

This is the situation for women in today's "modern" world of global capitalism:

Sexual trafficking crisscrosses the planet. Hundreds of thousands of women are kidnapped, coerced, bought, and sold into sexual slavery every year.¹

In India there are 400,000 to 500,000 child prostitutes. In Thailand, 800,000 children and teenagers have been forced into prostitution.²

Every day in the United States, four women are murdered by husbands and boyfriends.³

Every year in the United States, at least two to four million women are battered. Every year, approximately 132,000 women report being the victim of rape or attempted rape. An estimated 2 to 6 times as many women are raped, but do not report it.⁴

Millions of women around the world, in sweatshops, in sex shops, in their own homes, are abused and degraded—treated like commodities to be bought and sold. Millions of women are owned and controlled as things, not human beings.

The U.S. relies on and supports backward feudal classes to enforce social and political conditions for imperialist domination. And imperialism incorporates the most backward oppressive feudal relations into its structures of domination and exploitation. This is a nightmare for women where you get this perverse phenomenon: peasant women working in high-tech sweatshops; educated women subjected to arranged marriages; glossy billboards promoting high heels, plastic surgery, and makeup while backward feudal traditions require women to cover their bodies from head to toe.

In Iraq, under U.S. occupation, Shiite militias, empowered by the U.S., patrol the streets of Iraq's major cities, attacking women who don't dress or behave to their liking. In Basra, Iraq's second largest city, 133 women, according to official reports, were killed and mutilated last year, their bodies dumped in trash bins with notes warning others against "violating Islamic teachings." Ambulance drivers hired to drive through city streets early in the morning to collect the bodies say the actual numbers are much higher.⁵

In 2007, Du'a Khalil Aswad was a 17-year-old woman living in Iraqi Kurdistan. She was beaten and stoned to death by a mob of fanatical men—relatives and neighbors carrying out what is called "an honor killing." Du'a was killed for falling in love with someone her community did not approve of.⁶

In Iraq, women who have been raped are considered to have shamed their families. More than half of the 400 rapes reported since the U.S. invasion have resulted in the rape survivor being murdered by their families.⁷ Such "honor killings" have increased under U.S. occupation. And they are common in Third World countries around the world.

Behind these horrific anti-women practices are similar customs and property relations that exist in modern-day U.S. society. Here they are called "crimes of passion" where sentencing is not based on the crime but the "feelings" (or what can be described as "male honor") of the perpetrator. In 1999, a Texas judge sentenced a man to four months in prison for murdering his wife and wounding her lover in front of their 10-year-old child.⁸ What is this but a U.S. version of an "honor killing" that is then approved by the state?

Violence against women, rape, and prostitution are generated and promoted by the relations of male supremacy built into the structure of the U.S. imperialist military. There is the horrifying story of Abeer Hamza, a 14-year-old Iraqi girl who was raped by U.S. troops. Abeer, along with her sister and parents, were killed and their house burned down to cover up the crime.⁹

Sexual abuse and rape are not only practiced against the people of occupied countries but also inside the U.S. military. More than half of women in the Reserve National Guard experienced rape, sexual assault, or sexual harassment while on active duty.¹⁰ Only 2% to 3% of offenders receive disciplinary action as serious as a court martial. Usually, perpetrators receive only a mild slap on the wrist, such as extra duty or a letter of reprimand.¹¹

In the United States, people are constantly bombarded with advertisements, TV, and movies where women are portrayed as little more than objects whose "sex appeal" is used to sell everything from cars to music videos. What does it do to women and men when this stuff is constantly in your face? Is it any wonder that so many women suffer from eating disorders or feel they have to have plastic surgery, or that women's bodies are treated like private property by the men they love?

What kind of society is it where terms of contempt such as "b*tch, c*nt and ho become synonymous with being female? Or when women can't walk out at night without fear of being raped?

You have Christian fundamentalist anti-woman thinking and practices—officially promoted and enforced from the Supreme Court and White House on down. Christian fascists, a powerful force in the U.S. ruling class, want to impose a literal reading of the Bible, which means women are to be treated as inferior, as servants of men, as private

property.

These folks aren't just crazy. "Family values" are watchwords for both Democrats and Republicans. Why? These various ruling class forces all recognize the danger posed to the capitalist/imperialist system by any weakening of "traditional morality," including the role this plays in oppressing women.

The right to abortion in the U.S. has been systematically eroded, from the Supreme Court on down—while hip movies like *Juno* fill young women's heads with the unscientific lie that "a fetus is a baby" and "abortion is murder." Every year one clinic in five is the target of extreme anti-abortion violence like bombings, arson and death threats.¹² And every major anti-abortion group in this country also opposes contraception.¹³ This is about controlling women's bodies and reproduction.

What kind of world is this where the more wealth is created and the more the world is drawn into a single whole, instead of human progress the result is greater tragedy for millions? What kind of a world is it where women are ever more forcefully told that their only choice—if they even have one—is between the feudal nightmare embodied in the traditions of all the major religions, or the commodified "Sex-in-the-City" version of liberation, where you have "autonomy" to market yourself—as a commodity, in a world still premised on the everyday subordination, debasement, and brutalization of half of humanity? The answer is, a world still dominated by capitalism and imperialism.

The oppression of women developed together with the division of society into classes and the emergence of private property and exploitation. Under these conditions, what had been a more or less spontaneous division of labor between the sexes was transformed into one of oppression and domination. And, while these social relations have undergone changes over the years, the dynamics of the oppression of women is woven deeply into the fabric of class society today, reinforcing and being reinforced by other forms of oppression.

The horrific oppression of women throughout this planet is completely unnecessary—things don't have to be this way. And the only reason they are this way is because of the economic and social relations constantly generated by class society, by a whole system that can only operate by exploiting and oppressing the vast majority of humanity.

Humanity needs revolution and communism. We need a socialist society where the masses of people are truly mobilized to think and work together, to dig up all the economic and social relations of class society, to transform the world and ourselves and get rid of all forms of oppression, including the oppression of women.

Footnotes:

1. "The Hypocrisy of 'Newly Minted Feminists'... And David Horowitz' Dangerous Agenda," by T. Redtree. *Revolution* #105, October 21, 2007. <http://www.revcom.us/a/1105/feminists-hypocrisy-en.html>
2. *Ibid*
3. Violence Against Women in the United States. National Organization For Women website. Additional references in the online article. <http://www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html>
4. *Ibid*
5. "Who is Killing the Women of Basra?" *Madre* website, January 9, 2008. <http://madre.org/articles/me/womenbasra010908.html>
6. "The Murder of Du'a Aswad," *Madre* website, May 16, 2007. <http://www.madre.org/articles/me/duamurder.html>
7. *Ibid*
8. Murder in the Name of "Honor," *MADRE* Speaks, Summer 2006.
9. "Rape and Murder of Abeer Qassim Hamza: Bloody Reality of the U.S. Occupation." *Revolution* #53, July 16, 2006. <http://revcom.us/a/053/iraqrqape-en.html>
10. 2003 Veterans Administration report on military sexual trauma cited in "Does a rapist deserve a military burial?" *Los Angeles Times* Op-Ed by Anne K. Ream, January 23, 2008.
11. The Miles Foundation, a public policy institute specializing in interpersonal violence associated with the armed forces, cited in "Does a rapist deserve a military burial?" *Los Angeles Times* Op-Ed by Anne K. Ream, January 23, 2008.
12. Restrictions on Roe v. Wade. <http://feminist.org/roe/wade/restrictions.asp>
13. "The Morality of the Right to Abortion... And the Immorality of Those Who Oppose It," *Revolution* #38, March 12, 2006. <http://revcom.us/a/038/morality-right-to-abortion.htm>

The Horrors for Women in the "Modern" World of Global Capitalism



Left: Florencia Molina, from Mexico, was forced to work 17 hours a day, 7 days a week in a Southern California garment sweatshop after her bosses took away her ID. Right: A refugee from Afghanistan in a Pakistani brick factory forced to work as a bonded laborer to pay off debts.

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Du'a Khalil Aswad, "honor killing" victim in Iraq, 2007.

Du'a Khalil Aswad was a 17-year-old woman living in Iraqi Kurdistan. She was beaten and stoned to death by a mob of fanatical men—relatives and neighbors carrying out what is called "an honor killing."



Anti-abortion Christian fascists attempt to close down the only clinic in Mississippi that performs abortions.



Iraqis pass by U.S. occupation troops, Baghdad, 2006.



Jennifer Machmer testifies in Washington DC about being sexually assaulted while she was a lieutenant in the U.S. Army based in Kuwait.

Christian fascists in the U.S., a powerful force in the U.S. ruling class, want to impose a literal reading of the Bible, which means women are to be treated as inferior, as servants of men, as private property.

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Women from the Philippines who had been bought and sold as sex-slaves.



Sewing blue jeans in Bandung, Indonesia, 2007.

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A neighbor of 14-year-old Abeer Hamza points to the spot U.S. troops burned her clothes after raping and killing her, Iraq 2006.

Sexual abuse and rape are not only practiced against the people of occupied countries but also inside the U.S. military. More than half of women in the Reserve National Guard experienced rape, sexual assault or sexual harassment while on active duty.

Humanity needs revolution and communism. We need a socialist society where the masses of people are truly mobilized to think and work together, dig up all the economic and social relations of society, to transform the world and ourselves and get rid of all forms of oppression, including the oppression of women.