

Third World Revolutionaries: The Activism of the Third World Women's Alliance and Alliance Against
Women's Oppression, 1970s-1980s

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THESIS APPROVAL

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Abstract

The Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA) emerged from the Black Power politics of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and two black women's caucuses, the Black Women's Liberation Committee and the Black Women's Alliance. Formed in 1970, as a multiracial, socialist feminist organization, the TWWA engaged in transnational and intersectional activism. This thesis examines how the Alliance articulated a Third World feminist identity from their founding to their reconfiguration in 1980 to the Alliance Against Women's Oppression. I argue that through their publication *Triple Jeopardy* and their coalition building efforts, the Alliance developed a Third World feminist collective identity with the purpose of challenging racism, sexism, and imperialism. The thesis focuses on two of the TWWA's projects: their role in organizing International Women's Day Celebrations in the Bay area during the 1970s and their engagement with the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality in East Oakland. The thesis is informed by the Third World Women's Alliance and Alliance Against Women's Oppression Records, both of which are housed at Smith College.

Chapter one provides the intellectual foundation for the thesis by examining the TWWA's ideological organ, *Triple Jeopardy*. Through the publication, the Alliance examined capitalist, racist, and sexist oppression and used the publication as a tool to radicalize and educate their readership. Chapter two examines the organization's coalition work with the Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day. I contend that through the performance of music, skits, and poetry, the organization articulated a multifaceted Third World identity. Moreover, the Alliance's attempt to expand their work beyond their organization and build coalitions with revolutionary organizations in the Bay Area reflected their goal of forming a mass people's movement with Third World women at its center. Chapter three's focus shifts to

the Alliance's fight for complete reproductive autonomy, arguing that the organization moved beyond the reproductive rights framework established by second wave feminists to one of reproductive justice. Their reproductive justice framework focused on more than just abortion, considering involuntary sterilization throughout the Third World and in the United States. The chapter will forefront the TWWA's work with the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, when they spearheaded a community-driven investigation into high infant mortality rates at Highland Hospital in East Oakland during the 1970s.

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Introduction: The Creation of a Third World Women's Organization: The Background of the Third World Women's Alliance

As a socialist organization, the Third World Women's Alliance recognizes the fact that our primary fight at this stage is the overthrow of imperialism. Nevertheless, out of imperialism has grown two destructive forces, which we as third world women must contend with, racism and male chauvinism. In this context, an alliance of third world women has a specific role to play.

We are women, determined to reap the fruits of our labor. The history of our people in this country portrays clearly the prominent role that the Third World woman has played in the on-going struggle against racism and exploitation. As mother, wife, and worker, she has witnessed the frustration and anguish of men, women, and children living her community. As a revolutionary, she will take a part in changing this new reality.¹

Third World Women's Alliance: Background

The Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA) emerged from the Black Power politics of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and two Black women's caucuses, the Black Women's Liberation Committee (BWLC) and Black Women's Alliance (BWA). Along with other Black women in SNCC, including Gwen Patton and Mae Jackson, Frances Beal formed the BWLC to provide a space for Black women's feminist theorizing and to address issues of sexism in SNCC. The BWLC's formation came at a SNCC meeting in 1968 where Beal presented a position paper on involuntary sterilization. At the gathering, Beal argued that SNCC neglected issues concerning gender.² Her activist work on involuntary sterilization extended to the TWWA's fight for access to free abortion and contraception and to challenge high rates of infant mortality in communities of color.

¹ Third World Women's Alliance, "Editorial," *Triple Jeopardy*. 1, no. 1 (September-October, 1971) *Triple Jeopardy*, November 1971-Feb. 1975. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

² Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 47.

The BWLC articulated a collective identity among Black women built on race, class, and gender oppressions.³ The group challenged what they referred to as bourgeois gender roles and took an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist stance. The BWLC, BWA, and TWWA emerged during a moment of decolonization and liberation struggles throughout Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The organizations' focus on anti-imperialism grew from Beal's time as a SNCC activist. Beal's activism was informed by her transnational perspective, developed during a trip to Paris in 1960 when she engaged with people from Africa, Guadalupe, and Martinique. Also, during her time abroad, Beal became acquainted with the liberation struggles in Africa, particularly in Algeria. Beal's Third World consciousness emerged through reading diasporic literature, such as Frantz Fanon and the Parisian literary magazine, *Présence Africaine*.⁴

Beal wrote "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in 1969, where she articulated a race, class, and gender-based analysis, which became a foundational work for Black feminist thought and the TWWA's Third World feminist consciousness. The essay was published several times, including in Robin Morgan's anthology of feminist thought, *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings for the Women's Liberation Movement*, *The Black Women's Manifesto*, and *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, which was edited by Toni Cade Bambara.⁵ In the essay,

³ Stephen Ward, "The Third World Women's Alliance: Black Feminist Radicalism and Black Power Politics," in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 152-126.

⁴ Frances Beal, Interview with Loretta Ross, *Voices of Feminism Oral History Project* (2005) Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collection, Northampton, Massachusetts, 26. In the interview, with Ross, Beal noted an experience in Paris, which shaped her Third World consciousness. She recalled a protest and an encounter with a French citizen: "Well, this Frenchmen though I was, because he came up and slapped across the face, to the point where I just fell down. I was totally shocked., you know because this is before the mass demonstrations were going on. Ans then I saw the signs there. So, then I ran back to the hotel. I was furious! Do you know what that policeman did? My god, you know, he slapped me across the face. So it turns out that there's this liberation struggle going on in Algeria that I knew nothing about."

⁵ Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writers from the Women's Liberation Movement*. (New York: Vintage, 1970); Toni Cade Bambara, ed., *The Black Woman: An Anthology*. (New York: Random House, 1970); Third World Women's Alliance, *The Black Women's Manifesto* accessed at, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/wlmpc/wlmms01009>.

Beal examined the intersection of race and class, noting: “We as black women have got to deal with the problems that the black masses deal with, for our problems in reality are one and the same.”⁶ Beal’s observation positioned Black women’s lived experiences as engaging not only with racism, but also sexism. The TWWA’s ideological organ, *Triple Jeopardy*, continued this intersectional analysis, considering racism, sexism, and imperialism.

In 1969, discussions within the BWLC occurred, which called for the separation of the caucus from SNCC, leading to the formation of the Black Women’s Alliance in 1969. The organizational makeup was diverse including “women from other organizations, welfare mothers, community workers, and campus radicals.”⁷ Like the BWLC, the BWA responded to the myth of the Black matriarchy perpetuated by the Moynihan Report and discussed the role of Black women as integral to the Black Power struggle. Through this political theorizing, the BWA set the ideological foundation for the TWWA.⁸

Tensions occurred in the BWA when they were approached by members of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party about joining the organization. Members who opposed the inclusion of non-Black members argued that Black women had a distinct history, one that needed to be a central organizing principle. Beal argued for the inclusion of the Puerto Rican and all women of color to the organization by identifying analogous experiences of discrimination living in the United States and overlapping gender, race, and class oppressions. Beal contended:

When we looked at the Puerto Rican sisters, we saw that they were trying to deal with both their national oppression of living within the United States and a kind of racial and class thing that was separate from just being a part of America as a whole, and then how does your gender fit in when you have this other overriding oppression. Then black

⁶ Frances Beal, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, 8 (November, 2008), 174.

⁷ Springer, *Living for the Revolution*, 47.

⁸ The women in the BWLC and later the TWWA, challenged the myth of matriarchy, which was articulated by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in his 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The case for National Action*. The report can be accessed at: <https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/webid-moynihan/> Also, see Beal’s “Double Jeopardy” for a discussion on the myth of matriarchy.

women were essentially trying to deal with the same thing: how do you deal with the question of race and class and gender, in terms of what kinds of intersections.⁹

Following the organization's founding, the TWWA expanded to include branches in the Bay Area and Seattle.¹⁰ The Bay Area branch of the TWWA included fourteen members at its founding, including Miriam Louie and Cheryl Johnson.¹¹

Throughout this thesis, I will refer to TWWA activists as Third World women. The Alliance employed the phrase "Third World" to describe a collective identity through which to form solidarity and coalitions. *Triple Jeopardy*, the TWWA's ideological organ, explained the organization's use of the phrase in their editorial "What is the Third World?" The Third World included those places colonized or formally colonized---in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Alliance's notion of the Third World included peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America, as well as Native Americans, those who shared a history of oppression under the capitalist powers of western Europe and the United States. Evoking solidarity from a transnational perspective the organization wrote: "We have all suffered from the same kind of exploitation and colonial oppression as our brothers and sisters in our homelands."¹²

In their "Women in Struggle" article, the Alliance emphasized the importance of a Third World women's organization in liberation struggles. For the TWWA, a Third World women's organization played an integral role in efforts to challenge and eliminate racism, sexism, imperialism, and capitalism. The organization carved a space for Third World people, particularly women, to eradicate capitalist oppression, arguing: "A third world women's group

⁹ Beal, oral history, 45-46.

¹⁰ Ashley Famer, *Remaking Black Power*, 173. This thesis will focus almost entirely on the efforts of the Bay Area chapter, which are held at Smith College. The thesis will also consider the TWWA's ideological organ, *Triple Jeopardy*, for which Frances Beal served as editor and based out of New York City.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Third World Women's Alliance, "What is the Third World?" *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 2 (November, 1971), 14.

can potentially be one of the most revolutionary forces confronting the U.S. working class.”¹³

The Alliance emphasized that an organization focused on a Third World women would act as a way to forge solidarity among Third World people, rather than division. They contended: “An independent third world women’s organization, rather than divide the national liberation struggle would actually enhance that struggle. The rulers of this society would like to keep up thinking that the problem is only one of racism or that men are inherently the enemy, thus diverting our attention from the economic basis of our oppression.”¹⁴

The TWWA expressed their Third World feminist identity through their organizational principles. Beal noted that the TWWA rejected the notion of a feminism that considered gender the only form of oppression. Rather, the Alliance articulated an intersectional Third World feminism. Throughout this thesis, I will refer to the TWWA as Third World feminists. The term feminist was repudiated by several Black women activists, with many embracing Alice Walker’s notion of womanism. Walker noted that “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.”¹⁵ In an interview, Beal recalled why the Alliance rejected feminism concerned solely with gender oppression. She remembered:

The TWWA—at least the chapter that I was working with in New York—did not like that term, because at that time it came to mean women who put females first, and that was the only thing, you know, it was a very narrow perception. And what we were trying to deal with was the integration of race, gender, in consciousness, and not like one above the other, because we actually operated as one is more important than another, but that there was an actual integration of that.¹⁶

Their principles included: an aim to “create a sisterhood of women devoted to developing solidarity among the people of the Third World ” grounded in a socialist framework, which

¹³ Third World Women’s Alliance, “Women in the Struggle,” *Triple Jeopardy* 1. (September-October, 1971), 8-9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harcourt, 1983), xi.

¹⁶ Beal, oral history, 4

considered race and gender-based unity among U.S. based Third World people concerning “educational, economic, and political life.”¹⁷ Additionally, as part of the principles, the organization “collected, interpreted, distributed information” about Third World people, specifically women and created an educational fund with the purpose of publishing articles. Their principles extended to their relationships with men, aimed at “building and creating relationships with men” and “eradicating myths” that were put in place to divide communities of color.¹⁸

The objective of this thesis is to examine the ways in which the TWWA and later the AAWO, articulated a Third World feminist identity through their coalition-building efforts with the Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day in the Bay Area and the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality (CFIM) in East Oakland. I argue that through their work with both of these organizations, the Alliance established coalitions across difference to challenge racism, sexism, and imperialism. The Third World feminist identity expressed by the TWWA and the AAWO was anti-imperialist, anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist. The coalitions established by the TWWA and AAWO were geared toward their notion of Third World feminist thought. Moreover, the organizations’ activism took a transnational focus, looking to women revolutionaries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to shape their Third World feminist identities.

Intersectional and Women of Color Feminist Thought Scholarship

This thesis engages with a rich body of Black feminist scholarship produced primarily in the 1980s and 1990s. The decades witnessed a flowering of scholarship by women of color

¹⁷ Third World Women’s Alliance, “Women in the Struggle,” in *Triple Jeopardy*, 8-9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

theorists, such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill-Collins, Cherri Moraga, Gloria Anzaldua, and Audre Lorde. My understanding of the TWWA's Third World feminist identity is grounded in the scholarship produced during these decades, which articulated intersectional analyses and interrogated the category of Third World women. Examining this work provides the intellectual and theoretical framework of the historical genealogy of the TWWA and AAWO and their challenge to racism, sexism, and imperialism.¹⁹

Advancing the theorizing of women of color autonomous organizations during the 1960s and 1970s, *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* was published for the first time in 1981, and edited by Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldua.²⁰ The contributors aimed for the collection to “reflect an uncompromised definition of feminism by women of color in the United States,” from a transnational and intersectional perspective and considered the multiple identities and struggles of women of color globally.²¹ The editors elucidated their notion of “radical” as intertwined with personal experiences and revolutionary politics, noting:

We name this anthology “radical” for we were interested in the writings of women of color who want nothing short of a revolution in the hands of women—who agree that that is the goal, no matter how we might disagree about the getting there or the possibility of seeing it in our own lifetimes. We use the term in the original form—stemming from the form “root”—for our feminist politic emerges from the roots of both our cultural oppression and heritage.²²

When the book was first published in 1981, Moraga and Anzaldua described it as “a catalyst, not a definitive statement on Third World feminism in the United States,” aiming for the

¹⁹ Scholars have debated the historical genealogy of intersectional thought. An example of this work is: Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²⁰ Gloria Anzaldua also wrote *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, which was first published in 1987, and further contributed to this theorizing. See: Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute books, 2012).

²¹ Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 4th ed. (New York: SUNY Press, 2015), xvi.

²² Moraga & Anzaldua, *This Bridge*, xlv.

collection to be a revolutionary tool to continue the discussion on Third World feminism and to build a political movement.²³

A major contribution from *This Bridge*, the essay “Entering the Lives of Others: Theory in the Flesh,” articulated the concept of “theory in the flesh” to describe the political experiences of Third World women in the United States. The contributor wrote: “A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives--our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings, -all fuse to create a politics born out of necessity.”²⁴ Through the notion of bridging work, *This Bridge* provided a framework for women of color’s political theorizing. Kate Rushin’s “The Bridge Poem” explained the relationship between political awakening and bridging work, describing it as “a bridge to my own power” and “a bridge to their true selves, not one to be walked all over.”²⁵ Through bridging work, women of color found agency and uncovered history, being able to “name ourselves and by telling our stories in our own words-- agency and bridging “nothing easy about a collective cultural history.”²⁶ The TWWA and AAWO engaged in bridging work through their conceptualization of a Third World feminist identity and through direct action coalition building with Third World women across a broad spectrum of identities.

Audre Lorde’s emphasis on working across difference in her collection of essays and speeches, *Sister Outsider*, is crucial to my work. Lorde argues that difference is a “crucial strength” and can lead to “real difference for creative change.”²⁷ Lorde’s notion of difference as a form of strength and unity will inform my analysis of the TWWA’s coalition building with the

²³ Moraga & Anzaldua, *This Bridge*, xlv.

²⁴ Moraga & Anzaldua, “Entering the Lives of Others: Theory in the Flesh,” in *This Bridge*, 19.

²⁵ Kate Rushin, “The Bridge Poem,” in *This Bridge*, xxxiii-xxxiv.

²⁶ Moraga & Anzaldua, *This Bridge*, 19.

²⁷ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), 169.

Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day, the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, as well as their inclusion of white women with the AAWO.

Patricia Hill Collins' conceptualization of the matrix of domination, Deborah King's notion of multiple jeopardy, and Kimberlé Crenshaw's articulation of intersectionality all inform my analysis of the TWWA's activism. Deborah K. King's article, "Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," adds to the concept of double and triple jeopardy theorized by Beal and the TWWA. King argues that when examining multiple oppression, "The modifier "multiple" refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well. In other words, the equivalent formulation is racism multiplied by sexism is multiplied by classism."²⁸ King's essay disputes monist feminism, which considers only gender as a detriment, and often erases the experiences of women of color.²⁹ My work challenges this notion of monist feminism, viewing the TWWA's and AAWO's activism through an intersectional lens. Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in her article, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" in 1989 through the metaphor of an intersection.³⁰ Exploring the TWWA's and AAWO's examination of racism, sexism, and imperialism, this thesis contributes to scholarship on intersectional theory.

In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* Hill Collins introduces the concept of the matrix of domination. I will view the TWWA's work

²⁸ Deborah King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs*. 14. No., 1 (Autumn, 1988), 47.

²⁹ King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness," 57.

³⁰ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-Discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 no. 8 (1989), 139-167.

through the lens of Hill Collins' transnational matrix of domination.³¹ Through this framework, Hill Collins considered the "universality of intersecting oppressions as organized through diverse local realities," the necessity of considering Black feminism through a transnational perspective, and the creation of an "intercontinental black women's consciousness movement."³² The transnational matrix of domination considers the difference of experiences and overlapping oppressions through a global lens. In this thesis, I will examine the TWWA's and AAWO's anti-imperial activism, particularly their work with Somos Hermanas, an attempt to forge transnational solidarity with Central American women, through the perspective of the transnational matrix of domination.

Black Power and Women of Color Feminist Historiography:

This thesis also contributes to scholarship, which reconsiders the Black Power movement through the perspective of Black women's activism. It engages with historiography that considers Black women's activism within the Black radical tradition, and as articulated by historian Carol Boyce Davies, the Black radical female subject.³³ Moreover, this thesis adds to historiography that examines women of color's response to Black nationalist rhetoric within Black Power organizations and their organizing outside of Black Power groups in Black women's autonomous organizations, such as the TWWA. It also contributes to work which examines the emergence of Black and Third World feminisms.

³¹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 246-247.

³² Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 252; 254.

³³ Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Carol Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx the Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

Kristen Anderson-Bricker contributes to the volume *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women's Contemporary Activism* with her essay "Triple Jeopardy: Black Women and the Growth of Feminist Consciousness in SNCC, 1964-1975." The essay adds to scholarship examining the development of Black feminism in Black Power organizations and the emergence of Black feminist autonomous organizations. Anderson-Bricker's work interrogates the relationship between Black nationalism, Black feminism, and the divergent historical trajectories of Black and white women's feminisms. She argues that Black women's feminist consciousness emerged post-freedom summer, with the emergence of the BWLC in 1968. Anderson-Bricker argues that the shifting ideology of SNCC through the organization's engagement with Black nationalism, led to the development of distinct feminisms for white and Black women. Black women in SNCC formed the Black Women's Liberation Committee, which became the Third World Women's Alliance, marrying feminist and nationalist ideologies and considering the intersections of race, class, and gender.³⁴

Becky Thompson adds to work considering the historical roots of the development of women of color feminisms in her essay, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism." Thompson re-periodizes second wave feminist history through the lens of women of color and antiracist white women's activism. Conceptualizing the multiracial feminism framework, Thompson challenges "hegemonic feminism," which privileges the histories of white, middle class feminisms and neglects race and class-based analysis.³⁵

Thompson argues against the notion that women of color feminist activism emerged as a reaction

³⁴ Kristen Anderson-Bricker, "Triple Jeopardy: Black Women and the Growth of Feminist Consciousness in SNCC, 1964-1975," in *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women's Contemporary Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

³⁵ Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28 no. 2 (Summer 2002), 336.

to white feminism, asserting that the narrative excludes women of color's feminist activism as it engaged with the Black Power movement and antiracist white women's activist work. Black women's autonomous organizations, such as the Third World Women's Alliance and National Black Feminist organization are also excluded from this genealogy.³⁶ For this thesis, I will adopt Thompson's periodization, with multiracial feminist activism being in its early stages during the 1960s and early 1970s, and the mid-1970s, 1980s, and 1990s being the peak of activist efforts.³⁷

Sociologist Benita Roth's monograph, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave*, adds to Thompson's revisioning of feminist history by examining the development of different strands of feminist thought. Roth contends that rather than one singular second wave feminist movement, there were several feminisms. Roth's objective for *Separate Waves* was to "develop a picture of second-wave feminisms, feminisms that were plural and characterized by racial and ethnic organizational distinctiveness."³⁸ Employing an intersectional and social constructionist methodology, she argues that the emergence of the feminisms was not based on "natural differences" but diverse sets of circumstances. Roth adds to the discussion of the trajectory of Black feminism, noting that it did not just emerge due to racism among white women, but through a "different context in doing politics."³⁹ She contributes to scholarly discussions on Black feminist thought, arguing that it was "an intersectional, vanguard vision of liberation politics, emerged into a space created by the inability of both Black Liberation and white women's liberation activists to incorporate Black feminists as activists."⁴⁰

³⁶ Thompson, "Recasting," 340-341.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 1.

³⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁰ Roth, *Separate Waves*, 127.

In *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980*, historian Kimberly Springer introduces the concept of interstitial politics, or “politics from the cracks.”⁴¹ Interstitial politics had two meanings. One pertained to Black feminists activists being engaged full time, not being paid, and fitting activist work into busy schedules. Springer argues that the second meaning for politics between the cracks is that “black feminists developed a collective identity and basis for organizing that reflected the intersecting nature of black womanhood.”⁴² Springer’s study focuses on the development and demise of five Black women’s autonomous organizations, the Third World Women’s Alliance, the National Black Feminist Organization, the Alliance of Black Feminists, the Combahee River Collective, and Black Women Organized for Action. She contends that Black women’s autonomous organizations formed as a response to the restrictive roles placed on black women during the Civil Rights movement, the emergence of Black nationalism within the organizations, and that Black feminists considered their experiences as civil rights activists when conceptualizing their notion of Black feminist thought.⁴³

Another essay examining Black feminism and Black women’s role in the Black Power movement, Stephen Ward’s article, “The Third World Women’s Alliance: Black Feminist Radicalism and Black Power Politics,” explores the role of the Third World Women’s Alliance and their engagement with Black Power politics, nationalism, and feminism. The essay considers how TWWA activists merged Black nationalism and feminism. He argues that “black feminism is a component of the Black Power Movement” and that the TWWA’s feminism “was not simply

⁴¹ Springer, *Living for the Revolution*, ,2.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 15.

a critique of Black Power, but a *form* of it.”⁴⁴ Ward further contends that the TWWA used Black Power as a “broader feminist space” to establish a “black feminism as a political identity.”⁴⁵

A series of essays edited by Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution: Radical Black Women in the Black Freedom Struggles* introduces the concept of the long-distance runner, Black women activists who engaged with multiple movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement and labor movement, through an intersectional perspective.⁴⁶ The anthology contributes to historiography demonstrating the complexity and multifaceted activism of Black women. This thesis seeks to add this scholarship by exploring Black women as leaders of their own autonomous organizations, which engaged with multiple causes and coalitions.

Cheryl Higashida’s, book *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* contributes to scholarship exploring Black women’s activism from an intersectional perspective. Higashida introduces the concept of Black internationalist feminism, which examines the Black Left and how Black women had “special problems that could not be deferred or subsumed” through class and anti-racist oppressions.⁴⁷ She argues that Black women’s activism was internationalist, focusing on how their work engaged with struggles in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. Higashida asserts that Black women challenged heteropatriarchy “and masculinist assertions of nationalism, while maintaining, even

⁴⁴ Stephen Ward, “The Third World Women’s Alliance: Black Feminist Radicalism Black Power Politics.” In *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 120.

⁴⁵ Ward, “The Third World Women’s Alliance,” 121.

⁴⁶ Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Black Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*. (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁴⁷ Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism, Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2-3. For additional historiography on Black women’s internationalism see: Imaobong D. Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018); Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

centrality of national liberation movements for achieving Black women's social, political, and economic rights."⁴⁸

Historians Dayo Gore and Erik McDuffie add to work, which examines the complexity of Black women's radicalism. Gore and McDuffie add a dimension to this scholarship through their analysis of women of color in the Communist movement during the Popular Front through the 1970s, demonstrating the continuity of Black women's feminist organizing. Their work illustrates the engagement of overlapping oppressions and Black women's work within the CPUSA, challenging images like the male factory worker to expand a race and gender-based analysis.

Gore's book *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* argues that Black women's activist work in the Communist Party USA provided the foundation for Black women's activism, such as the Third World Women's Alliance during the 1970s.⁴⁹ Gore's work engages with radical Communist women, such as Louise Thompson Patterson, Maude White Katz, and Lorraine Hansberry. *Radicalism at the Crossroads* further contends that Black women's organizing "showed how political work shaped at the crossroads of the fight for black liberation, women's equality, and the U.S. left."⁵⁰ Moreover Gore notes that Black women's politics within the CPUSA were intersectional, calling for "left-leaning organizations to embrace and intersecting analysis centering race and gender as well as economics."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*, 2-3.

⁴⁹ Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists During the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 6-7.

⁵⁰ Gore, *Radicalism*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

McDuffie introduces the concept of Black Left feminism in *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* to examine Black women in the CPUSA. Black Left feminist politics focused on working-class women, merging Black nationalist, CPUSA notions of race, gender, and class, and Black women radicals' lived experiences. McDuffie argues that the "Communist Left existed as a principal site and viable alternative for black women radicals to agitate for black freedom and black women's dignity outside of women's clubs, the church, and civil rights and black nationalist groups."⁵² Black women radicals interrogated notions of masculinity and femininity and made up a "distinct feminist politics community of black women."⁵³ Like Gore, McDuffie examines the continuity of Black radical women's political activism, making connections through the 1970s.

Another book considering Black women's radical activism, Ashley Farmer's, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* examines women of color's Black power theorizing as they re-imagined masculinity and femininity within what Farmer describes as the Black gendered imaginary.⁵⁴ Farmer's book expands the parameters of Black Power activism by considering how Black women's re-framing of gendered relationships and theorizing informed the movement. Farmer examines the artwork and literature created by Black women as they constructed their own notions of Black womanhood, which overlapped with each other but changed over time, including the Militant Negro domestic, the Black Revolutionary woman, and the Third World Black Woman. Farmer argues that the Black gendered imaginary constituted a "critical site for Black Power activism and theorizing."⁵⁵

⁵² Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 3-4.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ashly D. Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 8.

Farmer conceptualized the Third World Black women, which examined the TWWA's re-imagining of Black Power identity. Her work demonstrates that the TWWA worked to build an identity focused on global commonalities of women of color and that the organization claimed a "black and Third World collective identity."⁵⁶ My work continues to expand on Farmer's through a close examination of the coalition building efforts by the TWWA as an expression of their Third World collective identity.

Chapter Breakdown:

Chapter one provides the ideological framework for this thesis by analyzing the TWWA's ideological organ, *Triple Jeopardy*. Through an analysis of the publication, I outline the Alliance's Third World feminist framework and their conceptualization of a Third World feminist collective identity.

Chapter two focuses on the TWWA's role in organizing International Women's Day through their coalition work with the Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day. In this chapter, I examine skits, poems, pamphlets, and programs as a way to understand the organization's articulation of a collective Third World culture and feminist identity.

Chapter three examines the reproductive justice work of the Third World Women's Alliance. Turning again to *Triple Jeopardy*, the chapter examines the intersectional analysis of the organization concerning the involuntary sterilization of Third World women in the United States. The second half of the chapter turns to the Alliance's work with the Coalition to Fight

⁵⁶ Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, 159-193.

Infant Mortality spearheading a community-based investigation into Highland Hospital, the only public hospital in Alameda County, California, which delivered babies.

The coda examines the TWWA's reconfiguration to the AAWO in 1980 as they transitioned to an organization for women of color to one that included white women. The AAWO's transition demonstrated the limitations, but also the success of building coalitions across difference. I also explore the AAWO's response to Reagan-era imperialism through their coalition work with Somos Hermanas in Central America and their continued effort with International Women's Day Celebrations.

Chapter 1: The Articulation of a Third World Feminist Identity: The Third World Women's Alliance and *Triple Jeopardy*, 1971-1975

In an "Open Letter to Third World Sisters," Leslie, a contributor to the Third World Women's Alliance's ideological organ, *Triple Jeopardy* (TJ), wrote about her experience as a Third World woman in the United States. For Leslie, *TJ* was a space to express her awakened consciousness as a Third World woman. Leslie's letter reflected the emergence of a gendered and racialized Third World feminist identity, considering her position as a woman of color and her alertness to gender-based oppression. She wrote:

It took a long time for me to realize that I was a woman in a man's world. I had sisters, Asian sisters and Third World sisters in the struggle. I've become conscious of many forces which tend to keep us in our place.⁵⁷

In *TJ*, the TWWA and its contributors examined the interlocking oppressions of sexism, imperialism, classism, and racism.⁵⁸ The organization conceptualized a Third World collective feminist identity on the pages of *TJ*, with the first issue published in 1971 and culminating with the International Women's Year edition in 1975. The publication expressed the Alliance's anti-imperial and anti-capitalist perspective and focused on multiple struggles, including race, class, and gender and how these forces shaped the lives of Third World women in the United States and globally. Attempting to center the voices of Third World women in the United States and abroad, the publication provided the Alliance with a venue to spread knowledge pertaining to

⁵⁷ Leslie, "An Open Letter to Third World Sisters," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 7 (Sept-Oct, 1972), 5. *Triple Jeopardy*, November 1971-February, 1975. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-ms-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

⁵⁸ Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, ed. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 15. I employ the Combahee River Collective's term "interlocking oppressions." The Combahee River Collective employed the phrase "interlocking oppression" in the "Combahee River Collective Statement," writing "The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see our particular task the development of an integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. As Black women, we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face."

liberation struggles and to radicalize their readers through political education. Moreover, *TJ* celebrated women revolutionaries throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin American, engaging with liberation struggles as a model for a Third World women's organization and revolutionary movement in the United States.

Unity through History

Central to *TJ* and the TWWA's activism was an emphasis on political education, with an organizational focus to "collect, interpret, and distribute information about the Third World, both home and abroad."⁵⁹ Through *TJ*, the Alliance uncovered the historical genealogies of Third World women. The authors' engagement with historical inquiry focused on how capitalism, race, gender, and imperialism intersected to shape the lived experiences of Third World women in the past. To forefront these histories, the publication featured a book reviews column with Asian-American, Chicana, Native American, and African American perspectives. To introduce the column and explain its purpose a contributor wrote in the first edition:

The Third World Women's Alliance believes that, in order to get a good idea of where we should be going, we ought to look back at where we've come from. To this end, this column will be devoted to a look at the history of women with special emphasis on Third World women.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Third World Women's Alliance "Women in the Struggle," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 1 (September-October, 1971), 8. *Triple Jeopardy*, November 1971-Feb. 1975. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

⁶⁰ Gayle Louie, "Forgotten Women," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no 1 (September-October, 1971), 11; Vivian A. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (Routledge: New York, 2015), 54. Through *TJ*, the Alliance challenged dominant forms of historical narratives as a form of resistance. Scholar Vivian May examines scholar Maylie Blackwell's concept of retrofitted memory. May notes that "retrofitted memory is a practice whereby social actors read interstices, gaps, and silences of existing narratives to retrofit, rework, and refashion older narratives to create new historical openings, political possibilities, and genealogies of resistance." The Alliance's political work to forefront Third World women's histories fits within the framework of Blackwell's conceptualization of retrofitted memory.

The book review segments and the use of history as a form of political education through various articles throughout the publication provided the TWWA with the tools to raise the revolutionary consciousness of their readers and to forge a collective Third World feminist identity based on analogous pasts.

With its first edition published in 1971, *TJ* was part of a broader heightened political consciousness within the context of the Third World U.S. Left.⁶¹ In her introduction to an article analyzing Chinese American women's history, Gayle Louie articulated this sentiment, noting "All over the world today, women are awakening from a long sleep. They are beginning to take an active part in changing their own existence."⁶² In her article, Louie briefly chronicled the history of Chinese sex workers. Through Louie's account of Chinese women's history in *TJ*, the Alliance positioned Third World women at the center of historical narratives, where they often faced erasure. Her reclamation of the past revealed that Chinese women's lived experiences, with capitalist and sexual exploitation, were informed by their intersecting identities as women of color. Louie's article featured examples of the dehumanization of Chinese women as sex workers and the discrimination encountered by them as manifested through a racist and sexist society. Concluding her article, Louie examined the representation of Chinese American women in historical literature, observing: "The literature concerning the history of Chinese women in that earlier society views them either as degraded animal-like creatures, spreading disease and corrupting young white boys or as untouchable objects of leisure and irresponsibility."⁶³

Focusing further on Third World women's experiences in a capitalist and racist U.S. society, *TJ* featured a review of feminist writer Clara Colon's book, *Enter Fighting: Today's*

⁶¹ Cynthia Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5-6.

⁶² Gayle Louie, "Forgotten Women," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no 1 (September-October, 1971), 11.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Woman, A Marxist-Leninist View. Of Ukrainian and Jewish descent, Colon was active in the Communist Party of the United States of America and several civil rights causes.⁶⁴ The Alliance's inclusion of this review facilitated an analysis of the history of the family and of capitalism in the United States as they pertained to the struggles of Third World people. The reviewer argued that Colon's book was "outstanding in its treatment of class struggle and its relationship to the women's movement" and that it "deals equally well with the family, particularly Third World communities."⁶⁵ The Alliance's notion of a Third World feminist consciousness was conveyed in this review. The contributor agreed with Colon's critique of the second wave feminist movement, which she argued overlooked race and class oppression to concentrate solely on gender.⁶⁶ By selecting a book that focused on the history of the family, the Alliance used *TJ* as a venue to understand what they described as Third World familial structures, describing them as collective, centers of community building, and as a safe haven from racism that permeated society. Specifically, the reviewer noted that "Within Third World communities, the family has served as a buffer against the racism of society" and "Black, Latin

⁶⁴ More information on Colon can be found at:

<https://centrop.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/faids/pdf/Colon,%20Clara%20Jan%202015.pdf>

⁶⁵ Book Review, "Enter Fighting Today's Women by Clara Colon," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no 1 (September-October, 1971), 12.

⁶⁶ Third World Women's Alliance, "Equal to What," in *The Movements of the New Left, 1950-1975: A Brief History of Documents*, Van Gosse (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), 121-131. The Alliance challenged white, middle class feminists, who they argued focused mainly on gender oppression, rather than considering race and class. Their essay, "Equal to What" reflected this view. They wrote: "It is difficult for Third World women to address themselves to the petty problems of who is going to take out the garbage, when there isn't enough food in the house for anything to be thrown away. Fighting for the day-to-day existence of a family and as humans is the struggle of the Third World woman. We are speaking of oppression; we don't need reforms that put white women into a position to oppress women of color or our men in much the same way as white men have been doing for centuries. We need changes in the system and attitudes of people that will guarantee the right to live free from hunger, poverty, and racism. Revolution and not reform is the answer."

and Asian families have been throughout history the victims of a racist plot by the ruling class.”⁶⁷

TJ's contributors' recovery of historical genealogies extended to Native American experiences. The November 1971 edition featured a review of George Novak's, *Genocide Against the Indians: Its Role in the Rise of Capitalism*. The book review brought to the forefront capitalist and racist oppression and its interconnection with the genocide of Native people. For instance, the reviewer included a passage from Novak's book stating that “Native people [lived] in a communal, socialist society” that was peaceful, where food was plentiful, and did not recognize private property.⁶⁸ Like Louie's article focusing on Chinese American women, the reviewer of Novak's book centered the histories of people of color, which the Alliance argued were historically overlooked. Explaining the importance of Novak's book, the review read: “*Genocide Against the Indians* sets the record straight once and for all. Native Americans were not just forgotten. They have been omitted from our history books the true stories of their tracks on the Indians to cover and treachery.”⁶⁹

The reviewer employed a historical analysis to reflect the commonalities of experiences among Third World people and explained the relevance of historical oppression to the barriers faced by people of color in the United States during the 1970s. Employing the term genocide, the author compared the atrocities committed against Native Americans to those foisted upon all Third World people, which effectively forged an identity based on common oppression. Concluding the essay, the author wrote: “All Third World people are being exterminated one

⁶⁷ Book Review, “Enter Fighting Today's Women by Clara Colon,” *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no 1 (September-October, 1971), 12.

⁶⁸ Book Review, “*Genocide Against the Indians: Its Role in the Rise of Capitalism* *Triple Jeopardy* 1, no. 2 (November, 1971), 11.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

way or another in the schools, the streets filled with dope, the prisons filled with subhuman conditions. And it's all done for profit.”⁷⁰

Unity Transcending Borders: *TJ* and Third World Women's Transnationalism

As a way to bridge solidarity across a broad-cross section of identities, the TWWA sought to transnationally unify Third World women. The organization called for the development of a transnational sisterhood, with one of their organizational principals stating: “to create a sisterhood of women devoted to the task of developing solidarity among the people of the Third World.”⁷¹ As an essential aspect of the TWWA's revolutionary struggles, this cross-border engagement was used by the organization to work toward the transformation of society's patriarchal, white supremacist, and imperialist structures. The organization explained their goal of a sisterhood transcending borders, writing:

The task before us is to develop a sisterhood of third world women which stretches across countries--A Sisterhood that finds within itself the strength to actively participate in all phases of the liberation struggles, while at the same time, making sure that the role of women in the new society will be one which will not be oppressive and will not be a continuation of the same kinds of stunting attitudes which are still in mode today, even among revolutionary men.⁷²

Adding to their focus on transnational solidarity, the publication centered U.S. imperialism and U.S. based Third World women as living within the “belly of the monster,” with the beast extending its “tentacles” around Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. For TWWA

⁷⁰ Book Review, “*Genocide Against the Indians: Its Role in the Rise of Capitalism*, *Triple Jeopardy*, 11.

⁷¹ Third World Women's Alliance, “Women in the Struggle,” *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 1 (September-October, 1971), 8.

⁷² Third World Women's Alliance, “Editorial,” *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no.1 (September- October, 1971), 16.

activists, it was essential to engage with liberation movements.⁷³ Through *TJ*, the Alliance challenged U.S. imperialism, sexism, and racism within and outside the United States.

The Alliance engaged with the anti-war movement in *TJ*. The publication's articles paralleled the experiences of Third World people in the United States with those in Southeast Asia by featuring articles critiquing Nixon's domestic and foreign policies.⁷⁴ Photographs of Vietnamese women and children frequented the pages of *TJ*, with images of children burned by napalm.⁷⁵ The Alliance's discussion of Vietnamese suffering, particularly of women and children, was meant to raise awareness regarding the brutality of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, while staging a campaign against the war through *TJ*. Through the publication, the TWWA took direct action by supporting the Van Troi Hospital in Hanoi, a children's hospital, along with the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the Young Workers League, and the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. The TWWA's coalition building through *TJ*, facilitated their efforts to articulate their positions as Third World people in relation to Vietnamese women. For the TWWA, Vietnamese revolutionaries were at "the vanguard of the international struggle against imperialism and oppression."⁷⁶ As Third World women based in the United States, the Alliance argued "We here should give what we can, so that we show solidarity with them and other third world people who

⁷³ Third World Women's Alliance, "Editorial: What is the Third World?" *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 2 (November, 1971) *Triple Jeopardy*, November 1971-Feb. 1975. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts; Third World Women's Alliance, "Editorial: What is the Third World," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 2 (November, 1971) International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers, Sophia Smith Special Collections, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

⁷⁴ Some examples of these articles include: Third World Women's Alliance, "Nixon's [NEP] Nasty Economic Policy," 1 no. 2, (November, 1971), 7; Third World Women's Alliance, "Know Your Welfare Rights," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 3 (January, 1972), 4.

⁷⁵ Third World Women's Alliance, "Out Government Destroys, Our People Must Rebuild," 2 no. 2, (January-February, 1973), 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

are struggling throughout the world. In Guinea-Bissau, in Mozambique, Latin America, and in the Arab countries. [sic]”⁷⁷

Including a piece titled, LIVE LIKE HER, a speech by a member of the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice in Washington, D.C., the Alliance expressed its opposition to the Vietnam War through a gendered lens and reflected contributors' admiration for women revolutionaries throughout the Third World. Along with decrying the U.S. imperialist violence in Vietnam, the writer focused specifically on the role women played in Vietnam's revolutionary struggle, and in China, Cuba, and Guinea-Bissau. Advancing the Alliance's notion of a Third World feminist collective identity, the speaker argued:

Whether we are Puerto Rican, Black, Chicana, Native American or Asian, our struggle is one. There is one enemy to be smashed: imperialism and capitalism. The Vietnamese people, and in particular the Vietnamese women, have taught these lessons.⁷⁸

Speeches and articles throughout *TJ* like the one above emphasized the importance of U.S. based Third World women to educate themselves about the struggles of women revolutionaries throughout the Third World. In these articles, revolutionary women beyond the borders of the United States were described as strong and capable and models for Third World people in the United States.⁷⁹ The Alliance sought to expand upon the framework put forth by women in Africa, Latin America, and Asia to conceptualize a broad-based Third World identity in the United States.

⁷⁷ Third World Women's Alliance, "Out Government Destroys, Our People Must Rebuild," 2 no. 2, (January-February, 1973), 12.

⁷⁸ Third World Women's Alliance, "LIVE LIKE HER, *Triple Jeopardy* 1, no. 2 (November 1971), 14.

⁷⁹ Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism During the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 4. Wu articulates the concept of radical orientalism, which "captured how some American activists romanticized and identified with Asian nations and political figures." The TWWA's engagement with revolutionary women in Vietnam in *TJ* fits within this framework; Grace Kyungwon Hong, "Intersectionality and Incommensurability: Third World Feminism and Asian Decolonization," in *Asian American Feminisms & Women of Color Politics*, eds Lynn Fugiwara & Shireen Roshanravan (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 27-43. Hong provides an analysis of Asian American women in *Triple Jeopardy*.

With their articles covering women's roles in African liberation movements, the authors in *TJ* linked their conceptualization of a U.S. based Third World women's struggle to a transnational struggle against imperialism, racism, and gender oppression. The editors honored Mozambican freedom fighter Josina Machel by including her obituary.⁸⁰ The Alliance used the space at the conclusion of the obituary to educate its readers about the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). Machel was described by the Alliance as "a shining example of the ability of all women to function in society at an equal level with their men and to make that society strong, happy, and prosperous for all people."⁸¹ The description of Machel as a leader for all people fits within the conceptual framework of the TWWA's Third World feminist notion. Through their memorialization of Machel, the contributor articulated the goals of the TWWA to create a society without sexism, where revolutionary men and women could work together to form a more just society.

TJ's purpose was not only to inform its readers about Third World revolutionary movements, but open possibilities for direct action. In conjunction with their series of articles on African revolutionary movements, the contributors provided the opportunity to send material aid. Articles suggested sending items, such as medicines and medical equipment, clothing synthetic textiles and blankets, to be gathered and sent to people in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. By incorporating the struggles of Third World women specifically, the Alliance further expressed their Third World feminist collective identity and how imperialism sat at the core of their struggles. To encourage their readers to send items and to articulate this identity they wrote:

Women in these countries have been forced to bear the brunt of colonial domination. The rise in malnutrition, the high infant mortality rate, the spread of disease, and a life

⁸⁰ Third World Women's Alliance, "International News: Obituary: Josina Machel," *Triple Jeopardy* 1, no. 2 (November 1971), 6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

expectancy rate for women of 28 years--these realities are linked to imperialist domination.⁸²

Facilitating a transnational dialogue among Third World women in the United States and those outside the U.S.'s borders was also prominent in *TJ*'s articles about China and Cuba. Advertisements for the Venceremos Brigade lined the pages of *TJ*. Joining the Brigade provided participants with the opportunity to visit Cuba and work alongside Cuban people.⁸³ Members of the Brigade contributed to the publication and described the country as a socialist utopia with free daycare, equality in the workforce, and women in all career fields, including medicine and law. In one article, a Brigade member wrote about her experience in Cuba: "it is a society where everything is shared" including responsibility, where everyone is loved and "recognizes each other as human beings and not objects to control and oppress."⁸⁴ Drawing inspiration from her experiences in Cuba, a Brigade member commented:

What we as Third World women must realize is that we are capable of excelling in any field we choose. We must not allow educators to misguide us; we must not allow employers to shut us out of jobs that anyone can and should perform be it man or woman. Nor must we allow them to force us to work under hazardous conditions and/or unsanitary conditions. We must not allow ourselves and our families to be abused. We must begin to voice our opinions because they are important and we can create change.⁸⁵

Interviews with Cuban women revolutionaries were also included in the publication. For example, *TJ* featured an interview with Vilma Espen, the director of the Federation of Cuban Women. The purpose of the interview was to further build solidarity with Cuban women and to memorialize the twentieth anniversary of the assault on the Moncada Garrison on July 16, 1953. The interview was useful with providing TWWA activists a space to articulate their notion of

⁸² Third World Women's Alliance, "We Can Support African Movements," *Triple Jeopardy* 2 no. 4, (May, 1973).

⁸³ Third World Women's Alliance, "Rummage Sale: A Fundraising Efforts for the Venceremos Brigade" *Triple Jeopardy* 2 no. 4 (May 1973), 15.

⁸⁴ Third World Women's Alliance, "Revolución Que Viva La Cuba Va!" *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 3 (January 1972), 5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Third World feminism, one which was anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. Espen's notion of feminism, echoed the TWWA's, aiming to dismantle capitalism, rather than working within the system to fight for women's rights. Espen argued feminist activism within the oppressive system of capitalism constituted a "partial solution."⁸⁶

The publication featured another article focusing on the experiences of Latin American women, with the purpose of bringing to the forefront the effects of U.S. imperialism in the region by uncovering incidents of torture by U.S. backed regimes in Latin America. The impacts of imperialism on Latin American women extended from poverty to the lack of healthcare. Women risked their lives, including as an article notes, Tania Bunker, a woman who was murdered fighting alongside Che Guevara in 1968.⁸⁷ The author wrote: "Our sisters in Latin America suffer the horrifying consequences of imperialism every day of their short lives," through hunger, inadequate prenatal care and maternal care.⁸⁸ The goal in including this article was to garner solidarity with women in Latin America to work together to challenge imperialism.⁸⁹ The contributors who wrote about Latin American women challenged stereotypes of them as being "passive' and submissive." Rather they were women who took direct action to fight for their rights, lives, and a freer society. A *TJ* contributor emphasized, "They risk brutal torture if they are caught. Many who were not involved suffered torture at the hands of sadists simply because they are suspected of being involved."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Interview by Presna Latina, "Feminism Puts Forth Only Partial Solutions," *Triple Jeopardy 2*, no. 4 (May-June, 1973), 3.

⁸⁷ Third World Women's Alliance, "Torture of Women in Latin America," *Triple Jeopardy 2*, no. 3 (March-April, 1973), 12

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

As they did with Cuban women, *TJ*'s contributors looked to Chinese revolutionary women and society for inspiration in waging their own revolution among Third World people in the United States, with women at its center. *TJ* included several articles about China and Chinese revolutionary women, with Genoveva Clemente, a Puerto Rican woman who had visited the country, recalling her experience in one.⁹¹ Clemente examined Chinese women's lives pre- and post-Cultural revolution, noting that "Chinese women today have a beauty and radiance that comes from good health, confidence and pride."⁹² Clemente recalled that Chinese women's relationships with other women and with men were transformed, also. She elaborated that women had healthy and amiable relationships with other women, noting: "Women openly show their affection and friendship by spending a lot of time together, helping each other, holding hands, and putting their arms around each other without embarrassment."⁹³

The shift in class structure was discussed in depth by Clemente. Unlike women in the United States, Chinese women worked alongside men in all occupations. However, with more experience, men's pay still exceeded women's. Rather than women being seen as inferior, men and women worked together in their marriages and were politically aware. Since the Cultural Revolution, Clemente noted that: "There were 15 women out of 170 members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Since the Cultural Revolution there has been a dramatic rise in the number of women delegates."⁹⁴ Clemente described the women as "dedicated, happy people" and a "model of what liberated women can be like: relaxed--confident--productive and a pleasure to be with."⁹⁵

⁹¹ Genoveva Clemente, "Puerto Rican Woman Visits China." *Triple Jeopardy* 2, no. 3 (March-April, 1973), 1; For more information on the interaction between Black Americans and China see: Robin D. G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," *Souls* (Fall 1999), 6-41.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Genoveva Clemente, "Puerto Rican Woman Visits China." *Triple Jeopardy* 2, no. 3 (March-April, 1973), 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Clemente emphasized that the socialist system played an integral role in Chinese women's liberation, both in the private and public parts of their lives, such as work. She reasoned that:

The socialist system has opened up vast job opportunities for Chinese women. In some major cities, the majority of women under 45 work in government offices, modern state-owned factories like the one in which Wang Chin-tsai works. This puts them on an equal footing economically with their husbands and enables them to contribute to building socialism in China.⁹⁶

Clemente's article and others like it throughout TJ took a transnational perspective and implied that through socialist revolution, class and gender hierarchies would be transformed.

TJ and "On the Job Editorials"

The capitalists in this country do not view us as being legitimate members of the labor force. We are used as "surplus labor." This is evident by the fact that very little provisions are being made for maternity leave or for free day care centers. We find ourselves in and out of jobs, and generally do not work for long periods of time at any specific job. Because of this we tend not to see need to take conscious actions around our oppression as workers.⁹⁷

"On the Job" editorials were used to magnify Third World working women's voices by conducting interviews, featuring speeches by activists, and direct actions focusing on Third World working women's experiences. The purpose was to create unity among Third World women based on not only class, but also gender, race, and ethnic identities. The first "On the Job Editorial" began by challenging gendered assumptions by arguing against the notion that women belonged in the home. The column disputed this claim by noting that the idea was framed for white, middle class women and in white and race-based privilege. The author noted that the

⁹⁶ Genoveva Clemente, "Puerto Rican Woman Visits China." *Triple Jeopardy* 2, no. 3 (March-April, 1973), 1.

⁹⁷ Third World Women's Alliance, "On the Job Editorial," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 1, (September-October, 1971), 14.

experiences of Third World women diverged from middle class white women, since often times they had no choice but to work.⁹⁸

TWWA member, Dara Nayo's, speech from a conference on Black and Puerto Rican women in the workforce in New Jersey and New York was featured in an "On the Job" editorial to further examine Third World women's position as workers. Nayo's speech considered job discrimination, U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico through the presence of corporations, and the lack of daycare for Third World women.⁹⁹ Another column concentrated on an interview with a factory worker employed by the meatpacking industry in Maryland. The factory worker discussed the lack of opportunity and jobs discrimination faced by Third World working women. She succinctly articulated this point when she remarked: "I worked there because I had to. The pay was lousy, the job was lousy, but me and my family had to eat!"¹⁰⁰

The interviewee further discussed the racial composition of the factory, noting that ninety percent were black, and the other ten percent were white. The unsanitary conditions resulted in many infections, since workers were prohibited from wearing gloves and were told that gloves would slow down the process. Additionally, workers were forced to stand for hours and to work overtime. The interviewee also noted sexual harassment by white, male co-workers.¹⁰¹ Drawing parallels between the meatpacking factory worker in Maryland, the Alliance interviewed a Dominican telephone operator.¹⁰² The telephone worker experienced race and gender discrimination like the factory workers. Tellingly, the telephone operator noted that, "In fact we

⁹⁸ Third World Women's Alliance, "On the Job Editorial," *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 1, (September-October, 1971), 14.

⁹⁹ Dayo Nayo, "On the Job: Third World Women & the Workforce," *Triple Jeopardy* 3 no. 1 (September-October, 1973), 6.

¹⁰⁰ Third World Women's Alliance, "On the Job Editorial," *Triple Jeopardy* 1, no. 1 (September-October, 1971), 14.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

are called “factory workers” by workers who have other positions in the company.¹⁰³ The interviewee noted that the majority of workers were Puerto Rican and Black, and experienced overlapping oppressions of race, class, and gender. The theme of desperation for workers ran throughout the editorials. The telephone operator, like the factory workers, had no power over hours they worked, and feared they would get fired if they objected.

The struggle for unionization was a central issue for the telephone worker as it was for the factory worker. For women with children, unionization was not an option, out of fear that they would become unemployed. The interviewee explained that although ninety-nine percent of the operators were Black and Puerto Rican, the workers, particularly the women “lacked consciousness” and were often “pitted against each other,” which made organizing challenging. Additionally, Black supervisors encountered exploitation and the union did not work with the operators.¹⁰⁴ Without support, including daycare, and apprehensive about unionization, mothers remained vulnerable to exploitative labor practices by their bosses. Emphasizing the importance of unions for workers the contributor concluded the article thundering: “unions not working for the workers; unions sold out to management; unions can be a vehicle to benefit workers, but that will only become a reality when unions are truly controlled by the workers!!!”¹⁰⁵

Another focus of the “On the Job Editorials” was the experiences of domestic workers. A column was dedicated to activist Dorothy Bolden. The interview with Bolden covered her work for the National Domestic Workers Union of America. With the Union, she taught domestics how to negotiate with their bosses.¹⁰⁶ The domestic workers, who Bolden attempted to unionize,

¹⁰³ Third World Women’s Alliance, “On the Job Editorial,” *Triple Jeopardy* 1, no. 2 (November, 1971), 3.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ For more information of the history of domestic workers organizing see: Premila Nadasen, *Houseworkers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built a Movement*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015); Ashley Farmer, “The Militant Negro Domestic, 1945-1965,” in *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

were central to the editorials. As discussed by domestics, many were migrants to the United States, often lied to about benefits, the accessibility of time off, social security, and about the job. One domestic discussed being told that she was only going to be a maid, but also put in charge of the children and cooking. Additionally, although Bolden attempted to unionize them, several were unaware of the union. A domestic summed up her job stating:

The household worker has no life of her own. Her life is centered around the people she works for. There is no such things as a maid or butler receiving Christmas or Thanksgiving holiday, their duty is to the family they work for. Their little pleasures are reduced to being the dutiful servant with the sole purpose to serve and clean-up and coke for their employer.¹⁰⁷

“On the Job Editorials” provided Third World working women a voice through interviews and were an attempt by the Alliance to challenge racist, sexist, and gender oppression in the workplace. The editorials revealed commonalities among women of color and their experiences at work, regardless of their occupation. Through an analysis of these analogous experiences, the TWWA was able to bridge solidarities across broad sections of U.S. based Third World women through the publication.

Conclusion: *Triple Jeopardy* and International Women’s Year (1975)

In 1975, as a way to celebrate Third World women revolutionaries and to build solidarity that transcended borders, the TWWA dedicated an edition of *TJ* to International Women’s Year (IWY). The edition included a speech given by TWWA member, Lenore French, from an African Liberation Day Celebration in New York City. Like several of the articles in *TJ*, French paid tribute to Third World women revolutionary fighters in Cambodia, Guinea-Bissau, and

¹⁰⁷ Third World Women’s Alliance, “On the Job Editorial: Domestic workers,” *Triple Jeopardy* 2, no. 4 (May-June, 1973), 4.

Mozambique. Her speech focused on a key tenet in *TJ* and an organizational objective for the Alliance-- working to dismantle U.S. imperialism. French thundered:

“We now understand that people all over the world are fighting the same enemy; that Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Native Americans, and the working class and the masses of women in this country are facing the same enemy across the barricades. THAT ENEMY IS U.S. IMPERIALISM!!”¹⁰⁸

Focusing on U.S. imperialism and capitalism as interconnected with the complex gendered, race, and class identities of Third World women, the issue solidified the Third World feminist identity articulated by the TWWA. Like *TJ*, International Women’s Day (IWD) celebrations were a way for the TWWA to articulate their Third World feminist identity through their work with the Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day. Engaging with the Committee enabled the TWWA to move toward creating a mass people’s revolutionary movement with Third World Women at the center.

¹⁰⁸ “Third World Women’s Alliance, “Third World Women’s Alliance Salutes African and Indochinese Victories,” *Triple Jeopardy* (Summer 1975), 2.

Chapter 2: Coalition Building and Cultural Production: The TWWA and International Women's Day, 1973-1980

Our observance of the Day is a significant part of our work because it represents the needs and rights of working women and all working people. Struggle for Third World women has become synonymous with survival, especially under our oppressive conditions. As Third World women we strive to make that survival free from racial, economic, and political and sexual oppression. We deepen our solidarity with working men and women of other countries, uniting them to change the face of the world.¹⁰⁹

International Women's Day Celebrations were an important coalition endeavor for the Third World Women's Alliance. In conjunction with the Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day, a collective of members from various revolutionary organizations in the Bay Area, the Alliance used IWD to challenge racist, sexist, political, imperialist, and classist structures. The Alliance's engagement with the Committee allowed them to further articulate their Third World feminist identity, incorporating the complex and diverse identities of Third World women as Black, Latinx, Native American, and Asian American. As they did through *Triple Jeopardy*, the Alliance's contribution to IWD celebrations enabled them to forge unity across differences. TWWA members involved in the Committee developed unifying principles for IWD celebrations, which shaped the political development of the Alliance. To express these principles and build solidarity among Third World revolutionary organizations, Committee members performed skits and invited members from Bay Area organizations to perform songs, poetry, and dance.

IWD emerged from working class women's struggles, with its origins situated in women's labor history. German socialist activist Clara Zetkin proposed the holiday in 1910 after a wave of strikes by immigrant women in New York City in 1908, demanding ten-hour work

¹⁰⁹ International Women's Day, 1979, "How this Meeting Got Called," Third World Women's Alliance Papers, Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

days, unions, and legislation against child labor laws.¹¹⁰ With its transnational, socialist, and feminist background, IWD provided the Alliance with the opportunity to practice their own notion of anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and feminist activism. Additionally, with the creation of the Committee, the events became an opportunity to build coalitions and move toward a mass revolutionary organization. For the Committee, IWD presented the opportunity to reclaim U.S. labor history, with Third World women at the center. In a speech during a celebration in 1979 by the Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day member, Dolores Price, declared, "We as Third World working people in the U.S. claim that spirit as part of *our* labor history."¹¹¹ The Third World Women's Committee's work in organizing, therefore, was an attempt to understand the past to fight for a more just society.¹¹²

This chapter will examine the emergence of the Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day and its expression of a Third World feminist identity as reflected through its unifying principles as an organization. It will consider their attempts at coalition-building by a collective of members from several revolutionary organizations in the Bay Area. The chapter will then explore the development of a Third World culture through an analysis of skits, programs, pamphlets, and poetry. The conclusion will consider the Alliance's transformation to the Alliance Against Women's Oppression (AAWO) in 1980 and their continued engagement with IWD celebrations.

¹¹⁰ Third World Women's Alliance, "History of International Women's Day," December 15, 1974. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹¹¹ Speech, Dolores Price, International Women's Day, 1976, Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹¹² Third World Women's Alliance, "Letter to the People: International Women's Day," *Triple Jeopardy* (February-March, 1972) International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

Third World Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day and the Development of Principles

The TWWA took part in several coalition efforts in the Bay Area, with IWD being one of their most successful. The Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day grew out of the Alliance's work challenging gender and labor oppression. The organization wanted to work with other organizations in the Bay Area, but did not want to encounter conflict over political positions. To avoid this, the TWWA's role was not organizational, rather individual Alliance members continued as Committee members. The Alliance played a key role in the establishment of the Committee, removing itself as an organization once the steering and principal committee were functional.¹¹³ Alliance members emphasized that IWD celebrations were not solely their endeavor. In their evaluation of the 1974 celebration, the organization noted their disenchantment with *The Guardian* claiming that it was solely the Alliance who organized the event. They wrote: "Though we are honored to have taken part in IWD's organizing it must be made clear that members of the Alliance participated but that the majority of the Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day was composed of individuals as well as sisters from other organizations."¹¹⁴

The Committee's members reflected this commitment to coalition-building with women from different educational, class, and race, and ethnic backgrounds. Describing the makeup of the group, the inside of an IWD program read:

¹¹³ Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day, Alliance Presentation #1, Evaluation International Women's Day, 1974. Committee evaluations, 1974-76, Third World Women's Alliance Bay area chapter Records, Sophia Smith collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹¹⁴ Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day, "Third World Women's Alliance Evaluation and Look Towards the Future," March 23, 1974. Committee evaluations, 1974-1976, Third World Women's Alliance Bay area chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

This event was planned and prepared by Third World women from throughout the Bay Area. We represent housewives, workers, students, and mothers of many ages. This reflects our need to develop Third World women's leadership and to speak from a Third World perspective.¹¹⁵

The Committee established their principles for the celebrations in 1973, highlighting its local, national, and transnational dimensions. Since the event celebrated the accomplishments of, and aimed to build solidarity for, Third World working people, a focus on the working class was crucial. When writing the principles, the Committee's definition of working-class people was broad and based on a multiplicity of oppressions, including gender, class, and marital status. The groups stated that "welfare persons, housewives, skid row brothers (and sisters)" were all included in the demographic.¹¹⁶ The principle further articulated that IWD events were a way to demonstrate solidarity with working-class people through commonalities, noting that "Working people are all people who have to work in order to have the basic necessities of life."¹¹⁷

Eradicating women's oppression constituted another core principle for IWD. Rather than being on the periphery, IWD celebration principles argued that Third World working women were essential to a mass people's movement committed to ending all forms of oppression. When conceptualizing the framework for the event, the Committee saw it as essential to transform gender roles in society. Without reconfiguration of gendered norms, the Committee asserted that their "roles as mothers and/or workers, could not be fully accomplished."¹¹⁸ Reflecting a Third World feminist framework, they argued, that "If we as women ask only for equality with men on

¹¹⁵ Program, International Women's Day, 1973, International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹¹⁶ Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day, "Draft: Principals of Unity (For use of the Central Coordinating Committee)," December 3, 1973, International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

all levels the basic role of class struggle would still exist--both men and women would be oppressed.”¹¹⁹

The role of women in revolutionary movements was also central when planning IWD celebrations. Committee members worked to demonstrate “recognition of the leading role that women have played in the movement to improve women’s lives.”¹²⁰ Particularly, the celebrations acted as a venue to demonstrate solidarity between the U.S. Third World Left and decolonization movements in Africa and throughout the Third World. In 1972, *Triple Jeopardy* featured an article noting: “IWD is a day not only of struggle for our (women) specific rights and of the general struggles of our people, but also of solidarity and friendship among the women of the world, supporting one another, exchanging experiences and advancing towards more and better organized and coordinated struggles on a world scale.”¹²¹ Later in the article, the author focused on the role of U.S. based Third World women, Third world revolutions, and the centrality of IWD. They wrote:

The Third World Women’s Alliance would like to express its solidarity with the brave women in Southeast Asia, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola who are fighting valiantly with the rest of their people against invaders of their countries. We pledge to do everything our power to force this government to cease its support of the Portuguese government and all other colonial governments in Third World countries. We further pledge solidarity with our brothers and sisters in South Africa and Zimbabwe in their heroic struggle for liberation from the colonial rule of their countries.¹²²

Through their transnational engagement, the Committee turned to revolutionary women who took part in liberation struggles for inspiration. They noted that while women in socialist countries were celebrated for their accomplishments in revolutionary struggles, women under

¹¹⁹ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, “Draft: Principals of Unity (For use of the Central Coordinating Committee),” December 3, 1973.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Third World Women’s Alliance, “Letter to the People: International Women’s Day,” *Triple Jeopardy* (February-March, 1972) International Women’s Day Celebrations, 1974-1990, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹²² Ibid.

colonial and capitalist rule experienced IWD much differently. The Committee noted that IWD in places without socialism were events to fight for a plethora of causes impacting the lives of women, including “decent housing, educational opportunities, healthcare for their families, vocational training and advancement, daycare centers.”¹²³

The final principle for IWD focused on critical engagement through studying and criticism, and self-criticism. This principle represented the Committee’s attempt to interconnect theory and praxis. The organization engaged with literature on the history of International Women’s Day and facilitated criticisms through their evaluations as a group post-celebration. Through engagement with literature, TWWA members and later the Committee, implemented ways to build coalitions and facilitate a sense of unity across a broad spectrum of organizations.¹²⁴

The Committee’s evaluation after the 1974 celebration analyzed their attempt at coalition building and the implementation of their established principles for the event. The group expressed optimism regarding the work done at the celebration and the application of the principles established early in the process, noting that the combination of political education and articulated principles reduced conflict among the women and led to an achievement in coalition building and unity among Third World people in the Bay Area. They wrote:

A unique common understanding of our goals and principles was developed that led this Committee to make correct decisions and judgements in many areas of political activity. Petty arguments about “political lines” and organizational bickering most certainly would have hindered our work could not take place because of the firm foundations laid down by the Committee in the first few months of its existence. The role of the Committee’s

¹²³ Third World Women’s Alliance, “Letter to the People: International Women’s Day,” *Triple Jeopardy* (February-March, 1972).

¹²⁴ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, “Draft: Principals of Unity (For use of the Central Coordinating Committee),” December 3, 1973.

goals, principles and collective Political Education cannot be underestimated in its final success.¹²⁵

Following the 1974 celebration, members of the TWWA spent 1975 reflecting on their experience organizing the IWD celebration with the Third World Women's Committee. The TWWA's engagement with the Committee informed their political principles as an organization. The period following the 1974 event witnessed an increase in Alliance membership and a re-conceptualization of the organization's principles based on their organizing with the Committee.¹²⁶ During her presentation for IWD in 1976, TWWA member Tani Takagi, discussed the role of IWD work in the organizational development of the TWWA, recalling, "Through working on IWD, the Alliance & other sisters gained valuable political experience of developing principles that could unite us all. In this work, we also gained the organizing tools, confidence and contacts to take on the task of encouraging new sisters to join us in our work."¹²⁷

The Alliance referred to this period in 1975 as the reconstitution. The coalition building endeavor through IWD celebrations facilitated their reconfiguration to a "truly mass revolutionary organization," eventually leading to the formation of the Alliance Against Women's Oppression in 1980.¹²⁸ Organizing IWD events expanded the TWWA's organizational reach with other revolutionary organizations in the Bay Area. The Puerto Rican Socialist Party

¹²⁵Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day, "Third World Women's Alliance Evaluation and Look Towards the Future," March 23, 1974. Committee evaluations, 1974-1976, Third World Women's Alliance Bay area chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹²⁶ Program, International Women's Day, 1976, International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹²⁷ Tani Takagi, Presentation to IWD, 1976, International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹²⁸ Third World Women's Alliance, TWWA Meeting, 1/29/1975, International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts. Also see: Reconstitution, 1975. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area chapter, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

(PRSP), for example, was contacted to participate in IWD. For the 1975 celebration, the Committee requested that a representative from the PRSP craft a presentation focusing on the struggles of Puerto Rican women, particularly Puerto Rican nationalist, Lolita Lebron.¹²⁹ In a letter to the PRSP, Committee member Patricia Takayama explained that the presentation would contribute to the celebration by demonstrating the role Puerto Rican women played in the struggle as working people. Takayama further articulated the importance of the celebration for Third World people as a way to create a more just society noting: “We know that the purpose of putting together such a celebration is an essential part of the organizing for change in our society.”¹³⁰

To prepare for the IWD celebration in 1975, the Committee also reached out to a representative of the American Indian Movement (AIM). In the letter, Takayama requested that AIM put together a short presentation examining the role of Native American women in their organization. The Committee’s inquiry reflected their goal to highlight the leadership of Third World Women in the United States.¹³¹ Committee members also contacted welfare rights activist and founder of the National Welfare Rights Association, Johnnie Tillmon, for an interview, which they featured on a display for the celebration. The Third World Women’s Committee’s inquiry to Tillmon reflected their focus on the working-class struggle, their highlighting of Third World women in leadership positions, and emphasis on the lived realities of U.S based Third

¹²⁹ Letter to the Puerto Rican Socialist Party from Patricia Takayama, 1975, International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Letter to AIM, February 27, 1975, International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

World women.¹³² The Committee's attempt to connect with a variety of organizations in the Bay Area allowed them to reach a substantial cohort of Third World women and garnered a sense of solidarity with the community.¹³³

A Space for Third World Organizing and the Development of a Collective Identity: Third World Cultural Evening, 1975

In an article for *The Black Scholar*, the Committee addressed how the United Nations declared 1975 International Women's Year to celebrate the accomplishments of women from a transnational perspective. While the author argued the people of the U.S. based Third World, "have been celebrating in spirit with our sisters in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East who actively fight alongside our brothers for the liberation of *our* people," the celebration in 1975 focused on the struggle against U.S. imperialism and liberation within the United States.¹³⁴ With a devastated economy and high rates of unemployment, people of color were impacted the disproportionality, particularly women. Therefore, the Committee's IWD focus centered on creating solidarity among U.S. based Third World working class people.

The Committee organized cultural evenings to raise funds for IWD celebrations. The 1975 cultural evening reflected the principles established by the Committee and the re-conceptualized principles of the TWWA. Through the Committee's poetry and music that was performed, the food that was served, and the displays and performances, Committee members articulated a Third World culture, which they hoped was a "reflection of the life of Third World

¹³² Letter to Johnnie Tillmon from Linda Burnham, February 27, 1974, International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹³⁴ Draft of Press Article from *The Black Scholar*, International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

people.”¹³⁵ The attempt to create a common identity based on the broad category of Third World women was expressed in the introductory speech by the fundraising committee for the cultural evening in 1975. The group communicated the purpose of evening, stating:

Tonight, we have come together to celebrate and commemorate the cultural life of Third World people in America. The performances tonight is both a reflection and commemoration of our past and a collaboration of our compelling desire to build a collective future in unity and dignity. Tonight, we see the best of our experiences gathered together by people’s artists and elevated to a form that calls us to the great tasks confronting the American people.

Our heritage, brought from many lands and tempered and polished in the crucible of American history vibrates in each of us and in our children the aspirations and militant courage to carry traditions of heroic struggle to a final and victorious conclusion.¹³⁶

The performances and art displays for the 1975 cultural evening reflected the Committee’s dedication to a collective Third World cultural identity and an attempt to celebrate that identity expressed in the introductory speech. The evening included music and dance performances from organizations in the Bay Area, including songs performed by the Union of Vietnamese, song and dance by the Native American Cultural Group, and a performance by a Latin women’s theater group.¹³⁷ Art was also used as a tool to solidify the Committee’s expression of a Third World culture.

The introductory speech for the cultural evening of 1975 expressed the centrality of honoring the artistic accomplishments of U.S. based Third World people. Art by Third World people, the Committee argued, represented the everyday realities experienced by the community in the United States. Moreover, art by Third World people constituted a tool to create unity across identities at the cultural evenings. Describing the artists as their “most loved and honored

¹³⁵ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, Fundraising Committee Introduction, 1975. Cultural Evening, 1975. Third World Women’s Alliance Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

heroes,” the Committee asserted that art done by Third World people “does not portray our heroic figures as larger than life, it portrays them as life itself--our life as Third World people in America.”¹³⁸ Poetry represented another powerful force at the cultural evenings and an expression of the Committee’s cultural production.

Like art, performance, and song, the incorporation of poetry for the evenings was a way to forge collective solidarity among Third World people and to examine the interlocking oppressions faced by the community in the United States. For example, the poems featured for the cultural evenings included “Profits Enslave the World” by Philip Vera Cruz, the Executive Vice President of the United Farm Workers. An account of a Filipino migrant coming to the United States, Cruz’s poem read:

While still across the ocean
I heard about the USA
So thrilled by wild imagination
I left home through Manila Bay

Then on my way, I thought and wondered
What the future would be
I gambled parental care and love
In search for human liberty

But beautiful bright pictures
Were just half of the whole story
Reflections of great wealth and power
In the land of slavery

Minorities to shanty towns
Disgraceful spots for all to see
In the enviable Garden of Eden
In the land of affluence and poverty

Since then, I was a hungry stray dog
Too busy to keep myself alive

¹³⁸ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, Fundraising Committee Introduction, 1975. Cultural Evening, 1975. Third World Women’s Alliance Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts. Cruz’s poem was read as part of the introductory speech for the Cultural evening in 1975

It seems equality and freedom
Will never be where billionaires thrive!
A lust for power causes oppression
To rob the poor of senseless greed
The wealthy few's excessive profits
Tend to enslave the world to need.¹³⁹

Cruz's poem focused on poverty and wealth inequality, as interlinked with the system of white supremacy and capitalism in the United States. The poem reflected the fight for survival faced by Third World people and disenchantment with the injustices of the United States--a place the author hoped would provide refuge and freedom. As a part of the introductory speech for the Cultural evening, Cruz's poem contributed to the expression of a Third World identity brought to the forefront by the Third World Women's Committee during the event.

The Committee used poetry to reflect the distinct experiences of U.S. based Third World women. IWD programs included the poem, "We Are Women of the Third World" by Ellice Parker. Parker thundered:

We are women of the third world
We deny and reject the
Centuries-old role prescriptions
For those our races, and those
Of our sex
We are people engaged in battle
Against our enemies, not against
Ourselves.

We've seen our children as casual-
Ties of the wars/we continue to
See them as songs of our victories
We've seen ourselves shackled,
Brutalized and murdered
We've seen the strength of our
Spirits continue to grow

¹³⁹ Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day, Fundraising Committee Introduction, 1975. Cultural Evening, 1975. Third World Women's Alliance Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts;

We've sold our labor and our souls
To survive unemployed.
We know rape, infant mortality
And starvation
We are the women of the farms,
The fields the barrios, the ghettos,
And the reservations.
We've known the lynching and
Range-murders of our men.
We've known the detention camps.
We've lived rootless lives
Of migrant workers following
The seasons of the sun
We are the women whose communities
Are ravaged by poverty, disease
And crime
Our hearts are torn and bleeding
As our people struggle against
Alcohol and drugs we have allowed
Ourselves to be clothes in elaborate
Untruths and misconceptions,
We have fallen prey to racist
Ideologies, and we have been divided
We have picked cotton, built houses,
Stood guard and tended the fires
Of each succeeding generation
Of warriors
We are women of the third world
We stand united with each other
We stand united without men
We are learning to turn the force
Of our anger outward
We are learning to nurture the
Seedlings of love growing inward.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Ellice Parker, "We are Women of the Third World," International Women's Day Program, 1979. International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

The author reflected on the lived experiences of Third World women, whose experiences were shaped by the white supremacist, patriarchal, and capitalist system, which denied them their agency and humanity. With the mention of infant mortality, sexual assault, and poverty, the poet centered the lived experiences of Third World women in the United States. The author's declaration: "We are women of the third world. We stand together!" aligned with the Committee's principles for leadership among Third World women and solidarity through IWD celebrations.¹⁴¹ The poem contributed to the emergence of a Third World culture and the construction of a Third World identity, with the celebrations as a venue.

Third World Feminist Identity through Skits, Pamphlets, and Programs, 1974-1979

The skits, pamphlets, and programs for IWD celebrations reflected the Committee's notion of a Third World U.S based feminist identity. For instance, a 1974 pamphlet for the event challenged the image of the "new liberated woman" as contextualized through a largely white, middle class feminist perspective. The pamphlet's authors argued that images, like Miss America, portrayed a conceptualization of womanhood that did not speak to the realities of Third World women.¹⁴² The pamphlet's objective was to "present a different perspective on Third World women, one that recognizes the heritage and struggle of our people" and aimed to reflect Third World women's contributions to fighting systems of oppression, which included reproductive injustices, such as involuntary sterilization. The pamphlet instructed Third World

¹⁴¹ Ellice Parker, "We are Women of the Third World," International Women's Day Program, 1979.

¹⁴² Program, International Women's Day, 1974, International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

women to unify as a community to challenge the dominant racist, gendered, and capitalist power dynamics in the United States.¹⁴³

With an image of Sojourner Truth and the title of her famous speech, “Ain’t I a Woman,” positioned next to her image, the Committee reflected a Third World feminist consciousness, one rooted in history through a pamphlet for the 1974 International Women’s Day Celebration. The pamphlet detailed the histories of Black women, Latina women, Asian women, and Native American women. The author wrote about the uses of history in the IWD celebrations and Third World women’s liberation struggle in the United States, “We have rather tried to deal with the history and struggle of America’s women of color in the belief that they will soon come forward to write their own chapter in the history of the world.”¹⁴⁴

The organizing principle for the 1977 IWD program was “Combat Racism: Build Third World Unity.” The program focused on attacks on affirmative action by white men, which the Committee argued ignored the history of racism in the United States and were a violation of, and a major setback for, Civil Rights. The *Bakke v. The University of California* case and another case brought on by white men to sue the California Department of Corrections, were the focus of the program. The Committee concentrated on the California Department of Corrections case, given that it led to the decision that made considering race and sex for promotions and hiring unconstitutional.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Pamphlet, International Women’s Day Celebration, 1974. International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁴⁵ Program, International Women’s Day, 1977. International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts. The TWWA took part in the National Committee to Overturn the Bakke Decision. For more information see: National Committee to Overturn the Bakke Decision, 1976-77. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

The IWD programs also reflected the connection between the domestic and transnational as central to International Women's Day and the TWWA's activist efforts. The 1979 program, for example, focused on liberation struggles and U.S. imperialism in southern Africa. The Committee argued that U.S based Third World women could not be complicit, stating:

It is important that the United States become aware of the situation in southern Africa. Despite world-wide condemnation of the minority white regimes, the U.S. government has consistently supported them by maintaining diplomatic ties, allowing the recruitment of U.S. citizens as mercenaries, and opposing economic sanctions. Also U.S. corporations and banks make investments and loans to help prop up those repressive regimes. These same institutions are not responsive to the needs of Third World communities and working people here in the U.S. We see this every day in our lives: discrimination against minorities and women in the labor force, enforced unemployment and soaring inflation while corporate profits increase.¹⁴⁶

Preparing for the 1979 celebration, the Committee aimed to celebrate South African women and sought out activists interested in joining "a mass southern African women's movement" based in the United States.¹⁴⁷ The program featured speakers from the Conference on Women's Affairs, Mozambique and Josina Machel Committee. To directly support southern Africa, the Committee organized for direct action, staging a picket in front of the South African Consulate and encouraging donations to aid Mozambique. The Committee's work engaging with liberation struggles in southern Africa allowed the group to practice transnationalism while remaining a U.S.-based organization, establishing connections with Third World people globally.

Like the IWD programs, the skits brought to the forefront the principles for the celebration, challenging racism, sexism, and imperialism, both in the United States and

¹⁴⁶ Program, "International Women's Day, 1979. International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁴⁷ Third World Women's Committee to Celebrate International Women's Day. Notes, Planning for International Women's Day, 1979. International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

transnationally. Moreover, as with the poetry, art, and programs, the skits were an attempt to bridge differences to create solidarity as Third World working class women with similar histories of oppression. A skit performed for the IWD celebration in 1974 featured performers making statements about their identities, which addressed the historical realities for Third World women. Similar to the book reviews column and articles recovering the historical genealogies of U.S. based Third World women in *Triple Jeopardy*, the skits carved a space to diverge from dominant narratives of history as a form of agency. The performers read:

I was brought here to work the tobacco fields of Virginia and I been here working ever since. You say you've heard my history a thousand time. Well, it may take telling a thousand times more before it all gets told--and told right.

Yo soy Raza, Chicana, Latina. We have a proud history, a struggling present and a developing future. Our labor has been exploited to make this country rich.

My name is morning flower. My bloods are of many great people--Sioux, Cherokee, Navajo, Apache. From Oklahoma to Arizona, I have left historic imprints on these lands.¹⁴⁸

Labor was also a focus of this skit, which discussed the “genocidal working conditions” that Third World people experienced, as well as the lack of healthcare and educational opportunities. Challenges to U.S. imperialism and settler colonialism also reflected through the skit, with the Native American woman, stating, “My address is at Pine Ridge on Ho Chi Minh Trail.”¹⁴⁹

The performers’ narratives for the skits focused on stories of survival, resistance, and a call for direct action. Another skit featured a group of telephone workers, who were miserable at their jobs. The performers expressed gratitude for the workers who came before them who went on strike, noting that they would be “working twelve hours a day and six-day weeks” without

¹⁴⁸ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, Skit, 1974. International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

their sacrifice.¹⁵⁰ However, the benefits were minimal, and the operators expressed the desire for paid maternity leave and free child care centers, both of which would serve the needs of Third World working class women. The skit concluded with a call to action, with the performers thundering: “This whole damn country could use a spring cleaning. And we all know how to clean.”¹⁵¹ The call to direct action and solidarity among Third World people was succinctly articulated at the conclusion of a skit for the 1975 IWD celebration, which listed demands: “1. Jobs for everyone, and more 2. Food, and more 3. Better schools, and more 4. Free daycare, and more, Free healthcare and more. A world we can live in, not just survive.”¹⁵²

Another skit took a transnational approach when considering Third World working class solidarity, with an unemployment line as the setting. The performers articulated the adverse effects of the economic downturn of the mid-1970s, specifically on Third World people and their attempt to navigate that economic landscape. Describing the capitalist and imperialist forces that governed their lived existence as Third World people, the performers stated:

They are the ones who only feel tall when they’re standing on the backs of others. They are the one who move their factories south so they can better exploit workers who have yet organized. They are the ones who prefer to cut free lunch for school children out of the budget than to withhold billions from Thieu and Lon Noi.¹⁵³

However, the dialogue ended with a declaration of self-determination as Third World people, as they concluded: “But their days are numbered.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, Skit, undated. International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁵¹ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, Skit, undated. International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁵² Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, Skit, 1975. International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁵³ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, Skit, undated. International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Focusing on the struggles of Third World people, the topic of welfare sat at the intersection of race, class, and gender and was examined in skits performed by members of the Committee at the celebrations. The skits concentrating on welfare rights and abuses brought to the forefront the efforts of the Welfare Rights Movement, specifically Johnnie Tillmon and her work with the National Welfare Rights Organization. With one performer pointing out: “There are some women who are working to make the welfare system better though. I have some good material at home about it if you want to check it out.”¹⁵⁵ The performances raised awareness about the issue of racist and sexist attitudes toward welfare recipients. For example, in a skit set in a welfare office, one performer noted that the majority of the people there are non-white, and goes on to say that Third World people have: “worked and worked and worked some more to make this country the richest one in the world. But we still have nothing.”¹⁵⁶ The Committee’s focus on class struggles through welfare and labor abuses reflected the IWD’s intense examination and repudiation of the capitalist system and its manifestation of sexism. Through the skits, the Committee revealed how Third World women experienced overlapping oppressions through a historical context and through their everyday realities. The Committee’s emphasis on agency and a call to direct action through the skits allowed for a space for the conceptualization of Third World feminist identity.

Conclusion: The Transformation, AAWO, and IWD Celebrations

With their transformation to their successor organization, the Alliance Against Women’s Oppression (AAWO) in 1980, the organization continued their work on IWD celebrations. The

¹⁵⁵ Third World Women’s Committee to Celebrate International Women’s Day, Skit, undated. International Women’s Day, 1974-80. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

AAWO's engagement with IWD celebrations contributed to their movement toward a mass revolutionary organization. The AAWO celebrated the completion of transformation process with a speech at IWD in 1980, exploring the history of the TWWA and the formation of the AAWO. The Alliance's work with the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality (CFIM) is another coalition effort, which shaped the TWWA's political line and its later work with the AAWO.

Chapter 3: Fighting for the Right to Choose: The Third World Women's Alliance and Reproductive Justice

Women must have the right to decide if and when they want to have children. There is no such thing as an illegitimate child, there should be free and SAFE family planning methods available to all women, including abortion.

There should be no forced sterilization or mandatory birth control programs, which are presently used as genocide against third world women and against other poor people.¹⁵⁷

For TWWA activists, revolutionary freedom and reproductive freedom were inextricably connected. Their work challenged efforts to restrict the reproductive autonomy of Third World women, encompassing campaigns focusing on involuntary sterilization, fighting for accessible and free abortion and contraception for all women, and spearheading a committee to investigate high infant mortality rates in East Oakland. The struggle for complete reproductive autonomy formed the core of the TWWA's articulation of a Third World feminist identity, particularly through its work educating readers about involuntary sterilization through articles in *Triple Jeopardy*, Frances Beal's analysis of reproductive freedom in "Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female," and their coalition building effort with the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality in East Oakland (CFIM).

The Alliance took a reproductive justice approach to challenge injustices inflicted upon Third World women. Conceptualized by black women activists in 1994, reproductive justice (RJ) activism adopted a human rights approach, considering not only access to abortion and

¹⁵⁷ Third World Women's Alliance, "Women in the Struggle," *Triple Jeopardy* 1, no. 1 (September-October, 1971), 8-9. *Triple Jeopardy*, November 1971-Feb. 1975. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-ms-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

contraception, but also the right to parent children in a safe and healthy environment. The framework considered childbearing a human right, focusing on access to quality maternal care for all women. The Sistersong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective founded by Luz Rodriguez, former director of the Latina Roundtable on Health and Reproductive Justice, and other activists, including Loretta Ross, constituted the foundational core of reproductive justice theory.¹⁵⁸

This chapter will begin with a discussion on involuntary sterilization as a major cause that the Alliance organized around. The TWWA centered involuntary sterilization as an organizational focus, and their articles in *Triple Jeopardy* enabled them to address their position on involuntary sterilization. Through this discussion, the chapter will examine the TWWA's conceptualization of reproductive freedom, considering Frances Beal's essay, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female." The remainder of the chapter will focus on the organization's leadership role in the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, how their coalition work fits within the reproductive justice paradigm, and how the work allowed the TWWA to progress toward their goal as a mass revolutionary organization.

Involuntary Sterilization, The TWWA, and Revolutionary Freedom

¹⁵⁸ Loretta J. Ross & Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 54-55. See also: Loretta J. Ross, et al. *Radical Reproductive Justice: Foundations, Theory, Practice, and Critique*. (New York: Feminist Press at City University of New York, 2017.); Jael Silliman, et al. *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2004); Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Zakiya Luna, *Reproductive Rights as Human Rights: Women of Color and the Fight for Reproductive Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

Journalist Claudia Dreifus conducted a study on involuntary sterilization in the United States in the publication, *The Progressive* in 1975. The article featured the story of Guadalupe Acosta, who was involuntarily sterilized at a hospital in Los Angeles. The hospital claimed that her common-law husband signed the consent form for the procedure; however, this ended up not being the case. Acosta was abandoned by her husband and left to care for her other children.¹⁵⁹ Norma Jean Serna was a Native American woman, sterilized without her consent for “economic reasons,” two black women from South Carolina, whose doctors refused to deliver their babies unless they agreed to be sterilized--both women were welfare recipients, and cases of disabled children who had their uterus removed at twelve, thirteen, and fifteen, all experienced involuntary sterilization in the United States.¹⁶⁰ These egregious cases of the infringement upon the reproductive autonomy of women of color provided the backdrop for the TWWA’s reproductive justice framework and activist work. As an organization that challenged the oppressions of race, gender, and imperialism, involuntary sterilization sat at the forefront of its activism.

The pamphlet “Stop Forced Sterilization Now!” was created by the Committee to Stop Forced Sterilization and included excerpts from *Triple Jeopardy*. The pamphlet explained the injustice of involuntary sterilization for Third World women. Particularly, the group considered involuntary procedures, which took place at the LA County-University of Southern California Medical Center. Women who experienced the procedure at the hospital were often asked while in labor to sign consent forms. Others were deceived and told that they were going to receive a c-section, while women with language barriers were asked to sign consent forms written in

¹⁵⁹ Claudia Dreifus, “Sterilizing the Poor,” *The Progressive* 13 (December, 1975). Reproductive rights, n.d, Box 6, Folder 1 Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

English. The booklet included excerpts of interviews with women who experienced involuntary sterilization, particularly poor women, those on welfare, and women of color. One participant recalled:

At an Indian hospital in Claremore, Oklahoma, 52 Indian women were sterilized in just one-month (July, 1974) Women who come to the hospital are urged by doctors and social workers to stop having babies. Hysterectomies are often performed right after delivery. (The program is financed by HEW-the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare)¹⁶¹

In 1974, the HEW set new standards for hospitals as an effort to eliminate involuntary sterilizations. The rules were established to protect women from coercion and ensure informed consent.¹⁶² The TWWA supported these guidelines, which included a waiting period prior to sterilization, a minimum age of twenty-one, and informed consent.¹⁶³ However, several hospitals—particularly teaching hospitals--remained unaware, of or refused to follow, the guidelines.¹⁶⁴

The contributors of *Triple Jeopardy* positioned reproductive justice as central. The publication included several articles focusing on the struggle for complete reproductive autonomy, with an emphasis on involuntary sterilization. The Alliance used the publication as a

¹⁶¹ The Committee to Stop Forced Sterilization, "Forced Sterilization Now!" (1971), accessed http://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC46_scans/46.StopForcedSterilizationNow.pdf.

¹⁶² Margaret A Kohn from Women's Right's Health Project Centre for Law and Social Policy, "Sterilization Abuse Fact Sheet, December 30, 1977. Reproductive rights, n.d, Box 6, Folder 1 Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁶³ Linda Burnham interview, interview by Loretta J. Ross, *Voices of Feminism Oral History Project* March 18, 2005, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Shelia Rothman, "Funding Sterilization and Abortion for the Poor," *New York Times* (1975) in *Welfare: A Documentary History of U.S. Policy and Politics*, ed Gwendolyn Mink and Rickie Solinger, 411-415 (New York: New York University Press, 2003). The Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) Proposal, which was meant to provide adequate funds for birth control, put more funds toward sterilization, with women of color, the poor, and the disabled all being disproportionately targeted for the procedure. An investigation in *The New York Times* by journalist Sheila Rothman, where she argued that "gap between rhetoric and reality quickly emerged" when the government entered family planning in 1970." Focusing on sterilization, rather than birth control, there were "100,000 to 150,000 women were sterilized at the new clinics each year and without seeking voluntary consent is an attempt to lower the birth rate of the poor, thinking that it would relieve social problems, such as the "strain on welfare *costs* and environmental costs.

venue to educate readers about the problem of involuntary sterilization and to express their intersectional reproductive justice framework. Featured in the September-October 1973 edition of the publication, the article “Sterilization of BLACK Women is Common in the U.S.” revealed the pervasive issue of forced sterilization in the United States. The author described the victims of the procedure as being poor, Black women, noting: “Clearly, one must be (a) a woman (b) black (c) poor (d) all of the above.”¹⁶⁵ The cover of the edition features a photograph of Minnie and Mary Alice Relf. From Montgomery, Alabama and sterilized at fourteen and twelve years old, the sisters’ case was particularly notorious. The article lists incidences of involuntary sterilization throughout the United States, including Illinois, Mississippi, New York City, and Georgia.

The January through February, 1974 edition of *TJ* returns to the topic of involuntary sterilization, focusing on the intersection of capitalism and reproductive violations endangering the lives of Third World women. In “Sterilization: La Operacion The Doctor May Need it More Than You,” the contributor, Gloria Rivera, investigated the system, which provided surgeons with the bodies of the poor and money to perform unwanted sterilization procedures. Rivera argued that the “reward” for doing more operations on the poor and disadvantaged was a “specialty certification,” which translated into profit. Rivera concluded the article asserting:

If you are a black or latin woman or are a poor white woman, your chances of being approached to submit to a sterilization procedure are multiplied. Doctors continue to be a willing tool in these genocidal practices: they will continue to view third world and poor women as guinea pigs.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Margo Jefferson, “Sterilization of BLACK Women is Common in the U.S.,” *Triple Jeopardy* 3 no. 1, (September-October, 1973), 1.

¹⁶⁶ Gloria Rivera, “Sterilization: La Operacion The Doctor May Need it More Than You!” *Triple Jeopardy* 3, no. 3 (January-February 1974), 1.

The analysis by contributors in *TJ* addressed the political line articulated by the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality when the organization was formed in January 1979, which examined the for-profit system, racism, and medical violence.

Another article in *TJ* showcased the voices of Dominican women living in New York City who experienced being involuntary sterilized. TWWA members interviewed three women who recently migrated from the Dominican Republic. The women all received at least one form of assistance from the government. The women relied on Gouverneur Hospital for their medical needs, which had a reputation for its lack of services. Due to this, the hospital sent their patients to Beth Israel Medical Center, which was a teaching hospital. Their experience with being involuntary sterilized reflected the vulnerability and the targeting of Third World women, who were poor, and in the case of these women, migrants.¹⁶⁷ Beal's essay, "Double Jeopardy to Be Black and Female" further expressed the TWWA's stance on reproductive justice, involuntary sterilization, and Third World women's revolutionary freedom.

The Alliance's fight for reproductive justice shaped their conceptualization of revolutionary womanhood, with activists, such as founder Frances Beal, forcefully arguing that any stance against complete reproductive autonomy constituted a counter-revolutionary position. In "Double Jeopardy," Beal emphasized the importance of access to birth control and abortion for Black women. She wrote:

The lack of availability of safe birth control practices, and the inability to obtain legal abortions are all symptoms of a decadent society that jeopardizes the health of black women (and thereby the entire black race) in its attempts to control the very life processes of human beings. This repressive control of black women is symptomatic of a society that believes it has the right to bring political factors into the bedchamber. The

¹⁶⁷ Third World Women's Alliance, "Sterilization: Dominican Women in N.Y.C.," *Triple Jeopardy* 3, no. 2 (November-December, 1973), 8.

elimination of these horrendous conditions will free black women for participation in revolution, and thereafter, in the building of a new society.¹⁶⁸

The last line of the above quote encapsulates the view of TWWA activists concerning reproductive rights activism and revolution. Described by Beal, the “horrendous conditions,” resulting from a lack of safe and affordable birth control options and access to abortion, prevented women of color from playing an active role in the revolution and robbed them of their dignity and their humanity.

As a SNCC activist, Beal raised awareness about the involuntary sterilization of Puerto Rican women. Additionally, her essay “Double Jeopardy” brought to the forefront the reproductive injustice of birth control experimentation on Puerto Rican women. Beal focused on the abuse experienced by Puerto Rican women as “guinea pigs” for birth control experimentation and asserted that Puerto Rican women were used to test the pill’s “efficiency and effect” before its use by white women. She forcefully argued:

We condemn this use of the black woman as a medical testing ground for the white middle class. Reports of the ill effects including deaths from the use of the birth control pill only started to come to light when the white privileged class began to be affected. These outrageous Nazi-like procedures on the part of medical researchers are but another manifestation of the totally amoral and dehumanizing brutality that the capitalist System perpetrates on black women. The sterilization experiments carried on in concentration camps some twenty-five years ago have been denounced the world over, but no one seems to get upset by the repetition of these same racist tactics today in the United States of America—land of the free and home of the brave.¹⁶⁹

Beal’s use of “Nazi-like procedures” and its association with the capitalist system revealed the power dynamics between women of color and white, middle-class women, who benefited from

¹⁶⁸ Frances Beal, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 8, no. 2 (2008), 173-174.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

the pill. Her analysis explored the colonial relationship with its race, gender, and class hierarchies, which deemed Puerto Rican women as the “Other,” and therefore justified the experimentation on their bodies to benefit white, middle class women in the United States.¹⁷⁰ The Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality further explored genocide and the fight against reproductive abuses through a community-driven committee investigating the high infant mortality rate at Highland Hospital in East Oakland.

Racism + Sexism+ Profits=High Infant Mortality: The Third World Women’s Alliance and Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality

The July, 1980 newsletter for the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality (CFIM) articulated the Coalition’s political line by proclaiming: “Racism + Sexism + Profits= High Infant Mortality.”¹⁷¹ A coalition building endeavor by the TWWA, the CFIM adopted a reproductive justice approach for their infant mortality campaign. Through their community-driven investigation of the astonishingly high infant mortality rate at Highland Hospital—the only public hospital in Alameda County, California that delivered babies—the Coalition brought to the forefront race, gender, and class-based oppressions as they manifested through the for-profit healthcare system and led to a high infant mortality rate for East Oakland’s women.

¹⁷⁰ Beal, “Double Jeopardy,” 173; For more information on Puerto Rican women, the U.S. government, and sterilization see: Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire” Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Iris Lopez, *Matters of Choice: Puerto Rican Women’s Struggle for Reproductive Freedom* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

¹⁷¹ Newsletter, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, 2 vol 1 (July, 1980), Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality correspondence, reports, flyers, and newspaper articles, 1979-1982. Linda Burnham papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00736, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

The CFIM's insistence that the Alameda County Board of Supervisors play an active role in ensuring quality maternal healthcare for Third World women through Highland Hospital formed the framework of their reproductive justice stance. Appalled by the high infant mortality rate at Highland, the CFIM confronted the Board of Supervisors in 1979, charging them with "state sponsored genocide."¹⁷² The Coalition asserted: "As Third World women and mothers we believe the rights of our children for life and health must overshadow the quest for profits and individual doctors and reluctance of the Board of Supervisors to act decisively."¹⁷³ The CFIM galvanized the community by asserting: "We must agitate, educate and organize with our communities to overcome these atrocities."¹⁷⁴

Building a Coalition: Infant Mortality and the TWWA

In 1978, the Health Committee of the Bay Area branch of the TWWA decided to mobilize around infant mortality. Discussion and research on the occurrence of infant mortality in U.S. based Third World communities revealed it as a pervasive issue. Given the disproportionate impact that infant mortality had on poor, minority women, the Alliance asserted that racism permeated the healthcare system. Additionally, infant mortality remained an area not

¹⁷² Third World Women's Alliance, "State Sponsored Genocide," Propaganda Committee, 1979 Third World Women's Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁷³ Third World Women's Alliance, Press Release in support of CFIM, undated. Press Releases, 1979-1980. Third World Women's Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁷⁴ Flyer, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, Demands, Undated, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality correspondence, reports, flyers, and newspaper articles, 1979-1982. Linda Burnham papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00736, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

taken up by other revolutionary groups in the Bay Area. Aiming to forge solidarity among Third World women, the Alliance reasoned that the infant mortality cause had the potential to “link outreach to the community in a concrete, meaningful and on-going way.”¹⁷⁵ They also viewed infant mortality as a cause that would allow for the inclusion of community people in political action and as an avenue to recruit new members.¹⁷⁶

The CFIM emerged from the early organizing efforts of Black Panther Party for Self Defense member, Ericka Huggins, who called a public meeting about infant mortality in 1979. Under the leadership of Huggins, the group included five members, with two from the Alliance. The TWWA took a leadership role and formed the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality in January, 1979.¹⁷⁷ With the TWWA in a leadership role, the Coalition’s political line centered equitable access to high quality healthcare, with a focus on maternal care. Specifically, the organization focused on the substandard care provided by Highland Hospital’s obstetrics and gynecology department. In 1979, the Coalition rallied community support for a community-based investigative committee to address the infant mortality rate at Highland.

The CFIM distributed pamphlets to the community leading up to their meeting with the Alameda Board of Supervisors in September and October 1979. In one pamphlet, the Coalition grabbed readers’ attention by posing the question: “Why do so many babies in East Oakland

¹⁷⁵ AAWO Assessments, 1979-82, undated. Alliance Against Women’s Oppression records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00699, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts, 2.

¹⁷⁶ AAWO Assessments, 1979-82, 3.

¹⁷⁷ AAWO Assessments, 1979-82, 6.

die?”¹⁷⁸ The pamphlet went on to note the alarming statistic that babies born in East Oakland were ten times more likely to die compared to the neighboring affluent, mostly white district of Piedmont. With so many babies dying within the first month of life, the newsletters emphasized the necessity of both maternal and postnatal care, arguing that access to both would reduce infant mortality in East Oakland. The pamphlet outlined the CFIM’s demands, which included: full funding for the clinics in East Oakland and the completion of a perinatal health initiative.¹⁷⁹ Additional demands made by the Coalition asserted that Highland Hospital remain open, but that the hospital be improved and expanded, that doctors on staff cater to the needs of the community, such as hiring bicultural and bilingual staff, that doctors on the staff work solely at Highland and not have private practices, and for the establishment of a sliding fee scale.¹⁸⁰

The East Oakland Community and Highland Hospital

The disturbingly high rate of infant mortality at Highland Hospital became public knowledge through local newspapers. Controversy raged when the hospital lost its accreditation due to the low number of births through its obstetrics unit. Following the loss of accreditation, the hospital hired six private practice physicians, who worked on a part-time basis at the hospital. Additionally, after the hiring of the physicians, a sliding pay scale was not implemented, making

¹⁷⁸ Flyer, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, Demands, undated, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality correspondence, reports, flyers, and newspaper articles, 1979-1982. Linda Burnham papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00736, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ AAWO assessments, 1979-82, undated, 8.

care at the hospital too expensive and unattainable for the neediest patients. The CFIM argued that the patients at the hospital received inadequate care and experienced neglect, since the doctors kept their private practices in conjunction with their work at Highland.¹⁸¹

An article by the *Oakland Tribune* provided a grim assessment of the quality of care provided to the East Oakland community at Highland Hospital. For example, the staff and patients suffered from a lack of and breaking down of equipment and an overall paucity of resources. Providing care for the poor, the hospital's registered nurses frequently went deficient on their training. The facility experienced understaffing, frequent budget cuts, and the constant need to hire new nurses. The introduction of new nurses meant that they were often inexperienced, which was especially troubling due to the hospital's persistent influx of high-risk patients.¹⁸²

A report assembled by the CFIM further reflected the dissatisfaction experienced by employees, patients, and community clinics who sent patients to the hospital to receive treatment. Reports from patients included describing being "treated like cattle" by doctors, reports of excessive wait times, and "racist and chauvinistic" doctors. Another commentor

¹⁸¹ Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality-Newspaper clippings, 1978-79, undated. Third World Women's Alliance Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁸² Article, "Verdict on Highland Hospital: It's a Mess," *Oakland Tribune* (March 18, 1979). Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality-Newspaper clippings, 1978-79, undated. Third World Women's Alliance Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

mentioned that the physicians did not seem interested in their patients.¹⁸³ Comments also came from the obstetrics and gynecological staff, who observed that “patients were seen as second-class citizens,” that the doctors were “chauvinistic, racist, punitive, and belittling,” that there were “dangerous delays in treatment,” and that often times, the physicians “commitment to the community was lacking.”¹⁸⁴ Additionally, as reported by Dr. Alice Jones, a resident in Internal Medicine at the hospital, inexperienced interns performed episiotomies and delivered babies.¹⁸⁵

The Coalition charged that the care Third World women received at Highland was directly linked to their race and class. Several newspapers in the Bay Area covered the issue of racism and health outcomes at Highland during the period the Coalition engaged with the cause of infant mortality. As expressed in an article in the *East Bay Voice*, disparities in healthcare outcomes were linked to location. The author argued that a “visible dividing line of poverty” existed regarding healthcare.¹⁸⁶ The CFIM articulated their position on healthcare rights for Third World women, their babies, the role of public hospitals, and the for-profit system in a press release thundering:

WE MUST EXPOSE THE UNEQUAL CARE FOR MINORITIES AND POOR PEOPLE WITHIN OUR SYSTEM. SAVE OUR PUBLIC HOSPITALS. SAVE OUR BABIES’ LIVES. HEALTH CARE FOR PEOPLE NOT FOR PROFIT.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ “Excerpts from Each Statement of Support Submitted to the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality From Community and Agencies.” September 11, 1979. Press Releases, 1979-1980. Third World Women’s Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Meeting transcript, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, Board of Supervisors Meeting, 9/18/79, Sophia Smith Collection of Women’s History, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹⁸⁶ The *East Bay Voice*: An Opposition Newsmonthly for the East Bay, November-December 1978, “Behind the Headlines: Oakland’s Infant Deaths” by Jonathon King Highland

¹⁸⁷ Press Release, “Statement of Purpose-Revised May 1979.” Press Releases, 1979-1980. Third World Women’s Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

To reduce the infant mortality rate, the Coalition promoted nutritional programs, outreach programs for pregnant women, and translators for non-English speaking mothers, all of which the CFIM argued were not supported because they did not generate profit.¹⁸⁸ To address these issues, the Coalition appeared in front of the Alameda Board of Supervisors to request a community-driven committee to investigate the Highland Hospital.

Fighting for Oakland’s Babies: The Board of Supervisors Meeting, September, 1979

Known as “a people’s physician,” obstetrician and TWWA member, Vicki Alexander, was at the center of the struggle against infant mortality in East Oakland.¹⁸⁹ Alexander was among the initial members of the Coalition, and one of two members representing the Alliance. Prior to the meeting with the Board of Supervisors, the Coalition worked to mobilize the community to support the creation of a community-based investigative committee. In a letter to support their cause, Alexander wrote: “We now recognize that we must mobilize the progressive medical community” and the community at large.¹⁹⁰ The support from the medical community, community clinics, and public officials for the Coalition was widespread.

¹⁸⁸ Propaganda, “Medicine for Money,” 2, Propaganda Committee, 1979 Third World Women’s Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁸⁹ “Vicki Alexander: A People’s Physician.” Unknown publication, 1979, Yearbook, 1979, Third World Women’s Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁹⁰ Letter, Viki Alexander, May 1, 1979, Letters from the CFIM, May-Nov, 1979, Third World Women’s Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

A group of physicians wrote a letter of support for the CFIM on August 27, 1979, addressing concerns about Highland Hospital's obstetrics department. The letter echoed the concerns of the CFIM, particularly the lack of translation services for non-English speakers and the absence of a pediatrician at the hospital on weekends and evenings.¹⁹¹ The Coalition also received letters of support from the California Nurses Association. Community clinics in the Bay Area expressed their support, including the Asian Health Services, which addressed the lack of translators and no payment sliding scale. A member of the Coalition for the Medical Rights of Women (CMRW) wrote a letter supporting the efforts of the Coalition. The CMRW representative focused on tax cuts through the measure Proposition 13, which significantly hindered the ability for public hospitals to serve their populations.¹⁹² They wrote:

The spirit of Proposition 13 threatens to decrease the amount and viability of county and community health care alternatives just when the need for low-cost services is increasing. Every criticism of existing services is increasing. Every criticism of existing services can be used as justification for additional service reduction. However, identifying problems is a necessary step to solving them. That is why we are speaking out about Highland's OB/GYN services. Problems exist which must be corrected.¹⁹³

With the support of the community, politicians, and the medical community, the CFIM went before the Alameda Board of Supervisors in September, 1979 and again in October that same year. Alexander addressed the Board in September, expressing the political line of the

¹⁹¹ Letter, August 27, 1979 to the Board of Supervisors, Support Letters, 1979-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹⁹² Jenna M. Loyd, *Health Rights are Civil Rights: Peace and Justice Activism in Los Angeles, 1963-1978* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 207.

¹⁹³ Letter. Coalition for the Medical Rights of Women, The Women's Building, San Francisco, CA, (September 1979) Support Letters. Proposition 13.

Coalition regarding the responsibility of the Board and healthcare. She argued that the Board was aware of Highland's high infant mortality rate, but was complicit while Oakland's babies died.

Alexander remarked:

Community groups and concerned professionals have joined in protesting the unforgivable discrepancy between the rate of infant death in poor, minority communities as compared to the rate of well-to-do areas. WE have joined in pinpointing you, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, as ultimately responsible for the health and welfare of Oakland and its residents.¹⁹⁴

We are here today to make it crystal clear that the community will not sit by while our babies needlessly perish. Highland Hospital shares in the culpability for the high infant death rate.¹⁹⁵

During her statement, Alexander reiterated the Coalition's stance that the governing body remained complicit while Oakland's babies died due to the inadequate care at Highland Hospital. Addressing the role racism and classism played in their deaths, Alexander argued that affluent Piedmont had fewer infant death compared to East Oakland, where poor, minority populations resided. As a way of demonstrating the support of the community, Alexander presented the Committee with 5100 signatures supporting a community-driven investigation in the care at Highland.¹⁹⁶

Coalition and TWWA member, Melanie Daumont, explained that the investigative committee, which was the central demand of the Coalition, would be made up of both

¹⁹⁴ Meeting transcript, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, Board of Supervisors Meeting, 9/18/79, Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History, Smith College, Northampton, MA, 1.

¹⁹⁵ Meeting transcript, to Fight Infant Mortality, Board of Supervisors Meeting, 9/18/79, Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History, Smith College, Northampton, MA, 2.

¹⁹⁶ Meeting transcript, 2.

community members and medical professionals of different races from the East Oakland community. Daumont contended that a committee put together by the hospital or the county would not suffice due to the past inaction by the Board of Supervisors. Moreover, Daumont expressed disenchantment with Highland's administration selecting a committee, given their apathy toward the community. The committee proposed by the Coalition included registered nurses, medical doctors, including an OBGYN and a perinatologist.¹⁹⁷ Concerns among the Board emerged that the Coalition's committee would be biased. Board member, Valerie Raymond, interjected with bias as a concern, while Daumont insisted on the importance of a community-based effort.¹⁹⁸

Letisha Wadsworth, a member of the TWWA present at the meeting, spoke about the racial disparities present when accessing maternal healthcare, comparing the experience of a Third World woman living in East Oakland with that of an affluent, white woman residing in Piedmont. Wadsworth commented:

There's a real marked difference in the care, health care, available to the residents of East Oakland and Piedmont. If you're poor and Third World in Alameda County and forced to go to Highland, you risk your life. If you're also a pregnant woman or a newborn baby, the risks are greater. This is the deadliest form of racism. The negligent care exhibited at the OBGYN Department at Highland Hospital is an attack on the...on Third World and poor women's capacity to bear and raise healthy children.¹⁹⁹

Wadsworth continued arguing that race, class, and sex should not impede a person's accessibility to healthcare in East Oakland and that the investigative committee was necessary to combat the

¹⁹⁷ Meeting transcript, 17-18.

¹⁹⁸ Meeting transcript, 19.

¹⁹⁹ Meeting transcript, 25.

struggle of infant mortality. Wadsworth's comment articulated the TWWA's and the Coalition's reproductive justice framework by arguing for access to maternal healthcare for all, regardless of income and race and for the right to raise healthy children.

The statements by the Coalition and the request for an investigative committee were met with a racist tirade by Board member Fred Cooper. Cooper blamed the *community* for the infant mortality in East Oakland. Comparing Piedmont to Oakland, the Board member contended that Piedmont “doesn't have teenage mortality. Piedmont does not have drug addicts getting pregnant. Piedmont doesn't have alcoholics getting.....getting pregnant.”²⁰⁰ With fellow Board member Valerie Raymond, Cooper abruptly left the meeting. As a Coalition member recalled in a local newspaper, both Board members “angrily walked out to keep a luncheon meeting “while babies are dying.”²⁰¹ Following the meetings in September and October, the Board did not provide the Coalition with the support for a community-driven investigation, rather they opted to conduct a Grand Jury Investigation of Highland Hospital and its obstetrics and gynecology department.²⁰²

Conclusion

²⁰⁰ Meeting transcript, 39.

²⁰¹ “Racist Majority Black Hospital Investigation—for now: Coalition in battle to Save Babies,” September 22, 1979, Yearbook, 1979. Third World Women's Alliance Bay Area Records, Sophia Smith Collection of Women's History, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

²⁰² AAWO Assessments, 11. “As a result when the request for a community-based investigation was turned down by the BOS, we threatened to take this issue to the State Legislature of California. This had not been discussed within the CFIM or within the TWWA, but had been laid out some of the middle forces in work and pushed by individuals before the board.”

In a letter of gratitude to their supporters, the Coalition expressed their concern regarding the racial and gender makeup of the Grand Jury. The letter informed its readers: “The Grand Jury is composed primarily of white, male, middle class residents of the Southern region—the polar opposite of those effected by infant mortality.”²⁰³ As an act of resistance, the Coalition conducted their community-driven investigation without the approval of the Board of Supervisors to serve the East Oakland. Through their effort, the CFIM continued to fight for reproductive justice for all Third World women.²⁰⁴ Working with the CFIM, the TWWA’s effort at coalition building in the Bay Area led to a long-term campaign to challenge infant mortality.

²⁰³ Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, Thank you letter to supporters (draft), November 12, 1979. Letters from the CFIM, May-Nov 1979, Third World Women’s Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

²⁰⁴ AAWO Assessments, 1979-80, undated, 11.

Coda: The Alliance Against Women's Oppression, the Transformation, and Anti-Imperialist Efforts, 1980-1986

Our main thesis here is that the objective conditions facing women in the U.S. reflects a potential to transform the masses of women into a revolutionary force. Women's oppression is a form of oppression for the working class as a whole. Women's oppression is fundamentally determined and shaped by capitalist class relations.²⁰⁵

It the responsibility of all of us to take the women's question as a revolutionary question into all areas of the class struggle. The leading line on women's oppression must be integrated into all forms of revolutionary work. The struggle to overcome women's oppression is a struggle in the interests of the working class as a whole, for as long as women remain oppressed the full potential of all peoples will not be recognized. Thus, we take up struggle against women's oppression as a responsibility within the women's movement as well as within the class struggle as a whole.²⁰⁶

Repositioning itself with the broader women's movement, the AAWO worked across differences to shift from a Third World women's organization to one that included all working-class women.

The Alliance responded to Reagan-era imperialism with their coalition building efforts through *Somos Hermanas*, which forged transnational solidarity with women in Central America, and their continued engagement with International Women's Day. Similar to the TWWA, the AAWO's efforts challenged sexism, imperialism, and racism.²⁰⁷

The Transformation and Formation of the Alliance Against Women's Oppression

²⁰⁵ Third World Women's Alliance, "Significance of the Transformation," 1980. International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts, 3.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 8; For more on the AAWO's political line see: Alliance Against Women's Oppression, "Our History and Political Line," 1980, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. The AAWO's political line focused on women's oppression, imperialism, racism, and gay and lesbian oppression.

²⁰⁷ See also scholar Anna Carastathis's analysis of *Somos Hermanas* in her chapter: "Identity as Coalitions," in *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 163-199 and Emily Hobson's work on gay and lesbian organizing in the American left, including the Alliance Against Women's Oppression and their work with *Somos Hermanas* in: Emily K. Hobson, "24th and Mission: Building Gay and Lesbian Solidarity with Nicaragua in *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016),.

The Third World Women's Alliance underwent an intense discussion about the future of the organization in 1980. Referred to as the "transformation" by the Alliance, the process ended with the formation of the Alliance Against Women's Oppression (AAWO) in 1980. The TWWA's engagement with their coalition building efforts through International Women's Day and the Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality facilitated this movement toward a mass revolutionary organization, which concentrated on women's oppression. Both efforts led to long-term campaigns and engagement with a broad spectrum of revolutionary organizations focusing on anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-imperialist causes. The AAWO aimed to reforge the women's movement by constructing a dominant anti-capitalist, anti-racist line as a working-class organization centering women's oppression.²⁰⁸

The organization's re-imagining of the TWWA's political line emphasized the intersection of women's oppression and capitalism, arguing for women to be free, capitalism needed to be dismantled. Their political theorizing and development of a revolutionary political line considered race, class, and gender oppressions within the context of the conservative 1980s. The organization argued that although women entered the workforce in large numbers during the decade, inflation led to poverty, both spouses working, and women being responsible for childbearing, housework, and childrearing. Moreover, they contended that the Reagan administration's defunding of social programs and increases in military spending exacerbated issues for Third World people. The AAWO articulated these socioeconomic struggles in their

²⁰⁸ Sushawn Robb, *Mothering the Movement: The Story of the San Francisco Women's Movement* (Denver: Outskirts Press, Inc, 2012), 233-234. Robb recalls that the organization took a Marxist turn with the formation of the AAWO, particularly with participation members of the group's participation in Line of March--A Marxist Leninist organization. Robb was a volunteer in the San Francisco Women's Building, the location where the AAWO rented a space.; For more of the AAWO, their Marxist orientation, and involvement in the New Communist Movement see: Max Erlbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che* (New York: Verso, 2018).

pamphlet “Working for the Rights of All Women,” where they expressed disdain for the Reagan administration. They wrote:

Working class women, especially women of color, are particularly vulnerable to attack since their oppression as women is compounded by racism and class exploitation. Women’s conditions have gone from bad to worse at the hands of a conservative administration intent on rolling back women’s rights, reinforcing white supremacy, and slashing the social services that, however inadequate, were a lifeline for the poor. Only through building a mass movement in defense of women’s interests with strong links to broader people’s movements, can women’s rights and total liberation be won.²⁰⁹

During the transformation process, the Alliance analyzed the TWWA’s history as an activist organization during the late 1960s and early 1970s and their relationship with the broader women’s movement and the New Left. Part of the critique focused on the failure of white, middle class feminists to establish a political line beyond a gender analysis and a failure to acknowledge capitalist oppression.²¹⁰ Their analysis of the Alliance noted that the organization’s assessment of the women’s movement as white and racist, and the focus on racial composition, particularly the identity formation of Third World women, led the organization to not “take up women’s oppression in an all-sided way.”²¹¹ To remedy these oversights by the white-dominated women’s movement, the TWWA, and the AAWO argued that “to bring about a successful revolution, it is imperative that all sectors of the working class be drawn actively to class struggle.”²¹²

The attempt by the AAWO to create a working-class organization within the broader women’s movement and the inclusion of white activists was controversial. AAWO member Linda Burnham discussed the inclusion of white women in an oral history as a point of

²⁰⁹ Alliance Against Women’s Oppression, “Working for the Rights of All Women,” undated, 1. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

²¹⁰ Alliance Against Women’s Oppression, “Significance of the Transformation,” 8-9

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

contention among TWWA members, with some women leaving the organization. Burnham recalled a dialogue common among leftist revolutionary organizations during the 1980s about class and its intersection with racial identity. Burnham remembered that throughout the transformation process, activists noted the presence of working-class white people and the need to create solidarity. However, the Alliance remained cognizant that the experiences of communities of color were distinct, compared to those of white working-class people.²¹³ During the 1980s, the Alliance's shift to "an explicitly Marxist formation" further influenced their choice to include white women. The AAWO sought to move for a more inclusive "revolutionary politic" and to develop "a women's organization that has sort of a more explicit class basis, that brings in and integrates white women."²¹⁴

Like the TWWA, the AAWO focused intensely on anti-imperial struggles. The AAWO's anti-imperial activism transcended borders during the 1980s, particularly through their coalition building effort with Somos Hermanas. The AAWO's organizational principles argued that U.S. based Third World women and the women's movement in the United States had an "internationalist responsibility" in supporting revolutionary women throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia.²¹⁵ The responsibility included political support for liberation movements and educational initiatives. The AAWO's role with Somos Hermanas in Central America fulfilled that principle. The Alliance's political line noted:

Given the role played by the United States as a leader of the imperialist system worldwide, building solidarity with our international sisters is central to forging the working-class core of the U.S. women's movement and the broader united front.²¹⁶

²¹³ Interview by Loretta Ross, Linda Burnham. *Voices of Feminism Oral History Project*, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts 23.

²¹⁴ Burnham interview, 24.

²¹⁵ Alliance Against Women's Oppression, "Our History and Political Line," 26.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Coalition Building: Somos Hermanas

The AAWO's coalition efforts, particularly through Somos Hermanas, developed from discussions concerning U.S. intervention in Central America and dialogues with Central American women revolutionaries.²¹⁷ The purpose of the Somos Hermanas delegation was to unify against U.S. imperialism in the region and forge solidarity between revolutionary women in the United States and those in Latin America, particularly in El Salvador and Nicaragua. A multiracial organization facilitated by the AAWO, Somos Hermanas delegates came from New York, Boston, Washington, D.C, and the Bay Area. The women who joined the delegation had experience in U.S. progressive activist spaces. They went to Central America with the aim to create solidarity as “doctors, lawyers, legal and health care workers, writers, media professionals and community organizers.”²¹⁸

Somos Hermanas' organizational principles articulated the multiplicity of women's oppressions as perpetuated by U.S economic and military aid and political support for despotic regimes in Latin America.²¹⁹ The delegation examined the intersection of militarism, gender, and race-based oppression through a transnational perspective, noting that they “shared the burdens of militarism and war, poverty, racism, and sexism” with Latin American women.²²⁰ Linking

²¹⁷ Scholarship on Latin American feminist revolutionaries and transnational connections include: Lindsey Churchill, *Becoming the Tupamaros: Solidarity and Transnational Revolutionaries in Uruguay and the United States* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014); Karen Kampwirth, *Women & Guerrilla Movements: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas, Cuba* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2002).

²¹⁸ Somos Hermanas, Press Release, October 22, 1984, Alliance Against Women's Oppression discussion papers, politics, and theory readings, and materials related to the Somos Hermanas and Jesse Jackson Campaigns, 1981-1989. Linda Burnham Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collection, SSC-MS-00736, Northampton Massachusetts.

²¹⁹ Somos Hermanas, “Proposal to Launch Somos Hermanas as a Network in Solidarity with Central American Women,” Alliance Against Women's Oppression discussion papers, politics, and theory readings, and materials related to the Somos Hermanas and Jesse Jackson Campaigns, 1981-1989. Linda Burnham Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collection, SSC-MS-00736, Northampton Massachusetts.

²²⁰ Miriam Louie and Vicki Alexander, “Salvadoran Women: *In Search of Peace and Justice.*”; Somos Hermanas News, no. 1. Spring, 1986.

militarism and women's oppression, the group noted that it led to illiteracy, high maternal and infant mortality, torture, sexual assault, and political repression. Moreover, the delegation argued that the effects of militarism were an impediment to the women's movement's progress throughout Central America. The poorest women in American society also suffered under Reagan's leadership, with the administration's budget cuts to education, welfare, and job training programs, with those funds being used instead for the military. Interconnecting women's experiences in Central America and the United States, Somos Hermanas forcefully argued: "Money snatched away from our childcare centers, clinics and schools is being used to pay for the bombs dropped on childcare centers, clinics and schools in Central America."²²¹ The AAWO further examined the impacts of militarism on the U.S. women arguing that they "were the first to fall victim to Reagan's war budget as a result of the transfer of public funds from social programs to the bloated military budget."²²²

With the increase in military spending, poor people, particularly people of color, experienced severe rates of unemployment, and specifically impacting women, high rates of infant mortality. Somos Hermanas, articulated this interconnection noting:

The Reagan Administration has been noteworthy in its racist contempt towards the peoples of Latin America and the developing world and peoples of color within the United States itself. The struggle for justice at home is inseparable with the fight for peace in Central America. Anti-interventionist politics are not an option for the minority communities; they lie at the very core of the people's survival.²²³

²²¹ Somos Hermanas, "Proposal to Launch Somos Hermanas as a Network in Solidarity with Central American Women."

²²² Alliance Against Women's Oppression, "Working for the Rights of All Women," 4.

²²³ Somos Hermanas, "Proposal to Launch Somos Hermanas as a Network in Solidarity with Central American Women."

The commonalties of militarism, poverty, sexism, and racism were considered by the delegation to form a sense of sisterhood. Through their experience in Central America, the delegation sought to “learn from the experience of our sisters, who serve as an example of oppressed women in the developed world” to learn how to organize in the United States.²²⁴

Focusing on women’s oppression, U.S. imperialism, and working with the broader movement to combat women’s oppression, the objective of Somos Hermanas reflected the AAWO’s objective as an organization to forge a broad coalition of women in response to U.S. intervention in Central America. The delegation brought together women from the causes of women’s, lesbian, and anti-racist rights, as well as broader movements including churches, schools, and the peace and solidarity movements.²²⁵ Through their attempt at organizing multiple sects of the liberation struggles under one common objective, imperialism in Latin America, the AAWO attempted to organize across difference to create a coalition. The drafted principles for Somos Hermans included broad tenets: that U.S. intervention in Central America remained an impediment to the women’s liberation movement in South America, that both women in the United States and Central America suffered from militarism, that people of color are especially affected by militarism, and to forge solidarity for the removal of the United States from Central America and to build bonds of sisterhood with Central American women.²²⁶

Miriam Louie wrote the discussion paper “Defending Our Country: Proud to be Conquering our Future,” to raise awareness of their trip to their readership. The Somos Hermanas delegation and Central American women expressed their own notion of transnational

²²⁴ Proposal to Launch Somos Hermanas as a Network in Solidarity with Central American Women,” 2; Patricia Hill Collins, “U.S Black Feminism in a Transnational Context” in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009). The delegation’s work with Central American women can be seen within the context of Patricia Hill Collins conceptualization of the transnational matrix of domination.

²²⁵ Proposal to Launch Somos Hermanas as a Network in Solidarity with Central American Women, 2.

²²⁶ Ibid., 3.

sisterhood, one that considered their overlapping identities through an exploration of racism, sexism, and imperialism in the United States and in Central America as perpetuated by the Reagan administration. The paper described the delegation: as a “rainbow coalition,” the organization included “Black women, Puerto Rican, Chicana, Peruvian, Asian, Arab, and white women.”²²⁷ The delegation arrived in Nicaragua close to an election in both the United States and Nicaragua, during an uneasy and violent time.²²⁸

Louie wrote about the delegation’s march with the revolutionary organization, the Asociacion de Mujeres Nicaraguenes Luisa Amanda Espinoza (AMNLAE), a Nicaraguan women’s organization to celebrate the role of women in rebuilding the country following the Somoza regime.²²⁹ Formed in 1977 as a response to the Somoza dictatorship, the AMNLAE fought for the rights of women within the larger context of the people’s struggle in Nicaragua. During their trip, the Somos Hermanas delegation took part in the seventh-year anniversary of the AMNLAE, to which the coalition was invited by the AMNLAE. At the center of their trip was a march with Nicaraguan women, leaders from the AMNLAE, including Glenda Monterrey, the Secretary General of the women’s organization, and the leader of the Sandinista government and presidential candidate, David Ortega.²³⁰

The Somos Hermanas delegation spent their trip engaging with members of the AMNLAE’s leadership, discussing commonalities in experiences and liberation strategies. The Secretary of International Relations of the AMNLAE, Ivon Siu, expressed a sense of solidarity

²²⁷ Alliance Against Women’s Oppression, “Defending the Country: Proud to be Women: Conquering the Future, (Fall 1984). Somos Hermanas, Press Release, October 22, 1984. Alliance Against Women’s Oppression discussion papers, politics and theory readings, and materials related to Somos Hermanas and Jesse Jackson for president campaigns, 1981-1989. Linda Burnham Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00736, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

with the delegation, describing a sisterhood transcending borders. Sui elaborated: “Our struggles have many points in common,” she continued addressing reproductive injustices also experienced by U.S based Third World women: “We are subjected to population control forced sterilization and high infant mortality.”²³¹ Sui discussed the AMNLAE’s work as a women’s organization in Nicaragua and the organization’s strategy to achieve revolutionary freedom. She told the delegation: “Our strategy is to educate the entire society to understand the root of women’s oppression; that it has the same root as the oppression of the people.”²³²

AAWO activist Carmen Vazquez discussed the overall purpose of the trips and the role of U.S. based Third World women. As she discussed in an oral history, Vazquez’s experience awakened her consciousness as a political activist and her identities as a lesbian Latina woman.²³³ Vazquez also commented on her experience in Nicaragua in press release following the trip. Like the TWWA’s discussions of revolutionary womanhood transcending the borders of the United States as articulated through *Triple Jeopardy*, Vazquez’s experience in Nicaragua reflected admiration for Central American women revolutionaries and their determination in rebuilding Nicaragua with women at the center.

The most inspiring thing that I saw was the empowerment of women and their fierce determination to defend what they’ve created and at the same time to rebuild the country. The material aspects of what they are up against are so stark, but they are totally committed. They’ve approached the question of women’s liberation differently from women in North America. They’ve gone for the institutional change first. The Sandinista leadership saw that women needed to participate fully in national life, that they needed to

²³¹ Alliance Against Women’s Oppression, “Defending the Country: Proud to be Women: Conquering the Future, (Fall 1984), 2; Somos Hermanas, Press Release, October 22, 1984. Alliance Against Women’s Oppression discussion papers, politics and theory readings, and materials related to Somos Hermanas and Jesse Jackson for president campaigns, 1981-1989. Linda Burnham Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00736, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Carmen Vazquez, Interview by Kelley Anderson, May 2005. *Voices of Feminism Oral History Project*. Sophia Smith Special Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, 52.

take leadership in the barrios, government, the military, and they have taken the necessary steps to ensure that.²³⁴

Miriam Louie also commented on the trip in the same press release as Vazquez, emphasizing the importance of the trip to Nicaragua for those involved in the women's movement in the United States. She noted "It is especially critical that more people of color from the U.S. experience the Nicaraguan revolution, for the common threads of our histories and cultures allow us to tap into its lessons all the more rapidly."²³⁵ Louie and Vicki Alexander returned to Central America to visit El Salvador in November 1986 for the "In Search for Peace" Conference with Somos Hermanas. While in El Salvador, Louie and Alexander engaged with activists spanning a broad spectrum of organizations, including those advocating for human rights, the rights of political prisoners, indigenous peoples, peasants, refugees and trade unions.

Upon their return, Louie and Alexander wrote the discussion paper "Salvadoran Women: In Search of Peace and Justice" about the conference in El Salvador, centering the voices of the activists they met. The paper explored the revolutionary activism of the women, examining the gender roles played by revolutionaries and the role of the U.S. government in causing violence in Latin America. Louie and Alexander wrote:

We from Somos Hermanas gained a vivid appreciation for the conditions, sacrifices and many areas of struggle taken on by our Salvadoran sisters through the concentrated experience of the conference and visits to refugee camps, prisons and slum areas. The isolation of the Duarte regime, the regeneration of the mass movement for peace in El Salvador, and Reagan's Iran/Contra predicament now provide valuable opportunities to support our Salvadoran brothers and sisters by stopping U.S. intervention in El Salvador.²³⁶

²³⁴ Somos Hermanas, Press Release, October 22, 1984; Somos Hermanas was an opportunity for lesbian solidarity. More information on this is available, and a possible research topic for another project.

²³⁵ Somos Hermanas, Press Release, October 22, 1984.

²³⁶ Miriam Louie and Vicki Alexander, "Salvadoran Women: *In Search of Peace and Justice*. (May 1987). Alliance Against Women's Oppression discussion papers, politics and theory readings, and materials related to Somos Hermanas and Jesse Jackson for president campaigns, 1981-1989. Linda Burnham Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00736, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

Partnered with Somos Hermanas, the AAWO educated the broader women's movement in the U.S. about the role of women in the revolutionary movements and the destruction of U.S. imperialism. The AAWO's work served as a call to action for activists in the United States to support revolutionaries in El Salvador and Nicaragua and for a closer examination of Reagan era-imperialism.

The AAWO and International Women's Day Celebrations

The TWWA's coalition building effort organizing International Women's Day continued with the AAWO. The celebrations acted as a way for the organization to work with activists from across several organizations and commit to transnational direct actions. With the conservative shift, IWD days concentrated on Central America with a focus on Somos Hermanas and South Africa focusing on the anti-apartheid struggles. The AAWO spoke of the importance and power of gathering for the celebrations in a speech in 1981:

People's celebrations such as IWD are of importance to people who believe that a new world is possible. It is through people's celebrations that we can take stock of the advances we made in our struggle to transform the world and reaffirm our commitment to the work ahead. These celebrations--especially when they are collectivized--can reinspire and revitalize our people to the understanding that we do have the desire, the ability and the responsibility to make our future.²³⁷

Coinciding with the Somos Hermanas delegation, the 1984 IWD celebration focused on Central America and challenging racism, sexism, and imperialism as it manifested in the United States and Nicaragua. The AAWO used the 1984 celebration as a platform to build momentum and support for organizing around anti-imperialism in Central America and for the coalition efforts. The organization aimed to attract women from diverse backgrounds at the celebration to

²³⁷ Speech, International Women's Day, 1981, International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts. The

join the delegation to encourage coalition building across difference. Moreover, the focus on Central America provided the AAWO a platform to educate women based in the United States about U.S. imperialism in Central America.²³⁸

The IWD Celebration in 1986 included a presentation from a representative from the Children Against South African Apartheid, encouraging direct action supporting the anti-apartheid movement. The speech promoted the Dora Tamana Day Care Centre campaign supported by the AAWO. The campaign to build a daycare center in South Africa emerged from connections made at the UN Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, which AAWO members attended in 1985. The conference hosted over 14,000 women and facilitated dialogue between U.S. based women and those from across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the rest of the world.²³⁹ The representative from the organization supporting the project connected his experience as a child in the United States to South African children, stating: “Kids here need good childcare and schools so we can learn, and our mothers can work and organize. South African kids need a good education, too. Then their moms can keep organizing, and the kids will be ready to go home and run the country when it is time.”²⁴⁰ The child’s powerful speech mentioned children being arrested and killed for protesting in South Africa, expressed the right

²³⁸ Program, International Women’s Day, 1984. International Women’s Day Celebrations, 1974-1990. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts. The program covered the delegation’s trip to Nicaragua in 1984.

²³⁹ Alliance Against Women’s Oppression, “Peace is a Women’s Issue,” 1986. International Women’s Day Celebrations, 1974-1990. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

²⁴⁰ Nguyen’s Rap for International Women’s Day, 1986. International Women’s Day Celebrations, 1974-1990. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts; Also see: Alliance Against Women’s Oppression, Flyer, “Raising Children in the Tradition of Struggle, Freeing Women to Continue the Fight,” (undated). International Women’s Day Celebrations, 1974-1990. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

to education for all people, and the support for women revolutionaries in South Africa.²⁴¹ The IWD celebrations, like the delegations through Somos Hermanas, focused on the devastating effect of militarism on women and on an emphasis on women's role in advocating for peace around the world through the fight against imperialism.

Conclusion

Although the AAWO problematized the notion of organizing a Third World identity, the tenets of the organization remained, including its anti-imperialist stance and transnational activism. The AAWO's activism continued throughout the 1980s, focusing on reproductive justice through the CFIM and support for abortion access for all women, IWD celebrations, promoting the Jesse Jackson campaign, and through transnational direct actions, such as Somos Hermanas. The organization also engaged with the New Communist Movement through Line of March, a Marxist-Leninist organization, and writing for their publication, *Frontline*. The Alliance Against Women's Oppression's continual effort to work toward a more just society reflected their commitment to Third World and poor women and an attempt to work across difference.

²⁴¹ Nguyen's Rap for International Women's Day, 1986. International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

Appendix One: *Triple Jeopardy*

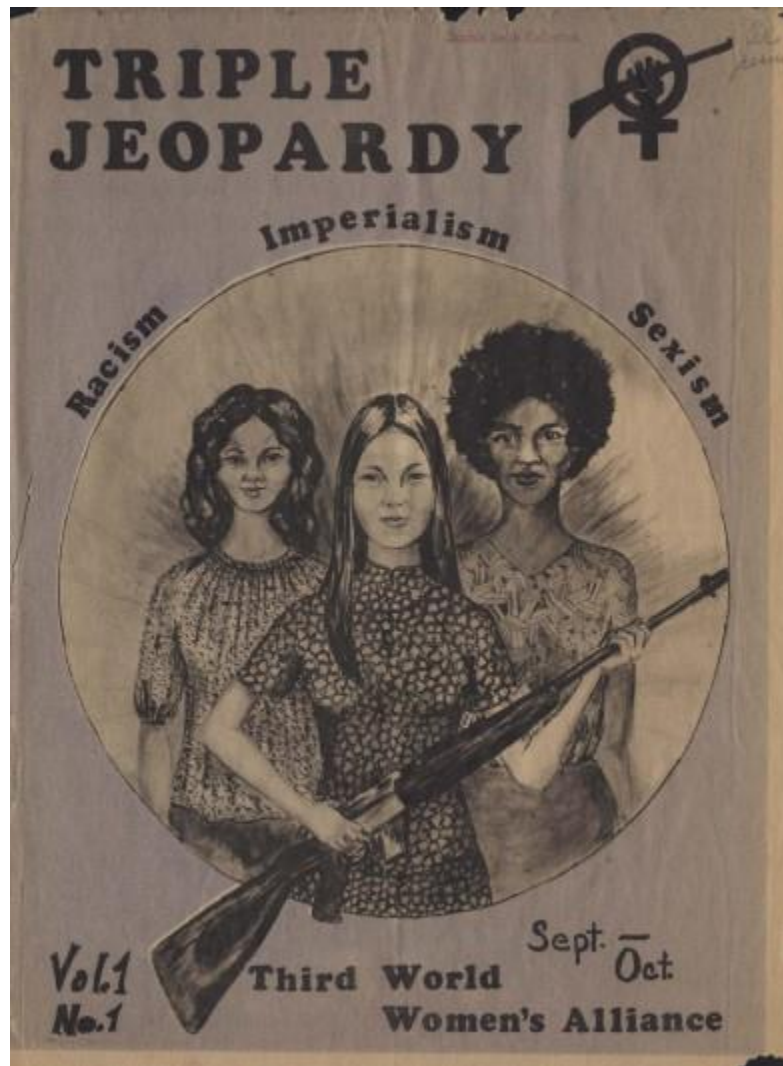


Figure One:

Third World Women's Alliance, *Triple Jeopardy* 1 no. 1 (September-October, 1971). Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-ms-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.



Figure Two: Third World Women’s Alliance, “LIVE LIKE HER, *Triple Jeopardy* 1, no. 2 (November 1971), 14. Third World Women’s Alliance, Bay Area chapter records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-ms-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

Appendix Two: International Women's Day

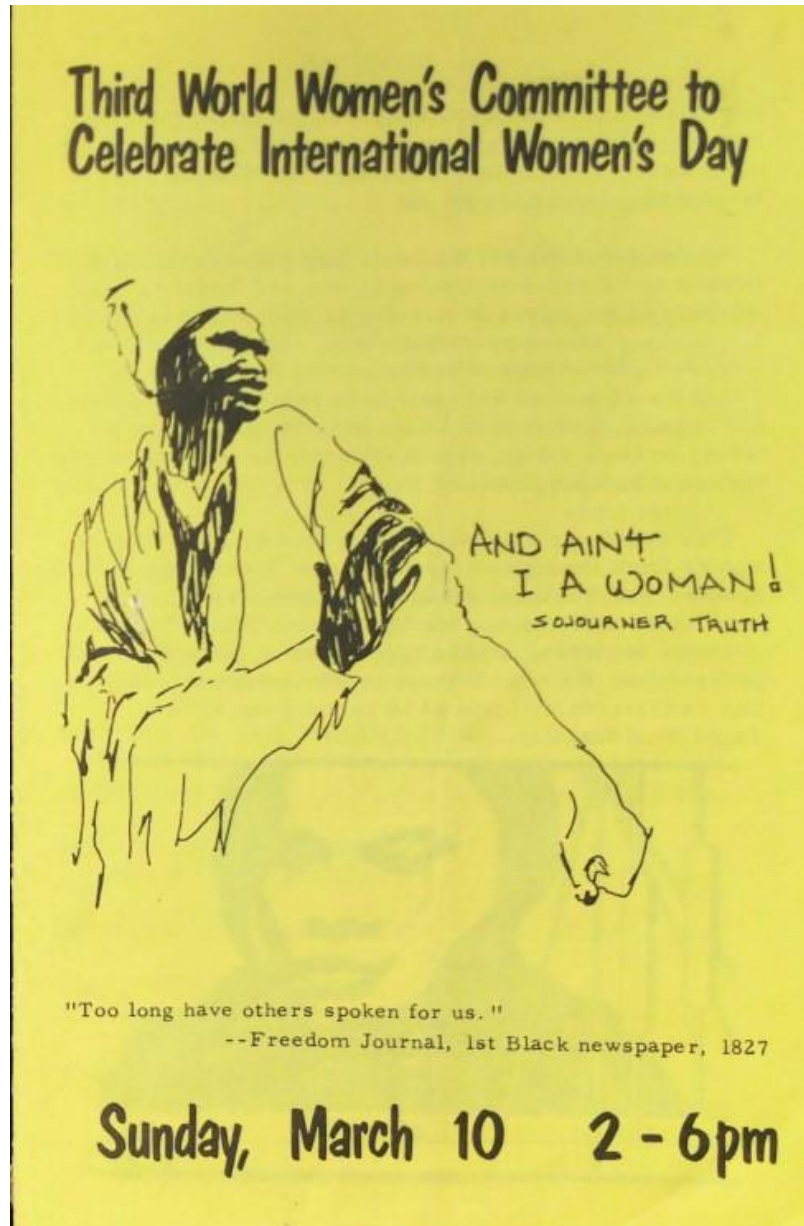



Figure One: Program Cover, International Women's Day, 1974, International Women's Day, 1974-80. Third World Women's Alliance, Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00697, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts



Figure 2: Program Cover, International Women's Day, 1984. International Women's Day Celebrations, 1974-1990. Miriam Ching Yoon Louie Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00719, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts. The program covered the delegation's trip to Nicaragua in 1984.

Appendix Three: Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality

OUR CHILDREN
ARE OUR FUTURE



Health Committee
Third World Women's Alliance
in Solidarity with

DIA DEL BARRIO
October 1, 1978
Sanborn Park
Oakland


The Health Committee of the
Third World Women's Alliance
recognizes:

- Health as a basic right of all people.
- Maternal and Infant Care as the most crucial service needed by women of Third World families.
- We are working to overcome the Maternal and Infant Care crisis in Oakland.

What is the Third World Women's Alliance?

- An activist organization of Asian, Raza and Black women committed to transforming our society.
- An organization committed to building solidarity of all working people.
- An organization committed to eradicating racism from this society.
- An organization committed to fighting for the democratic rights of women.

For more information call:
HEALTH COMMITTEE c/o
431-5266
665-4944
285-0771



OUR BABIES ARE
DYING

IN EAST OAKLAND —
26 of every 1000 babies
die before one year of age

IN PIEDMONT —
4 of every 1000 babies
die before one year of age

WHY?

Figure 1: Pamphlet, page 1, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, October 1, 1978. Third World Women's Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

There is a crisis in Maternal and Infant Care in poor, Third World communities.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF THIS CRISIS?

- high infant mortality rate
- high rate of teenage pregnancy
- premature births
- small babies
- growth retardation
- learning disabilities

The first nine months of life are critical. The health of the mother can affect the entire life of the fetus, child and adult.



WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT?

- Free and equal medical care
- Comprehensive services for mother and child
- Treatment as needed independent of income

WHY DO THIRD WORLD WOMEN RECEIVE WORSE CARE THAN OTHER WOMEN?

- Poor, cannot afford quality medical care
- Inadequate medical care when we can afford it
- Unequal health care system in our society

WHY DO THE LIVES OF THIRD WORLD WOMEN AND THEIR BABIES MEAN SO LITTLE?

- RACISM
- POOR WORKING PEOPLE HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THEIR HEALTH CARE
- INFERIOR STATUS OF WOMEN

—○—
OUR COMMUNITIES
MUST ORGANIZE
TO STOP THIS
GENOCIDE
—○—

Figure 2: Pamphlet, page 1, Coalition to Fight Infant Mortality, October 1, 1978. Third World Women's Alliance Bay Area Chapter Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts.

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