



Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

360 Nelson Street, S.W.
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August 1, 1967

Miss Gwen Patton
Joint Disease Hospital
1919 Madison Avenue
Room 211
New York, New York

Dear Gwen:

It was very interesting that I received your letter when I did. Interesting because I just left the Newark Black Power Conference and many women there had the same -kinds of questions.

The same thing occurred when I was in Oakland, California at the CORE convention. I don't know what is bringing all of this around, but it sort of bothers me.

After much discussion with other women and a few men, I have come to the conclusion that we should not get tied up in worrying about the woman's role in the revolution. The persons who are sort of responsible for bringing this question up are persons such as Ron Karenga of US from Los Angeles. He preaches polygamy and that black women should stay at home and have as many babies as possible.

There are others such as Queen Mother of the Yoruba Temple who preaches the very same thing, as if having babies will help any revolution.

My conclusion is that Karenga is a greedy man, as most men are and would like to have as many women as possible with the least trouble. He claims to have a number of wives and probably does. He is probably the type that likes to sleep with two or more women at once and tries to legitimize it by preaching polygamy.

Queen Mother is an old woman of 62, who is very active and much respected. She spoke at the Newark Conference and said some of the above things. Many black men gave her a standing ovation when she said that women should be willing to share their men.

Some of them stood and clapped in jest and others were really serious.

It is my feeling that a revolution, whether it is social or otherwise/not make one retrogress into the past. It would
does
seem that it would make people look forward to the future and the kinds of things they will be able to participate in as a result of their work.

Those self-same people forget that when African women were given their independence, those same women went to the government and asked that polygamy be abolished. The government stated that if they abolished polygamy right away, it would break up too many homes. So instead they told the women that from now on, when a man married, he could not take unto himself another wife without the consent of his first wife.

Now what woman, anywhere in the world, and under any culture, is going to give the okay to her mate to bring another female into her home?

In an extreme time such as we are now in, when all changes are radical ones, of course there will be radical and extreme ways of thinking. I think this will die down.

When the shit hits the fan, as it will and as it has done in the past, no one had time to stop and tell women to stay home or to stay off the front lines. We were always there and we will always be there.

No revolution, I don't give a shit where it is being fought, can be fought between men alone or by men alone. The women will play a great part in it. African women proved that. They didn't sit at home petting babies and women who were too old to have babies of their own. Algerian women proved it. They got a very important role in their society. They carried guns, shot, carried messages, sneaked into enemy lines, played the part of prostitutes, etc. Vietnamese women proved it and are proving it every day of their lives. Old men, old women and young children are also playing their part in the fight for their existence.

We proved it in the civil rights movement. There are legends around persons such as yourself, Annie Pearl, Ruby Doris, Diane Nash, Mildred Forman and others who were always on the front lines. I should not leave you out of those legends. I knew of you before we had ever met.

Many times, women in the movement were the ones who were the first to rush the police lines. Women who were pregnant were kicked in the stomach and as a result suffered great physical and mental damage, but it did not stop them.

During the slavery of our people, when men and women were bred as cattle, men were not the only ones who fought back. Many women were tortured, beat to death and oft-times burned at the stake. Black women's bellies were ripped open in front of other women and the unborn babes ripped from their stomachs to teach obedience to the others. Women who follow orders and do as the so-called master says, do not have to be given that kind of treatment.

We have always rebelled for a better way of life and most important, we have always been willing to fight for it.

I do not think we should let ourselves be put into a trap because a few greedy persons would have it so in order that they may use women to their own personal advantages. I do not feel that most men think or feel that way. It does not matter if they do. I am a black human being first and a woman incidentally. I believe in freedom of my people as much as any man and will fight as hard for any black person as he would.

Even though I have never know freedom, I have a dream of it and it is what keeps me alive and working in my small way. No man, nor woman can dictate who I shall fuck or how often I shall fuck or when or how often I shall have babies. Only I shall do that. When white people did that to us, we rebelled because it was against the laws of nature and of people. Would I not be less of a woman to let a black man do it. If a man is not for you, he must be against you, be he black or white.

Before ending this letter, I would like to turn you on to a book I just finished reading entitled "Studies in a Dying Colonialism" by Frantz Fanon. It is really worth reading. If the book belonged to me, I would send it to you, but maybe you can get someone to pick it up for you in New York City.

I hope that I have been of some help in answering your questions. If not, please write again. I would like to hear your thoughts on this letter, so write anyway. Take care of yourself and get out of that stupid hospital.

Love,

Eay