25¢

SPRING 1973 VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1

Published by WOMEN of Youth Against War & Fascism

BATTLE ACTS

"...no more traditions chains shall bind us..."

A SPECIAL ISSUE BY/ABOUT THIRD WORLD WOMEN

And We Still Keep Fighting

by BAYINNAH SHABAZZ
Albany Center for United Labor Action

We have each come out of different countries and different circumstances but have all experienced centuries of oppression because we were born nonwhite. We belong to the Third World and as such constitute the majority of the world's population, yet we and our families are dominated by a minority of the world's people. Collectively we've been maimed, killed, raped, starved, beaten, plundered, and generally exploited.

With the exception of our Native American sisters, we have all been hooked or crooked into coming to this country by sheer force or sheer necessity (usually because the colonial powers made conditions so unbearable at home). The economic system of capitalism has found it very profitable to keep us from our families and tradition. As nonwhite minorities in this country, our cultures and peoples have constantly been under attack, with an aim towards extinction.

All too well known is the history of our Native American sisters. We were once chieftans of tribal communities where people lived cooperatively with each other and the land. Once the settlers had learned the terrain and mastered survival techniques of this new territory, which they were taught by the Native Americans, they proceeded to thoroughly exterminate vast numbers of us from the face of the earth. In North and South America, the Carribeans, and the Pacific the pattern remained the same: plunder, pillage, rape, and kill. Worked till physical collapse, fed close to starvation, and clothed to exposure, our families were cleared from the land and dumped on small strips and patches of waste land called reservations, where we could be tightly supervised.

Our sisters from Africa saw their nation brought to this hemisphere as the shattered remains of mighty civilizations. We were forced not only to produce on the land but to tend and care for the families of the enslavers while our own families were cast to the wind whenever it was more profitable for the owner to sell us. As slaves our entire existence depended on using our bodies to the fullest physical extent, yet we were beaten unmercifully, ill fed and ill housed, and often left up to our own resources to handle injuries and medical ailments. Emancipation merely released us from the grips of the slave master to the grasp of the boss and the landowner who bought our labor and our lives for a pitiful wage.

Our Chinese sisters were exploited and oppressed by the feudal landlords for centuries and then by the imperialists in the eighteenth and ninteenth centuries. We watched our families tricked and brutalized into crossing the Pacific Ocean to build the railroads that would allow the ruthless business tycoons to tighten their economic vise on all oppressed nationalities and working people from "sea to shining sea." Often when the railroads' stooges could not force enough volunteers to sign up, they would go through the streets of China's cities and kidnap their victims in flour sacks to spirit them onto ships under cover of darkness.

During World War II, our Japanese sisters were relocated into barbed-wire concentration camps. Our homes and possesions were stolen from us, never to be returned.

Our Mexican sisters suffered at the hands of the Spanish conquistadors who robbed them of their homeland, and then from the Americans who conquered the Spanish. Chicana women found that tenant farming literally leased our families to the land forlife. Giving us no more rights than the landlord would allow, forcing us to follow crops from one harvest to another, we always just made enough to move on to the next farm.

Our Puerto Rican sisters are tricked into believing that the U.S. is the land of golden opportunity–an escape from the poverty and slums of their colonized homeland. But when we get here, we find ourselves dumped in ever-worsening slums, separated from our families, a source of cheap labor.

The right of Puerto Rican and Chicano people to speak our own language has never been respected in this country. Instead, we are insulted and deceived by the landlords, the bosses, the white storekeepers, the schools, and the government, who refuse

to recognize our language and customs.

As an extension of our traditional customs it has fallen on us to hold the body and spirit of the family intact against the tremendous brutality used to tear our people apart physically and emotionally. Racism was and still is used as an incredible wedge to turn husband against wife and children against parents. Thousands of our men have been killed whenever they have attempted to defend us or to organize against our exploiters. Those who are not killed are silenced through imprisonment and torture. Whenever we rise up with our brothers, we are treated no differently.

As we struggled, we watched wave after wave of European immigrants come into the country. After years of suffering and poverty, these immigrants were able to assimilate into the burgeoning industrial life of America. Once the language barrier was broken, the bosses recognized their white skin and granted them easy entry into the mainstream. Some even became bosses, cops, and slumlords.

For millions of white workers, a slice of the American dream could be theirs if they worked hard and struggled for it. And that slice seemed even bigger with someone on whom they could blame their problems. This is what the bosses told them. This is what racism means. Thus the smokescreen of racism is used to keep us divided from each other and helpless to combine forces against our common exploiters. Many workers are still duped by this trick and continue to use our families as the scapegoats for their society's ills.

Our men are usually unemployed, but when employed, they are given the hardest work at barely livable wages. As a result we have always had to work to survive, many times being the only working parent in our families. We have always been producers and not receivers of handouts. We face the same racial discrimination in employment as our men, be it in the field, the factory, or somebody else's home, any where the work is menial and lowest paid.

While we are out working during the day, our children are either left alone or if we are lucky, some other woman, perhaps a relative, looks after them. As they grow older they are placed in schools that can more aptly be called slum houses of learning. Here our cultural heritage has been denied and a culture of white superiority enforced in its place, which serves to degrade and demean them. Facing the worst teachers, poorest textbooks, and other shoddy equipment, it is by accident that the school teaches them anything.

Some in the Women's Liberation Movement would have us believe that our oppression has been caused solely as a result of our sex and not as a result of our nationalities. But how can this be when we see many of our men more oppressed than many white women? Our history as women in this country begins with bearing the unnamed children of white men who took us; and we have nursed other women's children while our own went hungry. Today when there are no jobs or child care and only Welfare to subsist on, we can be sterilized if the state so chooses–if we refuse, we can be kicked off Welfare and into the street.

We realize that only through the total liberation of our peoples will the problems we face as women be finally and totally solved. Being nonwhite, we cannot divorce any problem from that fact. Our goals are not reform but liberation. We look to the heroic liberation struggles of our sisters and brothers abroad for inspiration here at home in our internal colonies. Our models are our sisters in Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Cuba, North Korea, China, Palestine, and especially Indochina.

Our condition in this country is worsening as Nixon and his big business backers are driven to more and more desperate actions to hold on to their system. Everyday, Nixon announces another cutback in the already-meager services that our people need. At the same time, we are the first ones to be laid off, while the cost of food, clothing, housing, and utilities is soaring.

As oppressed people we know that we must continue to fight and instruct our children to heighten the struggle. It is the duty of our white sisters and co-workers to do the same. We are fighting the same oppressors. Only through the combined strength of Third World and white, women and men, old and young, can we weld a formidable fighting force that will eventually crush racism, sexism, and imperialism!

¡que

A History of Rebellion

by ALICE DIAZ, New York City YAWF Women

We've all learned in school how Christopher Columbus was sent by Spain in search of the riches of the East, and how he accidentally discovered America in 1492. On further explorations in 1493, he discovered the island of Borinquen, known today as Puerto Rico, and claimed it for Spain. As soon as Spain realized the strategic importance of Puerto Rico in relation to its colonies in North, Central, and South America, Ponce de Leon was appointed Governor of the island.

For 400 years the Spanish ruled over the natives of Puerto Rico. Columbus described the native Taine and Arawak tribes as "docile" agricultural people. But the natives of Borinquen did not accept Spanish domination docilly, and the Spaniards had to put down many uprisings. By 1830 there were over 30,000 slaves.

In 1868, a great struggle was fought in the town of Lares. Ramon Emeterio and Mariana Bracetti were leaders in what has become known as "El Grito de Lares" (Outcry of Freedom). This was a rebellion not only against slavery but for independence, as over 1,000 "jibaros" or slaves seized the town of Lares and declared it the Republic of Puerto Rico. ("Jibaro" originally meant mountain people who intermarried among the Indian, Black, and Spanish. Later the term became generally used to describe the poor mountain people.)

The jibaros fought courageously, but the rebellion was brutally suppressed. Thousands of people, along with the freedom fighters were murdered, jailed, and persecuted. Perhaps the dying cry of Venancio Roman expressed El Grito de Lares the best: "Long live the freedom of Puerto Rico. I came to Lares to fight and die. I did not come here to run."

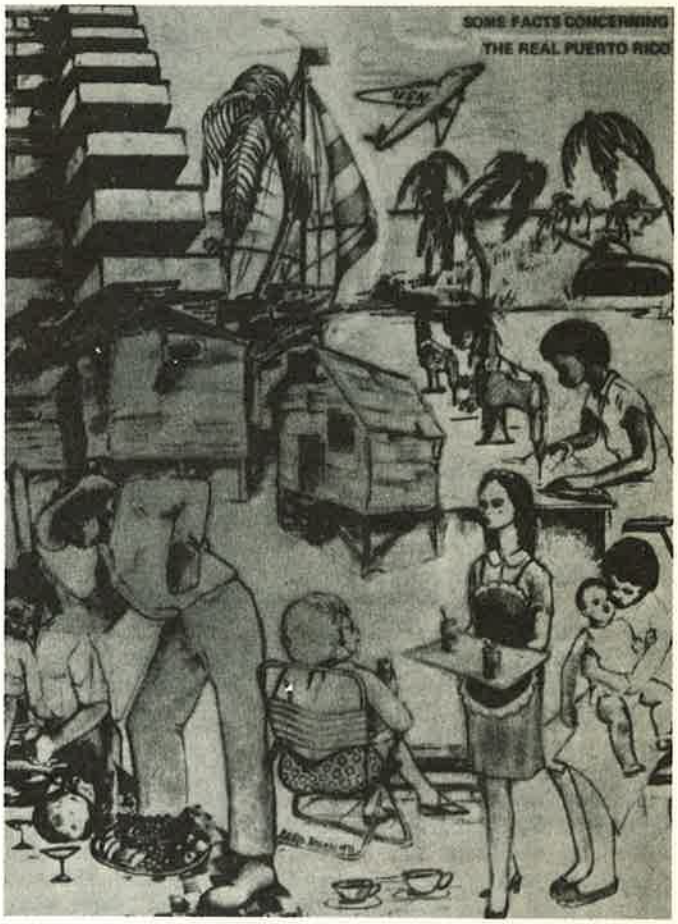
Although Lares did not gain independence, it did force the Spaniards to grant certain reforms, in particular, the abolition of slavery in 1873. By 1897, the independence movement had grown so strong and Spain's colonial strength had so weakened that Spain was forced to issue a decree giving autonomy to Puerto Rico. This decree never took effect, however, for a year later the Spanish-American war erupted and in November 1898, the Treaty of Paris was signed. Puerto Rico, along with Cuba, the Philippines, and Guam, became colonial possessions of the U.S.

The U.S. attempted to Americanize our country and destroy its language and culture by requiring that we swear loyalty to the U.S. The Puerto Rican flag could no longer be flown. English was to be taught in the schools. Puerto Rican money (which had been on a par with the dollar) was abolished, and U.S. currency was substituted on the basis of 60 U.S. cents for one peso. Thus the Puerto Rican people were robbed of 40 percent of their money.

Within two weeks of U.S. occupation, the first U.S. businessmen arrived. As early as April 1900, syndicates were organized to buy up all the sugar, tobacco, and coffee land. After six years of U.S. occupation, Samuel Gompers, an American labor leader, found that the men working in the sugar mills were being paid 40 to 50 cents a day for 15 to 16 hours of work.

Coffee had been the main crop of Puerto Rico, but the Americans saw that sugar would be more profitable; and within 30 years 50 percent of all land was converted to the sugar crop. The coffee industry had provided work for more than half the population, and with its collapse the workers fled to the cities looking for work. This was the beginning of the devastating slums which still exist to this day.

On March 2, 1917, the Jones Act forced U.S. citizenship on Puerto Ricans because our men were needed to fight in World War I. Over 20,000 men were drafted for World War I, and 200,000 for World War II, as well as many thousands to fight against our brothers and sisters in Korea and Vietnam.



Although the people of Puerto Rico are forced to fight in U.S. armies, in U.S. wars, we have no rights as a people except what the U.S. wants to give us. We don't even have a voice in Congress—only a representative who speaks there by "invitation only." We cannot make any trade agreements with other countries. Shipping, customs, air traffic, immigration, banking, radio, TV, postal communications are under the total control of the U.S.

With the Puerto Rican economy so intricately tied with the U.S. economy, the Depression of the 1930s hit Puerto Rico particularly hard. Unemployment and hunger combined with the continuing political repression made way for revolutionary independence groups to gain strength. Leading the struggle for independence was the Nationalist Party headed by Don Pedro Albizu Campos. One of his famous sayings is: "In order to take our country, they'd first have to take our lives." With these words set in the hearts of many Puerto Ricans, Don Pedro led the fight for independence.

(Continued on page 6)

viva puerto rico libre!

The Fighting Women

by NOEMI VELAZQUEZ
New York City High School YAWF

Why hasn't the Women's Liberation Movement become a strong movement among Puerto Rican women in this country and in Puerto Rico? In order to understand this, we must look at the heritage of oppression that Puerto Rican women and men have suffered with for so long. Then we can understand why the Puerto Rican woman looks more to the liberation of her people as a whole than to the liberation of herself as a woman, because she sees her problems as an integral part of her people's problems.

If we go back as far as the fifteenth century in Borinquen, we find that, unlike Europe, with its feudal class relations, the islands in the Carribean were at a lower stage of social development and still lived in an almost classless society.

Women were highly respected. The Tiano women, natives of Borinquen, wielded great authority; this was especially true of the widows of the "caciques" (male chiefs). Mothers were assisted by the fathers in bringing up children. In fact, many of the Indians were homosexuals, with the male homosexuals taking on the job of bringing up the children. This freed women to hold positions in the village that demanded a good deal of time and effort.

The invasions of the Spanish in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries completely upset these relations. The conquistadors were all men and came from a male-dominated society. By 1601, there were some 200 Spanish males in Borinquen and for the first time, the Tainas lived in constant fear of rape. Even when Spanish women came to Borinquen, the threat did not stop. Instead, a new social structure was introduced which completely wiped out the time-honored position of women in Borinquen. The Tainas were forced to become servants for the Spanish.

Along with the Spanish came Christianity, with its reactionary position on women. The Tainas were forced to pray to the carved Christian images and told that their present position in society as slaves and as women was "God's will." This was the only kind of education that the Puerto Rican people received until 1820. Even then, there were three times as many schools for boys as for girls.

The women and men of Borinquen did not accept slavery passively; they rose up many times for freedom and independence. Mariana Bracetti was just one of the women involved in the 1898 uprising, El Grito de Lares. Besides the leadership she gave to the struggle, she embroidered the banner of El Grito de Lares and for that she is known as "Brazo de Oro," or Arm of Gold. She was imprisoned for her revolutionary role in the uprising and later released under a general amnesty. She died in 1904.

Lola Rodriquez de Tio was a patriot, poetess, and author of the national anthem of Puerto Rico, "La Borinquena." She took part in two independence struggles in Puerto Rico and one in Cuba. She was exiled from Puerto Rico three times—to Caracas, to Cuba, and finally to New York where she continued the fight for independence. She spent her last years in Cuba, where she wrote many books about the struggles she fought in. She died on November 10, 1924, at the age of 81.

The people of Puerto Rico entered the twentieth century under the domination of a new foreign power. The U.S. brought industry to the island, in particular, the garment industry. From 1914 to 1918, sweatshops sprang up in the cities, especially in Mayaquez. Puerto Rican women, who left the countryside with their families hoping to find a better life in the cities, could find no work other than as washerwomen, pressers, seamstresses, and dressmakers. Many women were forced to work on a piece-work basis, sewing and embroidering while they took care of their children and their homes. In 1937, Puerto Rico exported the products of these hard-working women, 60,000 strong, to the value of $20.8 million. There were, of course, no childcare facilities.

Ana Roque de Duprey is a Puerto Rican woman who fought all her life to change the conditions of her people, and of women in particular, through education. She was born in Aguadilla in 1853 and at the age of 11, she became a teacher in one of the few schools for Puerto Ricans. She wrote geography books and 32 novels for teaching in schools.

When the women's movement started to grow in England and the U.S., Ana Roque played an important role in bringing this struggle to Puerto Rico. She founded the first Puerto Rican women's society, as well as the first women's magazine, "La Mujer del Siglo XX" (The 20th Century Woman), in 1917.

Ana Roque had many "firsts" in Puerto Rican history. She was the first woman astronomer, the first newspaper woman, the first woman to become a doctor, and the first president of the Puerto Rican Association of Women Voters, of which she was a founder. In 1929 the Puerto Rican legislature passed a law giving Puerto Rican women the right to vote. Ana was 76 then; but she never voted because she forgot to register. She died in 1933, at the age of 80.

(Continued on page 7)

— A History of Rebellion

(Continued from page 4)

Don Pedro became well known throughout the island in 1933 when he organized the gasoline consumer strike, which brought the island to a standstill. In 1934, an appeal was made to him to lead the workers on the sugar cane plantations. Over 80,000 workers went out on strike, before they were brutally forced back to work.

In December 1933-1934, the Nationalist Party held an assembly in Caguas. They demanded that the Americans leave the island immediately; if not, they would resort to armed force.

On February 23, 1935, two young patriots killed the chief of police, Frances Riggs, who had been sent to Puerto Rico to train the police in counter-insurgency. The two heroic liberation fighters were murdered in the police station. A violent wave of repression began, and Albizu Campos and other leaders were arrested on charges of "conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government in Puerto Rico." Don Pedro and seven other Nationalist Party leaders were sentenced to ten years and sent to the Atlanta Penitentiary in Georgia.

On March 21, 1937, Palm Sunday, a demonstration took place in Ponce. It was a peaceful demonstration demanding the independence of Puerto Rico and freedom for the imprisoned Nationalists. Permission was granted by the mayor of Ponce, but the American Governor, Winship, overruled the mayor and ordered the demonstration cancelled. The people did not know of the Governor's ruling as they gathered for the march. When they began moving forward, singing "La Borinqueña," the colonial police opened fire on them. Twenty died, including women and children, and over 150 were wounded. Over 1,000 patriots were thrown into jail in the period of repression that followed.

By the mid-1940s it became clear that the U.S. could not simply crush the Puerto Rican people's desire for independence. So an era of pacification was ushered in with the "Populares" led by the U.S. puppet Muñoz Marin. Marin promised the people bread, land, and liberty. He declared that if he were elected in 1948, "independence" would be just around the corner.

Albizu Campos was released from prison in 1947 and immediately began to reorganize the Nationalist Party. He advocated boycotting the upcoming elections, resisting the U.S. draft, and educating the Puerto Ricans about their real history and culture. Students at the University of Puerto Rico invited Don Pedro to speak. The rector, however, prohibited the meeting, which led to a militant four-month strike by the students. The Populares instituted military rule on the campus, and many students were harassed, attacked,and imprisoned, all because they invited Don Pedro to speak and dared to raise the Puerto Rican flag.

Although Marin won the election in 1948, it was clear that the Nationalist's program had been effective. Forty-two percent of the eligible voters did not vote and 25 percent of eligible draftees did not register. The success of the Nationalist Party terrified the U.S., and so the Marin government set out to destroy the party once and for all. The Nationalists had been planning for an uprising in 1952, but the repressive tactics of the colonial government forced them into battle sooner.

In October 1950, an armed rebellion broke out in Jayuya. The colonial police were driven out and a Republic of Puerto Rico was once again proclaimed. At the same time, armed uprisings exploded in many other towns throughout the island. After several months of vigorous fighting, hundreds of Nationalists were rounded up; many were imprisoned aad murdered.

To draw the world's attention to the crimes being committed in Puerto Rico by the U.S., two Nationalists went to Washington, D.C., with the intention of killing President Truman. They shot it out with the guards at the gates of Blair House where Truman was staying. As a result, one guard was killed, Griselio Torres died, and Collozo was wounded.

In 1954, Lolita Lebron and three other Nationalists went to the House of Representatives to execute U.S. Congressmen. They wanted to dramatize the fact that Albizu Campos was slowly being murdered in prison. (Albizu Campos died in prison in 1965 after he had been subjected to radiation treatments.)

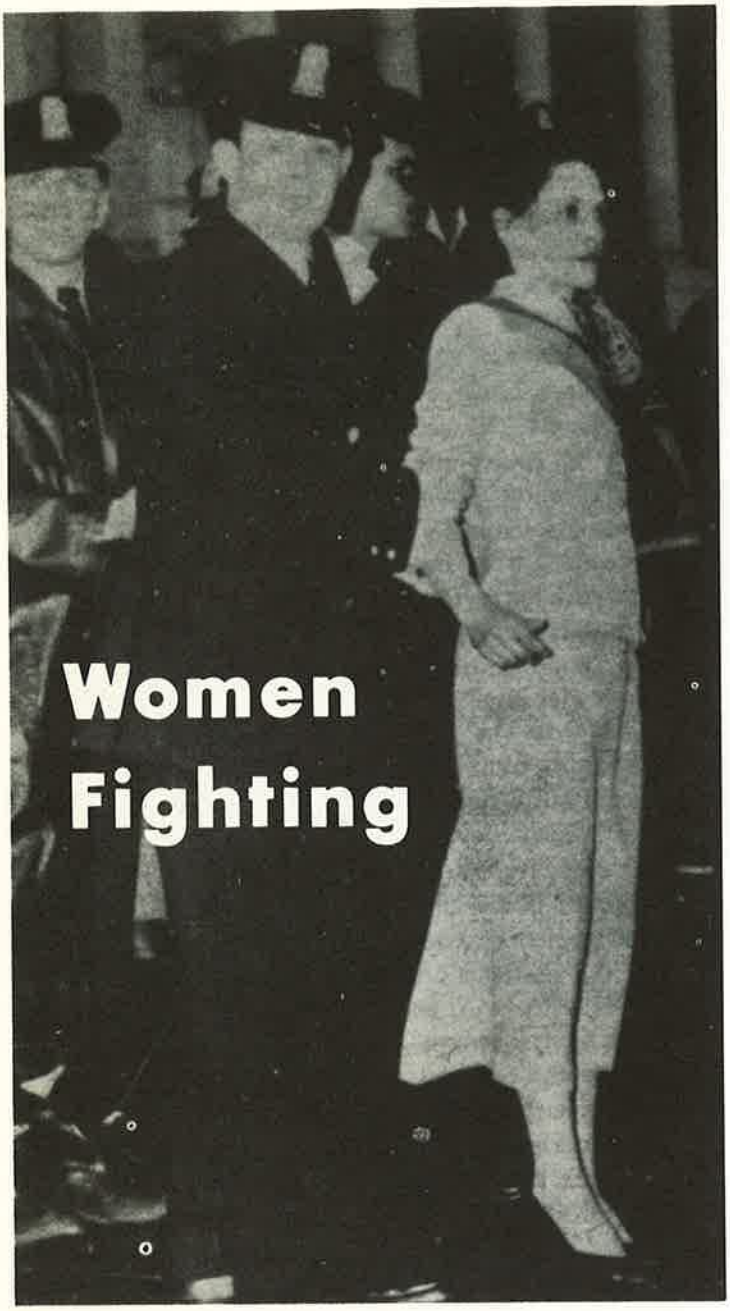
The U.S. was finally forced to give some measure of independence to Puerto Rico, but in reality it was in appearance only. In 1953, the U.S. imposed Public Law 600, creating the Commonwealth or Associated Free State of Puerto Rico. This made it legal for Puerto Ricans to raise their flag and to play their national anthem on public occasions and in the schools—but only if the U.S anthem was also played. Puerto Rico was now allowed to write its own constitution; however, U.S federal laws remained intact.

At the same time, Muñoz Marin announced "Operation Bootstrap" to "improve the standard of living." In reality, it was an open invitation to big U.S. corporations to build factories on land that was given them free of charge. As an added bonus, the U.S. corporations do not have to pay taxes on their profits for 17 years, after which time they can continue with this tax exemption by merely changing the name of the company. Today three out of four companies in Puerto Rico are owned by U.S. corporations. Operation Bootstrap has not provided jobs for our people, but has robbed us of our natural resources and made Puerto Rico more dependent on U.S. imports.

Operation Bootstrap meant that Puerto Rico was to become another playground for the rich. Tourist motels were built on our beaches,but our people are not allowed to swim there. We are employed as maids, busboys, dishwashers, and janitors.

Operation Bootstrap encouraged farmers to migrate to the U.S. to work on the farms. Many Puerto Ricans came to the U.S. in search of the "American Dream" and the "Land of Opportunity"; yet when our people got here all we found were slums, factory work, welfare, racism, degradation, and humiliation.

Traitors to our people such as Muñoz Marin and the recent Governor Ferré show us that the poor and working people can gain nothing through elections. Only through a revolutionary struggle will our people gain their independence. In the words of Don Pedro Albizu Campos, "When tyranny is the law, revolution is the order of the day."



Lolita Lebron

(Continued from page 5)

It is impossible to discuss women of Puerto Rico without giving highest praise to our sister Lolita Lebron. On March 1, 1954, she, along with three Puerto Rican brothers, unfurled the Nationalist banner and chanted "¡Que Vive Puerto Rico Libre!" as they sprayed the House of Representatives with bullets. Five Congressmen were wounded.

When Lolita Lebron was arrested, a note was found in her pocketbook: "I give my life for the liberty of my country. I take full responsibility for everything."

At that time Lolita Lebron was 34. She is presently at the Women's Federal Penitentiary in Alderson, West Virginia, where she has spent the last 19 years. Unfortunately, not too much more is known about Lolita Lebron; but she will always be remembered as a truly revolutionary woman not only by Puerto Ricans, but by all oppressed peoples.

Today in the U.S., the life of the Puerto Rican woman is not very different from that of her sister in Puerto Rico. She is still hard working, with nothing to show for it except a slum apartment, little or no food and clothing, and the constant threat of the Welfare Department. Forced to go to racist schools, Puerto Rican women are shunted into general courses, and even if they graduate, they have to take the jobs the bosses feel they are best suited for. No wonder Puerto Rican women fill the worst and lowest paying jobs and some are dragged into prostitution as a last resort to stave off desperate poverty.

Welfare is the only means of survival for the women whose husbands have left them with many children. Of course, it is necessary to understand why these men leave their families. They have come to the U.S. to have a decent life, and once here, they find it is a lie—there are not jobs and no decent living conditions. Demoralized, their pride smashed, they feel they have failed their families, and they leave. In 1968, out of every 23,000 Puerto Rican marriages, there were 18,000 divorces.

The heritage of Catholicism is a very important factor in understanding the role of women in Puerto Rican society and the "machismo," or male image, of Puerto Rican men. The Spanish used Catholicism as a restraining wall against the Puerto Rican culture, especially to undermine the women's position and to condemn revolutionary struggles. The religious Puerto Rican woman reads and believes in the teachings of the Bible. She believes in the story of Adam and Eve—that she is always evil and conniving, that man is superior because woman was created out of his rib, and that she must obey his every word. Since religion condemns struggle, she is forced to believe that if she disagrees with her husband, she must be quiet, or else she sins.

All this, of course, has a tremendously strong effect on the man, who believes that male supremacy is the wish of God.

"Machismo" is one of the trademarks of Latin culture. It's that exaggerated sense of manhood that constantly must be proven in a number of different ways.

Because of the frustrations that Puerto Rican men have gone through under the Capitalist system, a lot of them have turned their anger inward upon themselves and the women in their lives. A man says, "Well, I can't control anything else in my life, but in my home I'm gonna be king. And that means my wife does everything I say, my daughters do everything I say, my girlfriend does everything I say—and nobody dares question me." [a]

We realize that machismo has come about as a result of the social system we live under. It is because of capitalist exploitation that the Puerto Rican woman is doubly oppressed—in the home and on the job. We realize that the Puerto Rican woman will never be free until our people and country are free. How can we be liberated when our men must beg for work and receive only low-paying jobs and insults for their sweat? How can we be liberated when our children receive no education, when we know that they will grow up in the streets?

Instead, we must continue to struggle after the example of Lolita Lebron and Ana Roque and our heroic revolutionary men such as Albizu Campos and Ramon E. Betances. As we struggle alongside our brothers, we already see the chains of oppression begin to crumble. Together we must struggle as a people to win independence and freedom.

[a] **Palante**, the newspaper of the Young Lords Party.

the spirit of Lady Day

Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
black body swinging in the Southern breeze,
strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.
Pastoral scene of the gallant South,
the bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
scent of magnolia sweet and fresh,
and the sudden smell of burning flesh.
Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck,
for the rain to gather,
for the wind to suck,
for the sun to rot,
for a tree to drop,
here is a strange and bitter crop.[a]

by CLAUDETTE FURLONGE
New York City YAWF Women

These painfully graphic verses by Lewis Allan became the vehicle for a song that was Billie Holiday's biggest selling record. Whenever the famous jazz singer appeared, she always received requests for it. She wrote in her autobiography that she felt that she had to keep singing it, "because twenty years after Pop died, the things that killed him are still happening in the South." "When I sing it," she added, "it affects me so much I get sick; it takes all the strength out of me." [b]

That song and what she did with it and what she says about it begin to suggest the kind of person whom she was and why she is considered to be the greatest jazz singer who ever lived. Through the song, Billie Holiday raised an angry voice of protest against the forces of racism which permeate American society, at a time from the thirties through the fifties when such defiance was uncommon. She also set a precedent for other Black artists in the recording industry.

This same spirit of resistance can be seen in the way that she got her famous title. When she first started singing in the uptown clubs, it was common practice for the singers to pick up their tips off the tables with their thighs. Billie refused to do this. There wasn't anything "wrong with my body. I just didn't like the idea," she said. So, the other girls sarcastically referred to her as "Lady." Later, Lester Young took the last part of her name and made it Lady Day. And the name stuck because it obviously suited her. A lady, in the better sense of the word, she refused to stay in the place reserved for her color and her sex — she demanded respect.

Moreover, her unique singing style which eludes description has deeply influenced all jazz singing since her time. She infused into all her songs not only the same spirit and directness with which she lived her life, but all the feelings she had from her own bitter-sweet experience. "If you find a tune and it's got something to do with you," she wrote, "you don't have to evolve anything. You just feel it and when you sing it other people can feel something too. . . . Give me a song I can feel and it's never work. . . . When I sing them, I live them again and I love them."

A revival of interest in the life and work of Billie Holiday is due to the success of a new movie, "Lady Sings the Blues." The purportedly biographical film features one of the biggest Black superstars around, Diana Ross, who is a great entertainer and a wonderful singer in her own right. During the musical sequences of the movie, she truly seems to have captured the phrasing and some of the quality that Billie Holiday had. In a nonimitative way, but subtley combined with her own very personal and exciting talents, Diana Ross makes the musical numbers work—they are believable, magnetic, and sympathetic.

But the portrait of Billie Holiday as a woman, gleaned from the periodic dramatic scenes in the film, is, at best, that of a cocky, funny, likable kid, but, mostly, an emotional cripple who is totally dependent on the man in her life. In his absence, she is totally incapable of dealing with life, and therefore escapes by taking drugs.

The man in her life, Louis McKay, played by Billie Dee Williams, is the original knight in shining armor. Handsome by any standard, charming, gentle, always splendidly dressed, he has no vices and no problems and no brains. He never gets angry (except to grit his teeth) and he never runs out of money. He makes a lovely crutch — Diana Ross seems to be lost without him. So Lady Day is presented as a beautiful but helpless woman who just happens to have a great voice and, inspite of her sex and color of her skin, somehow becomes a great artist.

This sketchy portrayal contrasts sharply with the impressions that come out of Billie's autobiography which, although the publishers just issued a new printing with a photograph of Diana Ross on the cover, fortunately still contains Billie Holiday's real words inside.

It shows that Billie was really a very tough, perceptive, and honest woman — "a hip kitty." She had a real fighting spirit which she had to have in order to survive. Raped at the age of ten by a 40-year-old man, she was also punished by the Baltimore court and sent to a Catholic institution. Then at 14, tired of scrubbing floors, she turned to prostitution to get some of the things that she always wanted — "my first honest-to-God silk dress and a pair of spike-heeled ten-dollar patent-leather pumps." But then when she refused to go to bed with a local hustler, who had some influential ties with the cops, she was busted and sent off to Welfare Island.

After that, she wrote, "I decided I was through turning tricks as a call girl. But I had also decided I wasn't going to be anybody's damn maid. The rent always seemed to be due and it took some scuffling to keep from breaking my vows." Living in Harlem in the middle of the Depression, with her mother sick and an eviction notice hanging over their heads, Billie started singing one night out of desperation, although "I enjoyed it too much to think I could make any real money at it."

So together, Billie and her mom scratched and clawed out an existence for themselves in the early thirties. They were very close and their relationship was based on mutual respect as well as love. Her mother, Sadie (portrayed in the movie as a sympathetic but not too intelligent character), was very resourceful and, after years of domestic work, realized her dream and opened her own restaurant, "Mom's Holiday."

Curiously, the description of her real mother was closer to Diana Ross's slender physique while it was Billie who was large and robust. They were both big-hearted, but stubborn and realistic women.

When her mother died, Billie wrote, "I couldn't cry. . . . Wherever Mom was going, it couldn't be worse than what she'd known. She was through with trouble, through with heartache, and through with pain. I went back to Washington and finished the week" (performing at the Howard Theatre).

In the film, Billie crumbles emotionally after her mother's death and commits herself to a sanitorium, with Louis McKay footing the bill and giving her support. Billie felt that her drug habit had contributed to her mother's death, but she didn't try to end her addiction until a few years later. Then she paid the hospital bills herself and had the moral support of her manager, Joe Glaser, and club owner, Tony Galucci.

Although the movie version gives some sordid details of Lady Day's life, it doesn't sufficiently represent either the vitalness of the woman that enabled her to rise above the tragedies or the tremendous impact that she had on the whole music world. She was one of the first Black singers working downtown on 52 Street in the late thirties and early forties. This "Swing Street" had been off-limits to Black musicians until club owners "found they could make money off Negro artists and they couldn't afford their old prejudices."

Uptown and downtown, across the country and in Europe, she performed with all the greats—Louis Armstrong, John Hammond, Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins, and many, many others. She maintained several close relationships with her musician friends such as Benny Goodman, Lester Young, Hazel Scott, Bobby Tucker, Joe Guy, and Bernie Hanighan. Louis McKay was by no means the only man in her life, although Billie wrote that he was the most important love of her life and she had a lot of faith in him

Although the loneliness and pain that Billie felt comes through in her singing, so does the sensitivity and capacity for love that she had. During the war years, she went on USO tours, singing for the soldiers and corresponding with several of them, sending them wind-up Victrolas and a bunch of her records. While she was in federal prison on a 10-month narcotics rap, she was too depressed to sing, but she would steal food for the other girls who would get the "chucks" when they were kicking their dope habit.

She expressed a great deal of concern for other women in the music business and would try to help them out in any way that she could because "It's the easiest thing in the world to say, 'Every broad for herself.' Saying it and acting that way is one thing that's kept some of us behind the eight ball where we've been living for a hundred years."

According to the movie, a player of the white band she is touring with introduces Billie to hard drugs and helps her onto the "horse." In her autobiography, she wrote about getting involved with heroin through the influence of her first husband, Jimmy Moore. The movie version casts Billie as a vulnerable, malleable object for the band's (white society's) exploitation and makes the white man the bad guy. At best the movie version is symbolic, and scenes of racism are only subtle flashes in a personal tragedy—a condemnation of racism never comes through loud and clear.

According to the book, however, the white band with which she went on the road, Artie Shaw's, did not necessarily accept the racism that they encountered. They fought every mile of the way and turned out any place that didn't treat Lady Day right.

Of course, racism was something Billie had to deal with all her life, and even when she became famous, she summed it up as follows: "You can be up to your boobies in white satin, with gardenias in your hair and no sugar cane for miles but you can still be working on a plantation."

She resented the insults directed at her when she was seen with white musicians. Ironically, when she was working with the Count Basie band, the manager of the theater told her that she was too light and the audience might think she was white. They gave her special dark grease paint to put on because it would never do for a white singer to appear with an all-Black band. "It's like they say, there's no damn business like show business. You had to smile to keep from throwing up."

To stay at the top, a singer had to play the New York clubs, but after her time in federal prison she couldn't get a New York

(Continued on page 26)

PSC Provides Family Visits for Prisoners

by MICHELLE MITCHELL
New York City Prisoners Solidarity Committee

It is usually very late into the evening when you will see families, men, women, and small children, mounting into a large bus. It is the beginning of a trip that is not always a happy one, but one of much deep concern and heartache. The trip is to a prison; and the bus is bringing the relatives to their loved ones.

This is what the Prisoners Solidarity Committee (PSC) is all about. The PSC was born out of the Auburn Prison rebellion in November 1970, when our incarcerated brothers fought against the brutal and inhumane treatment and conditions of the concentration camp. At that time, the Auburn prisoners sent out a call for help, and Youth Against War & Facism answered that call with immediate support. The PSC was set up to wage legal and political battles on behalf of prisoners.

Since that time, PSC branches have been established in 15 cities, including Houston, Chicago, Milwaukee (see page 17), Detroit, Wilmington, and Richmond. In all the cities, there have been demonstrations to support prison rebellions and actions to demand decent prison conditions.

When the prisoners at Lewisberg Federal Penitentiary went on strike in February 1973, word was gotten to the PSC. Immediately a demonstration was held despite a freezing snow storm so that the brothers and the prison administration would know that they were no longer isolated. The PSC then waged a legal offensive on behalf of the prisoners, bringing charges against the prison administration.

As more and more prisoners heard of the early work of the PSC they wrote us—how a visit from the outside would lift everybody's spirits. But since most prisons are located in isolated, rural areas far from New York City and since many of the brothers come from NYC, transportation is too expensive for their families to make the trip easily. Some of the brothers had been incarcerated for years without ever having a visitor.

Our first trips to Auburn and other upstate prisons were difficult. Sometimes we couldn't afford a bus and had to borrow all the cars we could find. Despite all the problems, no one ever thought of not going. The importance of these trips to the prisoners and their families is too great. Recently, the Broadway United Church has agreed to pay for the buses while the PSC makes the arrangements. We now have regular trips from New York City to Attica, Auburn, Comstock, Green Haven, and Clinton-Danemora prisons.

Usually it is a very solemn atmosphere when the relatives start arriving for the bus trip. Some are afraid of seeing their sons, brothers, cousins, fathers, and husbands existing in the way the prisons force them to live. Some are very pessimistic because they do not even know if the relative is still alive or well. Others are happy because the times to go are far and few for them.

When I go on a trip, my first and most important job is to comfort the relatives in any way that I can. Often they just need someone to talk to—a way to relieve their anxieties. Often they look toward us as guides. You get to have a very strong feeling of what they are feeling inside and you know that someday things will be better and there will be no need of these trips.

The women find it much easier to talk to another Black woman. We talk about the injustices against you if you are Black or Puerto Rican or any minority. We talk about the racism on the job, in housing, in the schools, even in the supermarkets, because we live in Harlem, the South Bronx, or Bed-Stuy.

I feel one of the most important aspects of the trip is for all the relatives to get in to see their loved ones. Many times the prison officials play games with the relatives, making them go through more unnecessary changes, and making them feel as if they aren't supposed to be there. They do everything they can to make the inmates feel as if they are all alone—just shut away with no one caring what happens. That's why the prison hacks are so afraid of us, why they hate to see us come in large groups—they know we're giving the brothers so much strength to keep fighting.

At the end of the trip there are sighs of relief, sorrow, promise. Those who had good trips are waiting anxiously for the next one; others are very hesitant about going again. The PSC considers the relatives' trips to the prisons as stepping stones in helping the brothers and sisters fight to tear the prisons down.

penpals

SHABBAR J.T. EJANI P.O. Box 20321, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, would like to have pen pals from all over the world but most preferable U.S.A., Pakistan and the Arab Republic of Egypt. Hobbies: collecting stamps, cricket and swimming.

SHAUQAT RHEMAN (13), P.O. Box 470, Mbeya, Tanzania would like to have pen pals from all over the world. Interests: collecting stamps, coins and actors' snaps.

ANIS THAWER (14), P.O. Box 620 Morogoro, Tanzania would like to have pen pals from all over the world. Hobbies: collecting coins and pictures of actresses.

HARISH KANABAR (14), P.O. Box 64, Mwanza, Tanzania, would like pen pals from all over the world. Hobbies: collecting stamps and coins and correspondence.

Reprinted from the "Children's Corner" of the Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, **Daily News**, Feb. 18, 1973, p. 12

The Little Doctor

Little Ping Ping is playing doctor,
Younger sister comes carrying her doll
To find out what's wrong.

The little doctor
Listens to Dolly's lungs,
Listens to her heart;
Then smiles as she says:
"Dolly is perfectly well,
She doesn't need either medicine or injections."
Younger sister is happy to hear this.

Little Ping Ping is playing doctor,
Younger brother comes bringing Teddy Bear for a check.
The little doctor examines the backs of Teddy's paws
And then the inside, smiles and says:
"This Teddy of yours is not sick at all,
But he's certainly dirty.
You should take good care of him and keep him clean."

Little Ping Ping is playing doctor,
She's going to answer a call.
She finds her patient is a rocking horse,
Lying on the ground, moaning.
"What's the matter, Rocking Horse?"
The patient switches his tail as though to say:
"Children are so rough,
They've broken off my hind leg,
And left me here like this."

The little doctor fetches hammer and nails
And starts working—**ding, ding, dong, dong.**
"Rocking Horse, now your leg's mended.
Please trot on it and let me see?"

The rocking horse cuts a caper and begins to run.
The children all shout: "It's well, it's well!"
And praise the little doctor for her skill.

The Little Doctor with text by Chang Mao-chiu and illustrated by Yang Wen-hsiu was published by Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1966, and reprinted here.

"AND I WOULD CARRY YOU WITH ME"

Hakim Sulayman Gahtan, an activist veteran in the American Servicemen's Union and a BattleActs reader, volunteered to interview his mother, Mrs. Leither Jones, last August as a special feature story for BattleActs. The following interview particularly about Mrs. Jones' experiences as a Black working woman was transcribed by Beth Marino.

Hakim: Maybe you can talk a little about your experiences down South. When you were down there, generally what type of work did you do when you were younger?
Mrs. Jones: Well, when I was 7 or 8 years old on the farm—my father's farm was a small farm and we was a small family—we horse farmed. And, of course, I was the oldest one, and the only one for some time to do the work. I plowed in the field, with my father. I did all types of work on the farm except cutting the wheat. I never did learn to use a cradle (scythe). Then I left from there and went in the kitchen—in the white folk's kitchen—cooking, doing their washing, laundry, and things like that. I think it was about 50 cents a day and even less, and I did that on up until the year that I came North. That's what I was doing when I came North. I got a raise. I was getting $5 a week.
Hakim: This was doing like domestic work?
Mrs. Jones: Doing domestic work and all the housework, cooking—the whole thing. After leaving from there, why, I came North and I started in on $8 a week here.
Hakim: Where exactly did you work here in Elmira, New York?
Mrs. Jones: In Elmira Heights, for a doctor named Nathan Cohen, and I lived on the premises in the home with them. I did his office work and also his housework. . . . That must've been about 1938.
Hakim: How long did you work there?
Mrs. Jones: Oh, a year and a half. We thought it was a permanent home—the way we were treated, especially by his wife. She was nice, in a way. She fixed me up like she wanted me to look. Of course, when I couldn't do what she wanted me to do, why, then, things wasn't right.
Hakim: Did they ever give you a vacation?
Mrs. Jones: Yes, they give me a vacation. Two weeks' vacation. I went back to my home to visit my parents every year. . . .

I married on that job. During the time that I met your father, Solomon Jones,
Hakim: Was that for GE?
Mrs. Jones: That was for GE. And then we got married and he still continually worked there. Of course, you was born in 1946. He worked there until he passed when you were 4½ years old.
Hakim: What was the cause of his death?
Mrs. Jones: It was sclerosis of the liver. That's what it was called. He was working in the foundry then and he was working with the sand, and a lot of the men would get a lot of sand and grit on their liver.
Hakim: So, he died as a result of unsafe working conditions. The workers in the foundry were predominantly Black—if I remember correctly.
Mrs. Jones: Well, they were more working on that, but there were more Blacks on what they called the shake-out. He went from that to the molder. But all of that fume and pollution—of sand and dust breathing in—you inhaled so much of that through your lungs—a great portion of that lasted so many years that it settled on your lungs.
Hakim: Did you ever get any type of compensation for his death from the GE company or anyone else?
Mrs. Jones: Yes, he had insurance—Blue Cross and Blue Shield that GE had them all take out.

Hakim: By the way, do you have any idea what the wage was at the time he was working there?
Mrs. Jones: Now, as near as I can recollect, I think it was about $3. It was either $2.50 or $3.50 an hour. . . .

Yes, we were just getting by anyway. As long as it was just he and I, we did fairly well. We didn't have too much expenses and, of course, after you was born, I was taking you many days on the job with me. I didn't lose too much work. I had to carry the work on just the same. And I would carry you with me.
Hakim: This was when you worked for the Horrigan's?
Mrs. Jones: Yes.
Hakim: How much did they pay you per week?
Mrs. Jones: Well, at that time, I started off at 85 cents an hour and I worked with them for about 15 or 16 years. At the end, I was only getting $1.25.
Hakim: Now, in the 15 or 16 years that you worked for the Horrigan's, did they ever give you a vacation?
Mrs. Jones: They would call it a—yes—I would get a vacation. I would get a week off.
Hakim: Once a year?
Mrs. Jones: Once a year. Yeah, once a year.
Hakim: What type of work did you do there?
Mrs. Jones: Well, domestic work—washing, ironing, not too much cooking, just mostly house cleaning, and heavy work like that—scrubbing, things like that.
Hakim: Usually, what were your work hours per day?
Mrs. Jones: From nine to three.
Hakim: Now, exactly what happened as far as your work with the Horrigan's? Did you leave the job yourself or did they ask you to leave? What was the situation?
Mrs. Jones: No, I left myself. You see, after she passed, I worked for the old man, for the husband. And of course, all the kids were gone, and after he had moved out of the home residence, I just upped and quit. It was just a little bit inconvenient. Whenever he wanted to rest, I couldn't work. And unlessen I worked, I didn't get my pay for going over there. Somedays I'd go and he'd be there in bed, and there'd be nothing to do, so I'd turn around and go back.
Hakim: Now, what generally was the state of your health? Do you think that maybe this type of work was having any affect upon your health at all?
Mrs. Jones: Well, according to my doctor's statement, that was part of my starting with high blood pressure. When it first started, I went to the doctor's because I didn't believe it. Of course, I wasn't near as heavy as I am now. But I went to the second one and he said the same thing. So I was taking treatments for years, and I kept working.

Hakim: What type of work did you do after you left the Horrigan's?

Mrs. Jones: I was doing janitor work when I quit the Horrigan's. I went back to work for the Phillips. I was working for both of them at the same time.

Hakim: How much did you make per hour working down at the janitor services?

Mrs. Jones: At the Phillips, $1.50. The janitor thing was $1.85.

Hakim: Was that sufficient enough for the needs that you and I had?

Mrs. Jones: It wasn't exactly sufficient for myself, but I always made sacrifices in trying to bring you up and to get what you needed. There was lots of things that I needed myself, but I was trying to give you sufficient things that you needed. Also, I knew how I had to come up myself, how I did without things that I needed and my parents wasn't able to get for me. I don't say that you had maybe everything, but I did see that you got by. And if I had to do without things myself, that's the way it went.

After your father passed, then I bought myself a home so that we would have a place—so that I wouldn't have to be moving around with you. Whenever the man say move, you gotta move. That's their place. But if you got a place of your own, it means I didn't have to move.

But it was such a struggle with nobody but myself. I thought I had help and could make it, but I didn't do it. There was too many disadvantages being happened to me. When you think you got friends, you don't have friends.

And then another thing—that man I bought this place from—he was a great man until he got as much money out of it that he wanted. Then he had to take it back.

Hakim: How did he get the house back from you?

Mrs. Jones: Well, through tax.

Hakim: In other words, he found some sort of loophole which he could more or less use to swindle you right out of the house.

Mrs. Jones: It was on the land contract, and I didn't know that. You get a house on land contract and they can take it away mostly anytime that they want to—after they get what they want out of it.

Hakim: In other words, this was never explained to you.

Mrs. Jones: Not before. Not until afterwards.

Hakim: I'd like to try to bring things up to date a little. . . . You're a welfare recipient now. What is it like to be on welfare here in Elmira? What kind of changes, if any, do the people put you through down at the welfare office?

Mrs. Jones: Well, there have been quite a few changes—quite a few hassles that you goes through down there. This is the first time I've ever been on welfare, but it's because of my health. Of course, when I went on it, that was when I went into the hospital for my first operation. Then after that the doctor stopped me from working. After a year's time, the welfare writes a letter to me to go back to work. Well, I showed this letter to my doctor, and he fixed that right then. He wrote a letter to them and he told them: "No work and don't look for me and don't call for me." Of course, he was taking care of me cause he knew what was the trouble. . . .

All the while before, when I was working—for 5 or 6 years I was working and I had this blood pressure—the doctor never said, "Stop work," even though I was going every two weeks. He never said, "Take a rest. Take a vacation. I'll see you in two weeks."

Well, that goes on for so many years. That was a great hassle there. After I got on Medicaid, then I got with my other doctor.

Hakim: So, the first doctor was really taking as much money as he could.

Mrs. Jones: As long as he could get his money, that was all right. Even when I was in an accident and was going down four times a week, he still—after two weeks—he told the people that I could go to work. I was working and going to him at the same time.

Hakim: What kind of experiences have you had down at the welfare office? What did welfare do after the flood last summer?

Mrs. Jones: Well, they'll tell you one thing and do another. I go down for my stamps the first of August and there's a sign up there saying, "No More Free Stamps." The welfare man says that they're gonna send the stamps out in a few days because they had these made in Rochester and their machines here was broke down during the flood. And here it is, almost the last of August, and here they go sending two cards a month and they want us to pay for them. Stamps was supposed to be free for all the flood victims—all that was in the flood area.

Hakim: They were trying to make you pay for them?

Mrs. Jones: Right.

Hakim: What is it like living here in Jones Court? What generally has been the story with the housing authority?

Mrs. Jones: Well, they've had quite a hassle over the rent. They've gone from low to high. They raise you everytime they think that you try to get an extra penny—they raise you up. For myself, I started off at $48 a month when I moved in, and it went up to $90 when I went on welfare. Now it's $93. Some is paying $150.

Hakim: What benefits are you really eligible for at this time or do you think you will be eligible for? Like Social Security?

Mrs. Jones: Well, yes, I been eligible for Social Security. Even my doctor told me some time ago that I should start to working on it. But not by myself. Not to go down and hassle with them alone. . . . My doctor said, and also several other of my friends

(Continued on page 26)

Diary of a Telep

by LUELLA SMITH, New York City Center for United Labor Acti

Luella Smith (left) and Kathi Dennis being interviewed about the operators. *See article, page 22.*

May 5, 1969

I have found myself in a peculiar situation and feel that it would be in my best interest to put some of what is happening down in writing, as it is happening.

This morning I reported to work at Bell Telephone. I was excited, of course, almost as excited as when I started to work on my first job. My enthusiasm soon wore off when I met my new supervisor. She was a dumpy, little brunette, approaching middle age. She motioned for me to have a seat near her desk while she continued her telephone conversation.

I grew a little impatient sitting there doing nothing, as I was most anxious to get started. I couldn't help but overhear her conversation. She was talking to her mother, telling her why she would be late getting home that night. They went on and on, for over fifteen minutes as I thumbed through my new employees' manual.

She finished talking at last and then began introducing me to my new co-workers. They barely looked up from their work, mumbling an almost inaudible "Hi." None of them shook my extended hand, and none of them returned the smile that I had on my Black face. She showed me my desk, then excused herself almost immediately, leaving me with nothing to do. She went from desk to desk chatting with the other women, who were white and had Irish surnames as she had.

I cleaned out the desk. The empty potato chip bags, dried orange peelings, and candy bar wrappers told me something about the previous occupant.

I waited. She still didn't approach my desk, so I approached her and asked for an assignment. She told me she was busy getting an assignment out that was past the deadline, and suggested that I ask the other women if they had something for me to do.

I spent the rest of the day xeroxing materials for the other women and running errands. I left my first day exhausted from all the leg work — and disenchanted.

May 6, 1969

My first observation this morning was that two of the seven desks were empty. Later on during the day I overheard the supervisor telling one of the other workers that both women called in and gave her an ultimatum: Get rid of me or they would not return to work. I was flabbergasted.

To hear something like that in the year 1969, not in the Deep South, but on Madison Avenue, New York City, was too much! I felt like walking out. I was sure that she made the statement loud enough for me to hear — intentionally! I decided then that I would stay if for no more reason than to give them a few lessons on intercultural exchanges.

I found a procedure manual and some blank forms, the same as the other women were using. I followed the manual, and was able to complete two of the assignments that they worked on using the calculator.

At the end of the day, I showed my supervisor what I had completed. She said that I wouldn't be working on those for some time. When I asked her what I would be doing, she shrugged her shoulders and did not answer.

May 7, 1969

The two women who did not come to work yesterday did not come today either, so my supervisor was forced to give me something to do. I did my assignment of adding simple columns that the other women didn't feel like doing and did more xeroxing. The other women went to lunch together in shifts. They did not ask me to go with them, and I did not suggest it either. I brought my lunch to work with me and studied the procedure manual.

Two of them came back from lunch with green and yellow Irish flags. They handed them out to everyone but me. Some of them put them in flower pots on their desks; others had little stands; all of them placed the flags in conspicuous spots. I ignored them as best I could, and kept on working. Five o'clock finally came and I left.

May 8, 1969

This morning I walked in with the largest Liberation flag that I could find on 125th Street. It was 3 feet by 5 feet. I was anxious to show that I was as proud of what I am as they were. Everyone stopped working when I entered the floor, even the women and men in the other sections. There was some snickering.

I walked straight to my desk, and placed the flag under the glass top, between the wood and the glass. I ignored the mumbling about me, and went straight to the supervisor's desk for my assignment. "What kind of flag is that," she asked, pointing to my desk. "It's a Liberation flag, green for the land, red for the blood, and black for the color. What kind of flag is that?" I asked her, pointing to the flag on her desk.

She did not answer, but gave me an assignment that was different from the others. It was more difficult, it was

ephone Worker

or Action

out the AT&T $38 million settlement that totally ignores the

challenging, and that's just the way I wanted it. After all, I came there to learn and make a living — not to make friends. I do my work every day and leave. No one has made any attempt to make conversation with me, and I have not warmed up to them. The two women who disappeared after my first day have never come back.

May 12, 1969

A new woman reported to work today. She is Black. She seemed a little shy and timid. My first thought was, "Now I have someone to go to lunch with." She was given the same type of greeting that I received. When lunch time came, the supervisor sent us on different shifts. After lunch I gave her the procedure manual to study at home. She whispered to me, "I've been told to stay away from you. They say you're a militant." We both laughed.

After five, we walked to the subway together. I asked her why they called me a militant. She said, "I don't know. I guess it's because your flag is bigger than theirs." We waved goodbye, and caught different trains home.

May 15, 1969

The replacement for the second woman who left came today. She is a Puerto Rican. I almost leaped out of my seat when I saw her. I was so happy to see her.

Two other Black women came up yesterday, and were sent back to the Personnel Office. The supervisor called Personnel after they left, and asked, "Who else do you have?" and "What is her name?" I saw her face flush when she realized that I was looking her dead in the mouth.

The floor that I work on has over fifty workers, some management (all white), and craft workers. Since I came less than ten days ago, one Puerto Rican and two Black workers have been hired. Now the work force in my section is "sufficiently integrated" — three minority, three whites, and one white supervisor.

I helped the new women as much as I could, seeing that the supervisor avoided them the same as she did me. The white women kept to themselves. They made digs from time to time, which we ignored.

June 5, 1969

Today Anna, my Puerto Rican co-worker, left. She worked half of the day, went to lunch, and didn't return. She told me that she had spent her lunch hours looking for another job, and had found one. She encouraged us to leave also. We told her that we would miss her, but we expressed our determination to stay.

A conspiracy has developed in the office. The white women are completing the assignments that provide an opportunity for upgrading and eventual promotion. The supervisor gives them these assignments.

June 6, 1969

I spoke to my supervisor today, and asked her if my work was satisfactory. She answered, "Yes." I asked her, then, if she would allow me to work on the type of forms that the white women were doing.

She became flustered and asked me if I thought that she was giving preferential treatment to the other women. I told her that I wouldn't think so if she gave us the same work to do.

I asked her why she gave all of the overtime to the white women. She told me that if I didn't like the job I could leave, that there were hundreds of women downstairs in the personnel office begging for jobs.

I went to the union office on my lunch hour. Once there I found that there was no union steward in my section. The union officials were anxious to get a steward in that section. Before I left, I was designated as the job steward, armed with my copy of the contract and my steward's button in my purse.

June 10, 1969

This morning I invited my supervisor to attend a union grievance conference with me. She looked up at me from her desk, and stared at my steward's button that I was proudly wearing on my left nipple. "Of course," she responded, faking a smile.

We went into a conference room with another management representative and my division steward, and I presented her with the following grievances:

1. Nonequalization of overtime.
2. Failure to post assignment sheets on the bulletin board.
3. Falsification of records.
4. Conduct unbecoming of management (for example, picking her nose, with no handkerchief).
5. Failure to provide space on the bulletin board for union announcements.

(Continued on page 23)

Why don't they teach us?

By JEANETTE COUSAR
With Donna Lazarus
New York City YAWF Women

My school's name is Rothschild Junior High School. It's in Brooklyn, New York. I don't advise you to go there, but if you did, you'd see what I'm talking about.

We don't learn nothing in that school. The teachers say the students are stupid. I've been called stupid too. How can we learn when they don't want to teach us? In other schools they learn subjects that we don't get. How are we going to make it? They only tell us what we already know.

I try to talk to the teachers. I ask, "Why don't we learn something else?" But when we come back from vacation, it's still the same stuff as before.

The majority of the teachers are racist; they always say it's our fault. They never want to sit down and talk with the students. They never want to hear the students' side of the story. When we try to tell them something, they change the subject. When we ask a teacher, "How come we don't get Black History?" He says, "I don't know." We don't get algebra or biology either. We know they're learning more in the white schools. How can we learn when they don't want to teach us?

Some of these teachers at Rothschild are really kooked-up. Ask a question and they have to sit down and think about it. They don't know what they're teaching us! Sometimes we're learning baby words over and over. They don't give us hard things that we can try to figure out ourselves. Sometimes I want to curse them, but cursing won't get me no where. All I can do is think it out myself, get books for myself someplace, and study them.

They think they're so slick, pat you on the head, and say, "You're bright, you're bright," but you're still not learning anything. I just want to say, "Get the fuck out of my face."

But most of the time they call us stupid. I don't think anyone has the right to call someone else stupid. That's why the students turn around and do foul things to a teacher, call them names, too, because they don't like being called stupid. We don't like to be treated as if we are stupid. I think the students have a right to call the teachers names. One girl who hangs with us, Elaine, is Puerto Rican. She yells back at the teachers because she doesn't like to be yelled at. She says, "If I don't like my own mother yelling at me, what am I going to take it from a teacher for?"

There are lots of little things done just to harass us. For example, they serve lunch in the school. It's a good enough lunch that changes a couple days a week, but most everybody eats lunch out of the school. Inside the teachers are on your backs, looking over your shoulder. The same ones who call you stupid are breathing down your necks when you're trying to eat lunch.

And then there's a simple thing like a bus pass. My mother had to lie to get me one. Because we don't live a mile from school, she said I have asthma. It's a freezing, long, cold walk in the winter. Most people lie to get one. It's a shame the way some kids have to sneak on the back of the bus to get a ride to school. It should be free to everyone.

Worst of all is that the school is dangerous and students get hurt. I asked the teacher for a pass to go to the bathroom. When I was in the hall, someone felt my behind. I slapped his face and his brother hit me, and I ran to my class. I had a knife in my pocket—in that school you have to carry something to protect yourself with. Later I saw them again, but someone had swiped my knife and he and his brother had one. They cut me on my face and hand, and I had to go to the hospital. My mother tried to transfer me out of the school but they wouldn't let me change to another one. The principal told my mother the boy was mentally disturbed and that he wouldn't be in the school any more. But when I came back, I saw him there.

Even the teachers feel like they can hit us and push us

around. They should keep their hands off the kids. They aren't our mothers and fathers.

One day I was walking in the halls without a pass because someone had hit me with chalk. The teacher said I could clean it off, but didn't give me a pass. On the fourth floor another teacher asked to see the pass. I smiled and said, "You make me laugh." He pushed me and said, "Go to your class." I said, "Keep your hands off me," and he said, "Go to your class. I didn't want to get dirty anyway."

I started crying and went to tell the principal. She said I shouldn't have been walking in the halls without a pass. I figure she should have talked to the teacher. He shouldn't have said that to me. He shouldn't have had his hands on me. The teachers say not to touch them. I think we're entitled to the same respect.

But the main respect they don't give us is that they don't teach us. I asked the math teacher not to go so fast, and he said, "I don't have time for slow people." I asked him, "Well, what are you here for then?"

Another example is in Language Arts. We do journals everyday. The teacher says, "We're doing a journal today class." "Do a journal," "do a journal"—I get tired of that! All you do is write a funny-time little story that don't mean shit—on Success or My Secret Hideaway—who's got any place to hide anyway? They know we come from homes full up and crowded. Most of the time we're home, we're just thinking about how there's not enough to eat.

That's why some people are dropping out now. They can't take this because it doesn't mean anything.

The teachers stand up in front of us and curse. "I'm getting tired of this shit," they yell at us. They don't think we're tired of it? We only know, now that we're grown-up, how to run around. That's all we do because from back in the third grade they gave us blocks to play with, and said we could run around instead of teaching us reading and arithmetic. They'd given up on us back then and they're complaining now!

They give us passing marks just to pass us up to another grade and get rid of us. Who's learned a damn thing? It's just a shame what we have to suffer with, especially when you're Black or Puerto Rican.

It's really hard on mothers who didn't finish school. I feel sorry for them. When their kids come and ask them something, they don't know what to say, because they didn't learn it. These mothers didn't have a chance even to finish junior high school.

When we apply for transfer to the all-white high schools, or after we leave junior high, the all-white schools don't accept us. They're the schools where you can learn more. The only ones that will take us are already overcrowded. What choice do we have but just to go to another dumpy school again?

I wouldn't mind going to an all-white school, only I wouldn't want anyone calling me names. I don't hate anyone. That's what I like about my mother—she didn't bring us up to hate anyone. Only if somebody hates me, then I'll hate them. I don't like to fight neither. But if somebody hits me, I'll hit them back. There's a white girl in the school, Lucy. She's all right. She wanted to hang with us. She's real nice and everybody liked her, but her mother said she couldn't be with us. What's wrong with these mothers who won't let their children alone? My mother says I do things because I see the other kids do them. But I do them because I'm me and I do something because I want to do it.

A lot of students might be confused now, but I think all of us know that learning is our right and the schools and teachers had best shape up and do right by us. Give us some education. That's what we're there for.

The people freed Benita Orozco!

The Chicana leader of the Milwaukee Prisoners Solidarity Committee (PSC), Benita Orozco, was singled out by a high-ranking police official during a PSC demonstration against the Attica massacre in September 1971 and charged with battery against a "peace" officer. The police wanted to silence her because she is fighting for the rights of poor and working people inside and outside the prisons.

The PSC, YAWF, and the Women's Defense Committee demonstrated at every court appearance and did massive leafleting during her trial. Everyday last October the courtroom was filled with her supporters, young and old, from the Black, Latin, Native American, and white working class communities. After six hours of deliberation last October, the all-white, middle-aged jury of six men and six women voted to acquit Benita on the first vote. Now Benita is free to continue the struggle to end once and for all the brutal oppression and exploitation inside the prisons.

By DOMALI TIAFA New York City High School YAWF

Suppose someone tried to throw you out of a building and into the street when you had a legitimate appointment there? Suppose they wouldn't even listen to your explanation of why you had every right to be there? Suppose they attacked you as some kind of intruder and had you arrested by the police, who wouldn't listen to you either? To top it off, if you were Black or Puerto Rican, wouldn't you fight for your rights to correct the injustice that had been inflicted upon you?

Well, that's what happened to a friend of mine, Noemi Velazquez. She is a 16-year-old Puerto Rican student at Washington Irving High School. She also belongs to Youth Against War & Fascism (YAWF) and the Prisoners Solidarity Committee (PSC). Washington Irving has mainly Third World students, with a small percentage of whites, and the students are oppressed and harassed during their stay there. I ought to know. I go there too.

On May 2, 1972, Noemi was invited to speak about the PSC at the Afro-American Students Association at Forest Hills High School. That school is located in a community where racist hate had been whipped up for months over a proposed low-income housing unit. So when Noemi got there, she was immediately stopped by the white teacher's aide, Mrs. Scher, stationed at the door. Scher didn't pay any attention to Noemi's story. She used the attack-first, ask-questions-later tactic on Noemi because she is Puerto Rican. She had Noemi charged with assault and trespassing, despite the fact that Scher had done the assaulting and Noemi had a legitimate reason for being in the school.

Noemi had to go to court several times. Each time a delegation of supporters from YAWF and the PSC went with her. Each time we demonstrated outside the courthouse to expose the racist frameup of our sister Noemi.

At the trial it was obvious that the judge was more interested in the testimony of the teacher's aide, who was constantly prompted by her husband, a policeman. Even though her testimony was contradictory, it must have carried more weight with the judge than the strong testimony of a Puerto Rican student, because he found Noemi guilty of assault and dropped the trespassing charges.

Why was Noemi found guilty? It's not just coincidence that it happened when the school administration is trying to get more cops and teachers' aides in the schools to patrol the halls and keep the students in line. Instead of answering Black and Puerto Rican students' demands for better schools, the authorities are using a case like Noemi's as an excuse to turn the schools more and more into concentration camps. After hundreds of years of slavery, lynchings, and burning crosses, we have to say "no" to racism.

Noemi faced a possible 6 months' term in a concentration camp for "juveniles." On January 29, the day of Noemi's sentencing, in just the nastiest weather ever in New York City, over 75 people turned out to demonstrate in defense and support of Noemi. We filled the courtroom, and the people there knew it was a political case.

Noemi didn't get a jail term. She is free on probation, from 6 months up to 3 years. I guess the courts had to back down a little in the face of people in action really caring about each other.

Noemi is free. Now it is up to us to win more victories in the struggle against racism.

Buffalo

Struggle for Black Schools

The following is an interview with Bill Gaitor, a representative of the BUILD Organization, a Black community group, which has set up the BUILD Academy in order to gain control of the schools in their community. Janet Williams of Buffalo YAWF Women conducted the interview.

Battle Acts: Why do you feel it is important for the Black community to run its own schools?

Bill Gaitor: I think it is important because education is very, very relevant to the struggle that Blacks and minorities are waging to gain a status of equality. Since education is so vital to our struggle, I don't believe that it can be entrusted to the hands of other people—particularly white, middle class people, or the kind of people we usually get in the roles of teachers who traditionally support the system as it is.

Battle Acts: Can I get a little foundation on the school, like when it was established?

Bill Gaitor: The Academy was started in 1969, in September. At that time it was prekindergarten through fourth grade. The memorandum that was signed between the Board of Education of the State Teachers College of Buffalo and BUILD called for a continuous development of the BUILD Academy through the twelfth grade, so that we have expanded one grade each year. The purpose of the Academy is to demonstrate that Black kids, in the proper setting and the proper kind of curriculum and instruction, could learn; and we set out to prove that. We expected to take 5 years in developing the BUILD Academy concept, which is based on a program called responsive environment. This means that the major responsibility of the teacher is to respond to the child and to build a program around him according to his needs.

Battle Acts: When you first started to set up this school, did you encounter much opposition from the public school system officials because you were trying to get a better education for your Black students?

Bill Gaitor: There's a little history behind the start of the BUILD Academy. We had been discussing with the Board of Education for approximately one year setting up some kind of an academy as a demonstration or project to raise the level of achievement of Black students. It was only after January 1969, when the Board of Education transferred a teacher out of Public School 48 in the middle of the year—she was transferred because it had become known that she had been working with the BUILD Organization—that the issue was raised to a level that the Academy became possible.

We were able to get parents to agree that if this teacher was transferred, they would take their children out of that school and educate them, themselves. We conveyed this to the Board, and they ignored the parents who wanted the teacher to remain.

Of course, we pulled a class out and put the class in the church. We kept the class there a couple of weeks and forced the Board to negotiate with us. . . . There was a great deal of opposition, but we felt we had trapped the Board of Education—they either had to deal with us or take us to court, and we thought we were on solid grounds. We won, and we got the Academy started.

As late as September 1972, when it came time to expand the Academy to another building, we had to do essentially the same thing. . . .

There's been a great deal of racist opposition. By that I mean, there are white people in this community who know that they have been able to maintain an element of control and keep the Black community in a colony state because they do control education. By doing that, they control the entire lives of Black people. So they have fought it because they do not want to see the BUILD Organization create a situation where Blacks gain control of their schools.

Battle Acts: What do you feel the conditions were prior to your establishing the BUILD Academy for Black students?

Bill Gaitor: Well, basically the way they are in most schools now, where teachers and administrators feel that the schools are theirs. The problem is that they are not a part of the community that the children come from. They are not familiar with their backgrounds and the problems. Teaching the child is merely a job that starts at 8:30 in the morning and ends at 3:30 in the afternoon. In most instances, we found that teachers and administrators were actually afraid of the children they were supposed to be teaching. Being so unfamiliar with Black culture, and strongly indoctrinated with their own culture, they forced Black kids to deny their own culture and to deny being Black, which created inferiority complexes right from jump street in the minds of students that there was something inherently wrong with them. That, of course, created a problem in terms of those students being able to learn.

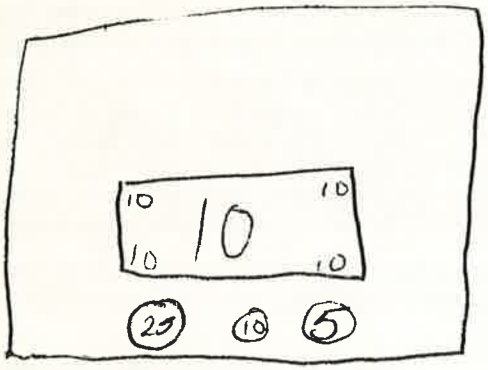
Battle Acts: Do you feel the BUILD Academy is the alternative to the public school systems?

Bill Gaitor: . . .We know that those students who have only been exposed to the Academy are achieving quite well. Preliminary tests show that they are achieving 10 to 12 months above the national norm. But those children who have been exposed to other systems are not achieving as well. But, preliminary tests also indicate that they are achieving no lower than 6 to 7 months

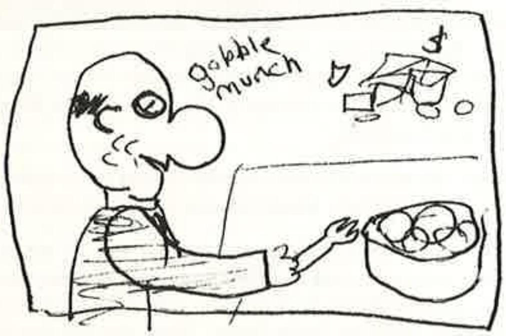
(Continued on page 21)

THE FOOD CYCLE

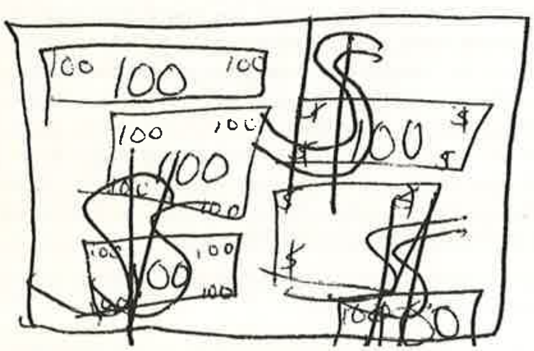
The food is grown by a worker.



The worker gets paid very little for his work.



The boss does not grow the food but he eats it.



The boss gets paid a lot for selling the food.

Kimberly Lombardo

Operation Food Price Rollback:

PROJECT EQUAL PRICING

By New York City Women United for Action

Fed up with rising food prices? Everywhere Women United for Action goes we meet shoppers who tell us how glad they are that someone is finally doing something about it. Women United for Action is working to unite thousands of women to fight not only for lower food prices, but eventually against other injustices in this society that particularly affect women.

Several months ago, we launched our first campaign: Operation Food Price Rollback (OFPRB), which calls for a 25 percent rollback of all food prices. Across the nation women heeded the call, and many OFPRB's sprang up as women began to get together in their local neighborhoods.

In August and then again in October, Women United took the issue of rising food prices directly to Washington. On October 14, over 100 women from ten cities across the country picketed outside the White House to demand that Nixon issue an executive order to roll back food prices 25 percent. The demonstration came about after the National Association of Food Chains cancelled a meeting between executives from 20 food chains and Women United, which they had agreed to in August.

"Prices rise, profits soar, we won't take it any more" and "Milk up, meat up, bread up, we're fed up" were our slogans. After picketing for an hour, we marched to a local supermarket where we had a rally and got signatures on our petitions.

Those who couldn't afford to go all the way to Washington had local demonstrations. Women in Houston, for example, put the rollback demand to the test. They went inside a supermarket and marked down many food prices with a stamp that read "25 percent off." Before the management caught on to what was happening, many shoppers had passed through the check-out counters where the clerks honored the rollback prices.

After doing research on food prices and the food industry, we have found many concrete examples of how agribusiness and government work hand in hand to rob the shopper and increase their profits. For instance, is it any wonder that the President's Price Commission granted Pillsbury an 11 percent increase on their flour products during the so-called Phase 2 price and wage freeze? Not when you know that the Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, is on the Pillsbury Board of Directors!

Women United for Action tries to expose such double dealings whenever an opportunity presents itself. So, when the head of the Price Commission, C. Jackson Grayson, came to New York City to address a meeting of security analysts, we picketed outside the building. Meanwhile, some of us, dressed up to pass as analysts, went inside. After he began speaking we pelted him with Pillsbury flour and denounced him as

"Pillsbury's doughboy." Just recently in Chicago, Women United demonstrated against an appearance of the Secretary of Agriculture. Since Pillsbury offices are located in Chicago, Women United is proposing a boycott of Pillsbury flour there.

At the New York Thanksgiving Day parade, Women United raised the issue of rising food prices with our own turkey float and a big banner reading "High food prices gobble up our wages." We decided we could not let this event proceed as usual, since it marked the start of the holiday buying season, which is especially hard on poor and working people. Many thousands of parade-watchers cheered us on as we marched for ten blocks in front of Micky Mouse—before Macy's called the cops to escort us away!

In Seattle, Rochester, and Detroit, to name a few cities, women are going to local supermarkets and talking with shoppers. When the weather got too cold to continue outside, we stamped pressure-sensitive labels with slogans reading "Fight for 25 percent off" and "This food is spoiled" and stuck them all over items in the stores. In this way we have been able to get our message across despite the cold.

Because of such actions, Women United has begun to receive some publicity and attention, and as a result our numbers are swelling. At meetings we exchange ideas and discuss future plans to broaden the rollback campaign. We feel a definite need to focus the campaign on one issue so we can win concrete and immediate victories. This is why we are launching Project Equal Pricing (PEP), which will fight the practice of price discrimination in different neighborhoods.

Every shopper knows that prices vary in different "links" of the same food chain and that they are higher in the poor and oppressed communities. But we need actual evidence for this. So, we have designed a shopping list form which shoppers can fill out and mail in. We have begun distributing thousands of shopping lists all over New York City and already the response has been good. Several community groups have joined with us on this project. We are also investigating the possibility of a legal case on this issue.

This struggle is but a step the strengthen our fight for the overall objective of a 25 percent rollback in all food prices. For further information or for the address of the Women United chapter near you, contact Women United for Action, 58 West 25 Street, New York, N.Y. 10010, (212) 989-1252.

Buffalo Struggle

(Continued from page 19)

below the national norm, which I don't think is a failure when you consider that the whole Buffalo school system is second from the bottom in this state, in terms of achievement.

The BUILD Academy is only a baby in terms of alternatives. . . . But, I think that we have started in the right direction and that if we're able to gain some form of community control on a much broader basis, then the program of the Academy will be much more successful. We still have to carry on too many battles just to maintain what we have at the Academy, so that we're not free to do a lot of things we would like to do. . . .

Battle Acts: Can you tell me what type of courses are taught at the school?

Bill Gaitor: The normal type of courses. The Academy is running prekindergarten through sixth grade on Clinton Street and we have a seventh grade class at Woodlawn Junior High School. But beyond teaching the reading, writing, and arithmetic stuff, I feel that our kids have to be taught a great deal more about who they are, where they should be, and what it's going to take to get them there. That's what is not being taught to Black kids in other schools in the city.

Battle Acts: So in other words, you're teaching them about the struggle, that it must be waged, and how to go about waging it?

Bill Gaitor: That has to be part of a student's education. Since an education is supposedly to prepare a person to deal with life, certainly you would have to teach him about the struggle, particularly if he is a minority student.

Battle Acts: How do you decide what students are acceptable to the Academy; is it open?

Bill Gaitor: Yes, it's open. We started with 390 students. About 250 came from the neighborhood around the school. The others were bused in. After the second year we discovered we had 400 to 500 students on the waiting list. A lot of people were saying that it was unfair that only those students in the area got an opportunity. So we started a lottery type of system. That's what we're working under now. . . .

Battle Acts: Tell me a little about the Freedom School and the differences between the BUILD Academy and the Freedom School.

Bill Gaitor: . . .The weekend before school was to open last September, we had contacted the parents and told them that since the Board had made no provisions to deal with the sixth-grade class that was graduating from the Academy and we had been negotiating with them for about 8 months for that purpose, we were going to provide a learning situation in this building. Of course, the operation quickly picked up the name Freedom School. . . .

After the Board had exhausted all of their bullying tactics to frighten us or force us to let the children go on to some other situation, they finally sat down and negotiated with us on sending the kids into Woodlawn Junior High School (two classrooms at this school are being used for the seventh grade of the BUILD Academy). . . .

Battle Acts: What about future gains, say, in expanding the Academy to accept more students?

Bill Gaitor: I think if we talk about future gains it must be in connection with the BUILD Academy concept. . . . If test results that we hope to get by the end of this year indicate that we're doing a good job academically, then the battle to expand won't be so difficult.

We're Fighting AT&T

by KATHI DENNIS
New York City Center for United Labor Action

In April of 1972 the New York City Women of the Center for United Labor Action took on the struggle against AT&T. I was one of those women. I am a service representative for New York Telephone, and after only 5 months on the job, I could no longer stand the racist harassment.

We started by petitioning for a field hearing in New York in the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission's (EEOC) case against AT&T, which charged them with nationwide racism and sexual discrimination. We won the hearings and the right to be a legal party of interest. I testified in the May hearings as well as acting as counsel for C.U.L.A.

When I took the stand I was not sure exactly what to say, but as I started to speak, it became easy to tell of the discriminatory practices of AT&T. All the workers felt the same way I did about the treatment we received. And all the workers told the same story: They told how the worst and lowest paying job is that of an operator and that 95 percent of the operators are Black or Latin. They told that only about 3 percent of the higher paying craft jobs are held by women. They told about being constantly hounded by the supervisors; about how degrading it was not to speak Spanish; and about how they had to listen to obscene and racist customers. The workers exposed the absentee control program which allows you no sick days and which is used in every way, shape, and form to harass women who try to stand up for their rights off the job. Women also told of the callous way women with children are treated: not only is no childcare provided, but if their children get ill, women are told, "We pay you to come to work—not to nurse your child." These complaints and many more came pouring out of the mouths of the workers whom AT&T had managed to silence for so long with threats of firing. When those May hearings finally ended, the workers had presented a very good case indeed. (For a detailed account, see **Battle Acts**, Vol. 2, No. 4.)

More hearings were scheduled for October in Washington, D.C. so that AT&T could answer the workers' accusations. In the meantime AT&T tried many maneuvers to keep up its image in the eye of the public. For example, when I walked into my office last September, I was informed that New York Telephone alone was going to fire 8,000 workers, and the rest of the Bell System would follow suit. I was also told that no hiring would be done for the next year and maybe more. Yet two days later the newspapers announced that AT&T had agreed to an "Affirmative Action Plan" with the Department of Labor in which it promised to open up 50,000 new jobs over a 15-month period starting on Oct. 15, 1972. All these jobs were to go exclusively to Black, Latin, and women workers.

However, as of October 31, when we went into the hearing room no operators had been notified that transfers could be had, no one had been transferred, and offices were being closed and workers were getting fired left and right.

In my opening statement for C.U.L.A., I outlined how the harassment on the job had been stepped up and that the Affirmative Action Plan was nothing but a farce.

The AT&T vice presidents proceeded to parade onto the stand with their facts, figures, and versions of how fair AT&T was to its workers and how fair they were in their hiring policies. Predictably, the most meaningful and important facts were always missing!

On cross-examination, we who have to work for them everyday took the pack of lies that they were telling and mopped the floor with them. We showed how they had lied to the workers with the Affirmative Action Plan by proving that no tests for transfers had ever been given. We told how the harassment of the workers had increased.

After 4 days of listening to their lies and seeing the kind of people who run the lives of so many others, I could not face going back to work. I could not walk in and smile at the managers, while hating them and everything that they stood for. So I took a leave of absence. During that leave I worked full time—struggling against AT&T's rate hikes, working with the unions to demand better working conditions, and getting ready for the next round of EEOC hearings.

On Jan. 18, 1973, the EEOC announced a deal with AT&T to drop its case if AT&T would grant $38 million in compensation to the workers.

At first glance this looks like a great deal, but on close examination we find that its implementation is all too familiar. Out of the 200,000 workers employed by AT&T only about 15,000 would receive any compensation at all. The operators would receive nothing. Absentee control would stay in effect, and no provisions would be made for childcare. Most of the money would go to women in **management** and women transferred into craft jobs. But since nothing has been done to change the hiring policies, and no provisions have been made to shift women into the better paying craft jobs, most of the money will probably never be given out at all. Black and Latin craftmen were to receive deserved raises and promotions, but AT&T was forced to admit it had a very hard time finding any Black and Latin craftsmen to give this money to. As in all the deals that AT&T makes, the people who needed it most will not receive anything at all.

In reply to this sellout, C.U.L.A. called a press conference to air our views on the agreement. We also filed a brief stating why the case should not be dropped and that AT&T should be made to pay for all the pain it continues to cause its workers.

Our struggle against AT&T is far from ended. We have taken up a major campaign against New York Telephone's proposed rate hikes, and were a legal party of interest at the February 20 Public Service Commission hearing in New York City. AT&T wants to charge 20 cents for a public phone call as well as charge for additional message units for local calls over 3 minutes.

AT&T will go to any lengths to shut the mouths of its workers, but thousands of us will not be quieted. We have opened our mouths for the first time and we are letting out a scream, a scream which will not stop until AT&T recognizes the needs of the people who work for it and the people whom it is supposed to serve.

—Diary of a Telephone Worker

(Continued from page 15)

6. Failure to give safety lectures.
7. Failure to give 15-minute breaks twice a day.
8. Storage of explosive materials in a working area.
9. Failure to give on-the-job training.
10. Union busting.

There were at least ten others that have slipped my mind.

She accepted the grievances, denied all of them, and ran off somewhere to cry.

June 11, 1969

Before I took off my coat this morning, I went straight to the bulletin board, and made note that the overtime and assignment sheets had been posted. However, they had not been calculated retroactively for the past six months as required by the contract.

I made a deal with the supervisor: if she let me work on the assignments that the other women were doing, then she could wait until the end of the week to have the required calculations completed. "Oh, sure, that will be fine with me," she said.

June 12, 1969

I am almost sorry that I became a steward now. That shit supervisor won't stay away from my desk.

June 16, 1969

Today I took a census of the union membership of the clerks on my floor. There were five members and 62 nonunion workers. I made a sign that looked like a barometer and placed a caption at the top, encouraging other workers to join. This was quickly snatched off by management.

The members became angry about this, so we decided to have a meeting to discuss this and also ways to increase our size. We requested the use of a conference room that was used for Spanish classes and meetings of various employee clubs. The secretary responsible for the conference room gave us the use of the room on June 27, after she checked her calendar to see that it wasn't booked. I posted an announcement of the meeting.

June 27, 1969

On the lunch hour, management refused to let us use the conference room for a union meeting, after it had been promised to us. The meeting was interrupted by management after we had sent out for our lunches, and we were asked to leave. We refused to leave until we were reimbursed for our wasted lunch.

The membership has grown from five to fifteen. We will have to find another place to meet.

Seated at counsel table for C.U.L.A. is (from the left) Luella Smith, Gavrielle Gemma, Kathi Dennis, and Claudette Furlonge.

June 29, 1969

I was talking on the phone, taking a report from one of the districts today, when my supervisor struck me on the shoulder from behind, causing me to drop the phone to the floor. I picked up the phone and told the party that I would call him back.

I turned in my chair and saw her standing there waiting for me to hit her back. It took every fiber of my being for me to maintain my control. I began trembling with anger, and tears wouldn't stop streaming down my face.

She stood there, pointing her finger in my face, screaming at me (not realizing how close she had come to death): "You can't discuss union business on company time."

All the other workers stopped what they were doing and began gathering around my desk to see what I was going to do.

I picked up the phone and called the police, and told them that I had been assaulted. They came. And, of course, they refused to arrest her. My co-workers were too afraid for their jobs to speak up on my behalf.

I went to the bathroom and vomited. Then I left early and went to the doctor when I got uptown. I promised myself that one way or another, I would make her sorry for what she did many times before she passed into hell.

I was glad that I controlled myself, that I didn't kill her. My son who is five is the only reason why I didn't.

September 17, 1969

The inevitable finally happened. I was suspended today on a trumped-up charge of refusing to do an assignment. This happens to be my first day back to work after filing charges of racial discrimination against the Telephone Company.

Not surprisingly the Human Rights Commission sided with the Telephone Company and failed to see the racial discrimination in Luella's case; she is appealing the decision to a higher body. As an activist with the Center for United Labor Action, she is also fighting AT&T with the operators.

VIVA LA HUELGA

by GERRI PRESSNALL
Houston Center for United Labor Action

New York City has long been considered the center of the American garment industry, but El Paso is now bidding to be first in this field. For years manufacturers have been moving their plants from "Fun City" to "Sun City" for the simple reason that the workers are paid less there. There are approximately 20,000 clothing workers in El Paso, only 2,000 of whom are organized. It's the biggest pool of unorganized clothing workers in this country. And Willie Farah, founder and owner of the Farah Slacks empire, sees it as his duty to keep it that way.

Farah Slacks is the largest manufacturer of men's and boys' slacks in this country. They employ over 10,000 workers in seven plants in Texas and one in New Mexico. Ninety-five percent of the workers are Chicano; 85 percent are women. The strike against Farah began in the first week of May when several workers were fired for legal union organizing activities. The strike spread quickly. One of the three plants in San Anto is still completely shut down.

Farah fanned the flames by calling the strikers "filth" and saying that the union had done him a "favor by cleaning the troublemakers out." Since this remark, Willie has hired a public relations director to give him the image of a "benevolent" employer who has been wronged by having such statements attributed to him. One of his new tactics has been to run full page ads in the local papers, signed by "8,000 happy Farah workers." But the tiny print revealed 2,310 names, many of

whom wrote letters and made phone calls to protest their names being used in this way.

Another approach has been to emphasize the benefits that Farah workers are supposed to have. Farah provides health insurance—at a fee to the employees. There is no maternity leave and the benefits are $14 a day, when the cost of a room alone is $35 to $40. Then there is the so-called savings plan. The company urges the workers to save, but they get no interest whatsoever. The company has been sued for that practice by a number of workers who believe their interest is going to Farah.

Then there is the so-called retirement plan—$20 a month. In the 50 years of the company, only one person has retired—Willie's old nurse. Most important is that there is no redress for their grievances, at all. A worker can't complain without reprisal—usually losing the job. Perhaps the only true statement that Farah has made is that he provides free coffee and sweet rolls. But the strikers are willing to give him back his coffee for a decent, living wage.

No one, however, can tell the story as well as the women themselves. Eighteen-year-old Rosa Flores is one of several hundred workers in San Anto who have been on the street striking for 9 months. Poverty is the reason that Rosa had to grow up fast. Her father died just before she turned 16; and since then, she's been the family's main breadwinner.

That's Rosa in the photo on the strike poster. This photo was taken in El Paso during a union organizing parade shortly before the workers in San Anto walked out. The strong refrain of slogans of the marchers had built up behind her as she walked along. Caught in the emotional wave of the moment, Rosa raised her fist and shouted "Viva la huelga!" It was at that moment that the camera caught her and recorded it for all to see and understand.

Rosa Flores knows what she wants. She tells about it in direct language. "I hope we all go back in—with the union of course. It'll be hard, but we can do it."

Rosa was one of the first Farah workers in San Anto to sign a union card—and one of the first to wear an organizing committee button while at work.

She had been employed at Farah for about a year, cutting back pockets on pants. She was earning $1.80 an hour and producing about 60 bundles a day. Then management insisted that she raise her production. She was assured that she would get extra pay if she produced more. She went from 60 to 70, then to 80 and 85 bundles a day. And then finally she hit 90 bundles. But there was no pay raise.

"So then I just let drop because I never got my raise," Rosa added. "That started me thinking. I didn't like what I saw in the shop. They treated people like machines. They pushed you around to get you to produce more. And they didn't even pay you for it."

The union, she said, gives her a sense of belonging and helping. "At least, I've got someone to help me out. I can't do it alone."

Rosa described what it was like to be terribly poor: "It makes you angry, very angry and you have to hate. Because other people above you treat you like you're less. Sometimes, they try to put me down because of my lack of education or because I'm a Chicana. I know that if the union goes in, we'll all better ourselves. We'll have more wages, more rights, more security—a lot of things we've never had before."

Another woman, Manuela Reyes, who is 22 years old and has worked at Farah since she was 16, started at $1.60 an hour and was making $1.90 an hour when she walked out. She couldn't get a raise.

One of Manuela's, and many women's, complaints was the lack of dignity. "At the break is the only time you can go to the bathroom. If you have to go to the bathroom when it is not the break, the supervisor sees you and he waits for you outside. When you come out, he asks you why you went in and what took you so long? Perhaps it is your period and you have to mess with the machine and you are tired and you must change clothes, or perhaps it is diarrhea you have. But it is embarrassing to say this to the supervisor, so you just say that you don't know why it took so long and look dumb."

The case against the company is truly staggering. And it has continued to grow since the strike began. The company has tried every slimy tactic to break the strength of the strikers—injunctions, armed guards, unmuzzled dogs. Farah's mother even ran over one of the women picketers with her car.

But the strike continues to grow and the strength of the national boycott against Farah, and in support of the strikers, continues to hurt Farah where he feels—in his profit column. The company's annual report discloses that it lost $8.3 million in the past fiscal year compared with a profit for $6 million in the preceding year. Sales were down $10 million.

The strikers are determined not to go back without a union. For them it's a question of survival.

C.U.L.A. was the first to hold demonstrations in Houston at the Foley's Department Stores in support of the Farah workers last October. As a result, the local AFL-CIO asked C.U.L.A. to join the local Farah Boycott Committee. Other C.U.L.A. locals, including Oneonta, New York, and New York City, have also held demonstrations infrontof local department stores to protest the sale of Farah pants.

editors: SUE DAVIS
EMILY HANLON
technical editor:
MEIRA POMERANTZ
assisting technical editors:
SHARON EOLIS
BETH MARINO
LALLAN SCHOENSTEIN
staff: YAWF WOMEN
Editorial office:
46 West 21 st ST.
N.Y.,N.Y.
Telephone: (212) 255—0352
cover by Beverly

spirit of lady day

(Continued from page 9)

City license to sing any place liquor was served. For the last 12 years of her life, after a standing ovation in Carnegie Hall and several successful European tours, Billie was effectively banned from making it big.

Although she tried to kick her drug habit, the pressures were ultimately too much for this sensitive Black woman artist. Narcotics agents constantly harassed her and put her in prison several more times. Even as she lay on her deathbed, the police placed her under arrest and posted two guards at the door, barring visitors.

She died at the age of 44 in June 1959, but as Ralph Gleason put it, "She had been dying by inches for years. . . . Drink, dope, dissipation were really only the superficial aspects of what was wrong with her. She suffered from an incurable disease—being born black in a white society wherein she could never be but partially accepted."[c]

The makers of the film chose to gloss over this important point and ignored the opportunity to present an accurate story of a Black artist in a racist society. Instead, they chose to turn out yet another Hollywood "love story"—above average and very entertaining, but showing Billie as little more than what Nat Hentoff described as a "latter day Camille of the jazz grottoes who lit her candle at both ends."[d]

Because of its orientation, the film made me realize the glaring difference between Black people in a film and what a Black film could be. Moreover, it shows another Black star in another time giving a glamorous, but shallow, rendition of the Black artist in a white society, with a muddled version of what that all means.

If it's the real Billie Holiday you want, listen to her sing—and remember how hard she had to fight to make it.

[a]In the movie, the phrase referring to swinging Black bodies is omitted.

[b]Billie's father, a famous jazz guitarist, died because no hospital in a Texas town would admit him for treatment until it was too late.

[c]Liner notes of record album, **The Golden Years of Billie Holiday** (Columbia).

[d]**The New York Times Magazine**, Dec. 24, 1972.

coming this spring.....

A new phamplet on
"WORKING WOMEN"

which can be ordered from the Women of the Center for United Labor Action, 167 West 21 St., New York, N.Y. 10011.

"WOMEN AND THE MILITARY"

which can be ordered from the American Servicemen's Union, 58 West 25 St., New York, N.Y. 10010.

"And I would carry you with me"

(Continued from page 13)

say, that I should be getting disability anyway, as I am disable to hold a sufficient job.

Hakim: Are you getting any type of disability at all?

Mrs. Jones: Not any at all. Just welfare.

Hakim: . . . So, you cannot go out and do strenuous activity as you've done in the past.

Mrs. Jones: No, I definitely would not be able to go back into the heavy work that I have done. As time is, my health is getting a little better, but the veryest little thing might upset it. The doctor hasn't turned me loose to work . . . .

Welfare wants you to go to the unemployment office, and whatever kind of job they give you, you have to take it or either get off the welfare.

Hakim: So, the welfare office persisted that you get a job and you had to get the doctor to really come down on them to get them off your back.

Mrs. Jones: That was the only way I could do it . . . .

Taking Their Rightful Place

Private Anna Joseph

This article was sent to BattleActs by Sue Higa, a Third World sister in YAWF Women and contributor to BattleActs, who recently moved to Tanzania to live. (Edward Shayo, Dar es Salaam's Daily News, **Feb. 18, 1973, p. 11.)**

Do you still believe in the old, reactionary myth that women "are weaker than men"? If you do, you are a century behind time. Listen to Private Anna Joseph: "I am ready to go to Mozambique—one of the Portuguese-occupied territories in Africa—to fight alongside Frelimo militants. In such a struggle, I believe separation of roles on the basis of sex does not arise."

Anna, an 18-year-old soldier, is one of the women who joined the Tanzania People's Defence Forces last year when the Party decided to establish a women's section in the army.

With the establishment of the People's Militia training programme in February, 1971, the Party's decision has now placed the country's defence into the hands of everybody—men and women. . . .

After enrollment, Private Anna Joseph and several other women underwent a four-month basic military training at the Tanzania Military Academy—Mgulani in Dar es Salaam. They proved promising trainees.

After the basic training, they held a passing-out parade at Jangwani grounds, before the Prime Minister, Mr. Rashid Kawawa, and thousands of residents of Dar es Salaam. . . .

In another interview with Anna's colleagues, most of them said that they joined the army to defend the country and to prove to the world that women are as tough as men. . . .

A greater number of women are expected to join the army in the next call-up. Meanwhile, the struggle continues.

message to our Indochinese sisters

By SHARON CHIN, New York City YAWF Women

For many, many years now your countries have been invaded by one set of imperialist aggressors after another. They have plundered your land and killed countless men, women, and children in their ruthless quest for labor, resources, markets, and profits. You have fought the U.S. with all your might for all these years and have dealt them one tremendous blow of defeat after another, finally forcing them to withdraw from your country with the recent signing of the ceasefire pact.

This has been a long-awaited moment after years of hard struggle by your people, and we, along with all the progressive and revolutionary peoples of the world, rejoice in your victory and at the same time give a solemn salute to your comrades who died, great numbers of them women, in the struggle to kick out the U.S. and to achieve self-determination.

Much remains to be done to rebuild the country, to redevelop the land, to rectify all the horrible destruction resulting from the bombing raids and chemicals — to build hospitals, schools, and roads, grow food, and move forward in the ongoing struggle to bring unity and socialism to all of Indochina. We know that you, the courageous, determined, revolutionary women of Indochina who have played no small role in all aspects of the liberation struggle, will be playing just as important a part in the reconstruction of your countries.

At this time, in the advent of International Women's Day — a day of celebration and struggle for oppressed women the world over — we feel it particularly timely to express our continued support and solidarity with you, for we are united in the common struggle to achieve liberty and freedom for all people so that everywhere people can have decent and fruitful lives.