question of her call:
fulminating or forgetful but late
and always after the fact that could save or
condemn me

I must become the action of my fate.

2
How many of my brothers and my sisters
will they kill
before I teach myself
retaliation?
Shall we pick a number?
South Africa for instance:
do we agree that more than ten thousand
in less than a year but that less than
five thousand slaughtered in more than six
months will
WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH ME?

I must become a menace to my enemies.

3
And if I
if I ever let you slide
who should be extirpated from my universe
who should be cauterized from earth
completely
(lawandorder jerkoffs of the first the
                   terrorist degree)
then let my body fail my soul
in its bedeviled lecheries

And if I
if I ever let love go
because the hatred and the whisperings
become a phantom dictate I o-
bey in lieu of impulse and realities
(the blossoming flamingos of my
                   wild mimosa trees)
then let love freeze me
out.
I must become
I must become a menace to my enemies.

**GO OUTSIDE – HANNAH BLACK**

ALL RIOTS EMIT A WORLD-HISTORICAL SHINE, but the George Floyd uprisings were extra radiant because they opened the doors of the world. The riots saved social life by proving that it was possible, with masks and moving air, to spend time together outdoors without getting sick. The riots reconstructed an outside of the home as they enacted an outside of capitalist social relations. Before the riots, even before the pandemic, it often felt as if life stopped just before the point where other people began.

The opening of the outside was an accidental effect of the uprisings. Although the uprisings were a mourning practice, a riot is also the undirected intersubjective power of a crowd, just something that can happen when a lot of people are outside in the same place. By providing new uses for public space—by uprooting street furniture, smashing plate-glass windows into piles of jewels, and pedestrianizing highways—the riots demonstrated that all objects can be transformed by collective play. A riot can’t resurrect the dead, but it can resurrect the dead spaces of cities, animate the streets—“*Our* streets!” as the chant goes, a civic-anarchic cliché that makes sense in the moment, as the streets get used differently. The physical sensation of taking a street stays even after the street is reconquered by everyday traffic.

It’s important to go outside because you feel different when the weather touches you directly and because there are people there. Social life is the substance that revolution is supposed to work on, so it’s no surprise that the brief, disgusting history of the police is founded not only on the slave patrol but also on crowd control. The police exist in passionate opposition to crowds. Unlike riots or an idea of art, the police are filled to the point of obliteration by purpose, so that in the practice of policing they don’t act as people at all. They are against escape and against gathering. The streets are the frame and context for working-class social life, so the police limit the pleasures that can be experienced there. Their job is to smash the informal life of the streets in all its manifestations: street vending, loitering, all the nothing crimes that hurt no one through which the police project of racist harassment gives itself legal form. Mohamed Bouazizi, whose self-immolation was the spark that began the Arab Spring, was a street vendor; Eric Garner was a street vendor. The banning of loitering is similarly paradigmatic, as it potentially criminalizes being anywhere at all.

**A riot can’t resurrect the dead, but it can resurrect the dead spaces of cities.**

In New York in the first week of June, when the city said everyone had to be indoors by 8 PM, the chants of *Fuck your curfew*began as the hour struck. Whoever had really been out stayed out. No one was conscious of being brave; they were powered by the electric currents of collective energy that constitute courage. The police tried and failed to prevent groups of a few hundred or a few thousand people from congregating at random around the city. It was wild how close New York came, that month, to defeating the NYPD. This was achieved without weapons, just physical presence and fire.

After the riots, before the winter, the city was like a creature in between exoskeletons. It turned out everything could happen outside. In summer, the parks were dense with people and competing musics. Grill smoke and weed smoke and Pop Smoke outlined the spectral presence of the New York commune that lived a second ghost life after its erasure by politics. I walked dark streets with people I had met on apps and navigated suddenly ornate boundaries of touch. On Jacob Riis Beach, we swam at night and interrupted someone else’s sex. Groups of young abolitionists still high on outdoor life congregated fleetingly in different parts of the city to eat and talk. It was romantic to see how everyone had grown into one another. In Prospect Park, we lay in the bowl of the earth and watched the sky tear itself into sunset. “I’ve been out every day,” a friend told me in October, “since the first day of the riots.” With winter coming, we rediscovered fire, as if rewinding back to the first language-animals who lived when history had yet to happen. I remember in the image of riot the hyperadaptability of being.

Communism is a movement away from the state and toward each other. Everything that happens in the street is a lesson because it is a point of contact. Conversation and confrontation are a real education. Signs and wonders remain, the names of the dead graffitied on a building, broken windows like breathing holes in an airless world. The government does nothing worth anything for anyone, and on good days, it feels as if the state could just evaporate overnight. When the young people say, *New York will breathe*, or, *Abolition now*, they mean it—they go outside, and, for a few hours, they make an image of the present condition of freedom.

 **Excerpt from ‘Experiments in Imagining Otherwise’
 Lola Olufemi**

I think the imagination calls on us to understand and embrace [XXXXXXXXXXXXXX]

as a project of resistance without determinable end.
Do not underestimate its relationship to the material. If we take imaginative potential seriously, we can properly articulate a politics committed to the expulsion of misery,
a politics that is not ‘politics’, a schema that refuses persuasion, compromise, sacrifice, the trap of practicality.

Repeat after me: Our freedom is not a policy popularity competition.

Revolutionary movements require a teleological pool from which to draw. The imagination is that teleological pool: it not only creates liberatory drives; it sustains, justifies and legitimises them. It undoes entire epistemes and clears a space for us to create something new. Though this ‘newness’, or the demand for *something else*, can never fully be realised in the realm of the discursive, it exists in other registers: it can be felt, heard, touched, tasted. The structural limits of this world restrict our ability to articulate all that the imagination is capable of conceiving.
Do not forget this.

The feminist imagination carves out a site of agency that forms the impetus for action. It has many purposes, but in this regard, it enables resistant acts to take place by dismantling hegemonic notions of what is permissible under current conditions. The imagination is central to the cultural production of revolutionary movements; its primary role is to signal *what could be. What could be* is a linguistic stand-in for a set of political, social and cultural demands, strategic aims, revolutionary longings. As such, it resists singular definition:
It is an unwieldy phenomenon and its currency is chaos.
It is an unwieldy phenomenon and its currency is chaos.

That is, the future is not in front of us, it is everywhere simultaneously: multidirectional, variant, spontaneous. We only have to *turn around*. Relational solidarities, even in their failure, reveal the plurality of the future- present, help us to see through the impasse, help temporarily eschew what is stagnant, help build and then prepare to shatter
the many windows of the here and now.

**THE CORAL TREE
Jackie Wang
Excerpt from ‘The Sunflower Cast a Spell to Save us from the Void’**

I have been having such strange and beautiful dreams lately, though I was only able to sleep for a couple hours last night. I dreamed I was walking through a bombed-out abandoned building . . . just a shell of a building, really; there were no windows or doors and it was quite dark. But right outside one of the doorways there was a luminous tree–not just any tree but a coral tree–not just the color coral but the stony sea substance–and this radiant tree was growing up out of a little pond that shimmered in the light–and instead of leaves it was covered in delicate glass threads–everything was very bright and I knew that as soon as I exited the dilapidated building and passed through the doorway the word would really open up, kind of like that rush you get in the morning when you step out of your house and into the sunlight. I write this because . . . maybe I am thinking of what Michael Hardt says about the imagination being constitutive, the way the imagination “becomes so intense and embedded that it becomes real through its intensification and articulation.” So I think . . . these flashes of the luminous world should be shared. I don’t believe the imagination can fix everything (I am a rigorous materialist!), but it can do some of the work: the work of creating openings where there were previously none. In my talk on revolutionary loneliness I reminded the audience how we choose to interpret life and death is not neutral; interpretation itself is always strategic. Some interpretations are more politically and personally enabling than others. I think of this when I write my dreams down in the morning. When I had this dream I thought, *here is the destroyed world and here–beyond the threshold– is the luminous world.* Simone Weil says that the greatest calamity the human race can experience is the *destruction of the city.* That’s where I was: walking through a destroyed city. But . . . the luminous tree!