

TO OUR SISTERS IN ARMS

FROM JOAN BIRD AND AFENI SHAKUR

In a few days, the legal lynching of the N.Y. 21 will resume. Since the first night of our capture (April 2, 1969), we have watched your patient struggle to rid yourselves of old, decrepit ideas. We have drawn strength from the unyielding feel of your faith. We know that without your support, we could never have made it to this point.

There were always times when we doubted our ability, as women, to do certain extraordinary things; and through it all, you have vigorously criticized our passive attitudes. You have shown us that we can stand up against any attack the fascists wage. We need not fight simply tit for tat, but we can also act as machine guns to wear the enemy thin.

Through their example, and the examples of Jane Alpert and Bernadine Dohlm, we along with the entire Central committee of the Black Panther Party, recognized the legitimacy of the struggle in the mother country for Women's Liberation. While at the same time, we recognized our duty as Black colonial subjects, to struggle courageously against slavery and genocide of all our people.

Within our ranks, we were able to recognize the old ideas of chauvinism, as destructive symptoms of a decaying system. Our brothers-in-arms joined us in these recognitions, while all the time they emphatically criticized any passive ideas we might have enveloped. Daily we found that evil ideas were foreign to social-

We suffered for every inch of progress. Our hearts were in constant pain and yet we continued when Li'l Bobby was murdered, we could not separate ourselves into gender to classify our emotions. When Bunchy and John were shot down by the very champions of chauvinism, we watched Ericka transform her hurt into determination as she adapted her husband's valor. We have always looked upon John and Ericka as examples of the new man and the new woman. Since that time, other brothers and sisters have advanced that example.

In December, 1969, when the enemy troops attacked the Los Angeles office, they did not find chauvanistic men or passive women-- they found instead, a unified force



JOAN BIRD, JOAN KELLEY, MASAI, AFENI AND EVON

We have held constant struggles with our comrades in arms, who were a bit slow to understand our fidelity to the struggle for complete liberation. We watched the women of the mother country, struggle for equal status in a capitalistic system, knowing all the while that guerilla women want equal status in a system that does not exploit or murder other people. We detest Golda Meir with the same venom that we feel for Richard Nixon, Hoover and Mitchell. We cannot look upon revolutionaries as exploiters, because we have seen them fight, die and kill for an end to exploitation.

At the height of our annoyance at this reactionary element of Women's Liberation, a small group of young White women for the Women's Center, came to us and asked if they could help to get one of their contemporaries out of the clutches of the enemy. The Joan Bird Committee recognized that our struggle was against a racist capitalist system that oppresses all minority peoples.

They immediately moved to convince other women that our National Salvation is directly related to all struggles for liberty. In the process, they raised \$25,000.00 to contribute to the ransom the courts had imposed on us. When the ransom was met and both of us were back in the colony, they moved to educate their friends and neighbors about the preplanned murder attempt on our comrade Lonnie McClucas. They did not limit their love of women! They showed us, through their practice that revolutionary love is not abstract.

istic living. It became necessary for us to move as one force to eliminate those, just as in the past, we moved against liberal or dogmatic ideas within our ranks.

It has never been easy for any of us! We had just gone through a cultural struggle with factions of our communities, who had cast us in "roles". Our history of brutalization is long and painful. We had always turned an accusing finger on our men because of the atrocities imposed on all of us. We blamed them for the crimes of the racist capitalists. When we ourselves failed to attack the real enemy of humanity, we sought to punish ourselves by saying our role was to "stand behind our men". Brothers found this a flattering position and quickly adapted it. These were the ideas we bought into the Black Panther Party. Once we became familiar with the honorable principles of our Party, we found we had to question those incorrect ideas.

Brothers knew that Ericka Huggins deserved nothing less than equal status as a warrior. They knew that the sisters who sold papers with them also watched their backs. They endured torture that only a dedicated servant of humanity could endure, and still they fought. Whenever we found ourselves falling for the mistaken ideas, we criticized ourselves! We discipline ourselves! We trained ourselves! Today we look at the four years that knew the dawning of the Black Panther Party, and our reaction is the same--it's a miracle! Deep down inside, we know that it was not a miracle.

of uncompromised resistance. None of us were surprised to hear that those eleven people had held off hundreds of mercenary troops for many hours. We did not for a minute doubt the ability of any of our comrades to deal a striking blow against this fascist regime.

We are objective in our treatment of subversive thinking. We do not tolerate opportunism of any form. We do not separate the opportunistic traits of chauvinism and pacifity from the other destructive elements of an exploitative society. Our enemy, American imperialism and all symptoms of its evil path will be vigorously opposed.

We have been so moved by your efforts, comrades, that at least one of us, will follow the revolutionary example of our Chairman Bobby Seale. We have recognized the illegitimacy of America's institutions and our response to that is constant attack. In furtherance of that determination, we wish to stand before the racist courts of Babylon, and intone your spirit, your goals and your thirst for liberty. We wish to be representatives of all that you are! So that today we dedicate our lives to the unified struggle of our people. We shall fight eternally in the spirit of Bobby Seale, knowing that you will advance the spirit of Jonathan Jackson, William Christmas, James McClain, and Ruchell McGee.

With the warmth and fidelity of true comrades-in-arms.

Joan Bird and Afeni Shakur
(2 of the N.Y. 21)