

“ALL THE WORK WE DO AS WOMEN”

FEMINIST MANIFESTOS ON PROSTITUTION AND THE STATE, 1977

INTRODUCTORY TEXT BY
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In 1977 San Francisco’s city government, in the midst of redeveloping its downtown as a center for tourism and a west coast banking capital, initiated a new wave of crackdowns on street prostitution. The SFPD coordinated sweeps of downtown neighborhoods, arresting sex workers en masse. At the same time, the city’s Board of Supervisors put forward a proposal to the California legislature to increase the penalties for soliciting to \$1000 or one year in prison. Local sex workers had been organizing against police harassment and violence for over a decade at that point, and when the latest crackdown came some of them reached out to feminist groups around the country and in Europe for solidarity.

The manifestos included here were found recently in a library archive along with other documents about San Francisco sex workers’ struggles in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. They are statements written by sex workers and other feminist women in support of their comrades in San Francisco. They were written in response to a call put out by the San Francisco chapter of Wages for Housework, a Marxist-feminist group that was part of an international network of feminists opposing the criminalization of prostitution. The statements were written by women in Brooklyn, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Toronto, and London, all loosely affiliated with the Wages for Housework groups.

The International Wages for Housework Campaign was founded by a small group of Italian and American Marxist feminists in 1972. Among them were Mariarosa Dalla Costa, a participant in the Italian Autonomia movement who became a member of Lotta Femminista, and Selma James, an American former member of the autonomist Marxist group the Johnson Forest Tendency who went on to live and work in

Trinidad and England. The Campaign was founded on the idea that women should receive wages from the state for their unpaid labor in the home, thus allowing them financial independence from men and forcing the state to return to the working class some of the money that had been taken from it through capitalist exploitation. Chapters emerged in Italy, England, Germany, Switzerland, and Canada. Lesbian women and Black women organized autonomous groups within the larger Wages for Housework umbrella as Wages Due Lesbians and Black Women for Wages for Housework. In England the Wages for Housework groups worked together with the English Collective of Prostitutes, formed in 1975, which in 1985 occupied a church in London as part of a struggle against police violence.

The political framework of Wages for Housework drew upon the concept of reproductive labor as developed by Italian Marxist feminists, including Dalla Costa and Leopoldina Fortunati. These feminists reread *Capital* from the perspective of working-class women, in so doing elaborating a theory of how unpaid household labor conducted by women contributed to the reproduction of the working class and the entire capitalist system. They argued that the unwaged character of this labor hid its structural function: to lower the cost of reproducing the working class as a whole and thus allow capitalists to reduce wages and reap extra profits. If women did reproductive labor for free – if they could be compelled to cook, clothe, clean, and provide emotional support for their husbands, children, and parents without receiving any wages in return – the capitalist class would not have to factor the cost of this labor into wages.

The mechanism that compelled women to perform this labor for free, according to their theory, was women’s

subordination to men, and in particular working-class women's subordination to their husbands. They argued that women's lack of access to wages (or at least to wages that were high enough to support them and their children) forced them into sexual and emotional partnerships with men whether or not they wanted them, merely in order to meet their material needs. Women were thus extremely vulnerable to male domination and abuse, which was heightened by the physical and emotional strain working-class men experienced as exploited wage laborers. Women became the punching bags upon which men could release their pent-up frustration and whose subjugation allowed men to experience some measure of power and control. In this sense women's subordination was also useful for the capitalist class as a pressure valve that displaced men's anger toward their bosses onto their wives and children.

According to their theory, women's dependence upon men prevented them from attaining sexual autonomy and thus made heterosexuality more or less compulsory. Patriarchal divisions of labor, organized through the basic unit of the family, require heterosexual partnerships between men and women and thus queer people, and women in particular, are frequently compelled to enter into relationships that go against their personal sexual and emotional desires. Thus the Marxist feminist analysis of reproductive labor is also a theory of compulsory heterosexuality, as some of the texts below demonstrate.

In elaborating their ideas, Dalla Costa, Fortunati, James, and others hoped to show how male domination was built into capitalism and how both men (including working-class men) and the capitalist class benefited from the unpaid nature of women's reproductive labor. They argued that for women to gain some measure of independence — including the ability to freely choose who and how to love — they needed money of their own, so that they would not have to provide sexual, emotional, and other services to a man in exchange for access to his wages. However, unlike liberal feminists and many Marxist feminists, they did not believe that women should achieve this independence by attempting to gain equal footing with men in the waged workplace (which they viewed as another site of exploitation and misery rather than an opportunity for liberation). Rather, they thought that it would benefit not just women but the entire working class if housework was

recognized by the state as productive work and compensated as such. They further argued that if women received wages for housework, they would be able to more freely choose what kind of work they wished to do. All of these developments, they felt, would advance the cause of class struggle by lessening the division between working-class men and women and forcing the capitalist class to return some of its stolen profits.¹

Dalla Costa, Fortunati, and James' analysis of reproductive labor is evident in almost all of the manifestos included here. Their perspective underlies one of the most important rhetorical devices employed by all of the authors: the emphatic insistence that prostitution is not an isolated, unique form of exploitation but is intimately connected to the general condition of women and the proletariat under heteropatriarchal capitalism. In other words, they placed themselves in opposition to prominent strains of feminism, such as those represented by Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, that favored the criminalization of not just prostitution, but pornography, legal forms of sex work, and all sexualized representations of women's bodies. Rather than isolate sex workers as a special category of victim, anti-criminalization feminists pointed out the connections between sex workers and all women and workers: all women provide men with sexual services in exchange for access to money; all workers sell their bodies and time in exchange for money. They point out that by isolating sex work as the sole exploitative relationship, pro-criminalization ideology implies that women should perform reproductive labor for free within the context of families and romantic partnerships. Without

1 This strategy can be and has been critiqued on a number of fronts. Even assuming victory is possible (a proposition that is certainly up for debate), questions remain about the relationship between reform and revolution posited by the wages for housework campaign. Despite its insistence that women need not enter the waged labor market, the movement still seems to rely upon an assumption that housewives must be made more classically proletarian, i.e. must receive a wage in exchange for their labor power, in order to be proper political subjects capable of fighting against capitalism. From a revolutionary perspective one might ask why housewives should struggle first for reforms that would grant them a higher position within the working class rather than fighting directly and immediately for the abolition of productive and reproductive spheres, i.e. communist revolution.

presenting sex work as liberatory or a freely made choice — and in fact insisting on the ultimate goal of abolishing it along with patriarchal capitalism — they explain the reasons why women enter into the field of sex work: unlike housewives, sex workers get money directly for their services, and thus can have more autonomy. Unlike secretaries, waitresses, or maids, many sex workers are relatively highly paid and have more free time.

This line of thinking is carried even further in the piece by Black Women for Wages for Housework, clearly the most complex and nuanced of the manifestos included here. The authors argue that all Black women have an interest in defending prostitutes. In part this is because many Black women are compelled to work as prostitutes due to the material conditions of life in the ghetto. But they point out that even Black women who are not prostitutes are directly impacted by the working and living conditions of prostitutes, for when they are criminalized and violently attacked this constitutes an attack on the ability of all Black women to gain a measure of financial, sexual, and emotional independence from men. They point out that within the category of “woman,” Black women function as symbols of all that is undesirable and degraded, the negative inverse of an idealized white feminine purity. In this sense, to be a Black woman is to be always already considered a prostitute. This position in the symbolic order expresses itself in the choices black women are forced to make within the confines of racialized poverty. While most women are compelled to exchange sexual services for access to money or material goods, the authors point out that Black women must also often exchange these services for the mere assurance of avoiding racial terror: to avoid being arrested or beaten by police, for instance.

The text also extends the political strategic discussion of fighting for wages for housework to a discussion of the welfare rights movement waged by Black women in the 1960s and 70s. The fight for welfare payments is a fight for wages for housework, welfare being the first and only money women in the U.S. have won from the state for their reproductive labor. The decision to go on welfare, they argue, is similar to the decision to become a prostitute in certain ways: a choice, given existing social constraints, that allows women access to money without entering into low-paid service work.

An alternative to dependence on men, on the one hand, and wage slavery, on the other.

Clearly the strength of the manifestos lies in their penetrating analysis of the condition of working class women under heteropatriarchal capitalism, and their attention to the ways in which this condition is variable along lines of race and sexuality. Their greatest weakness, however, is their failure to integrate into their analyses the relationship between cis-female sex workers and other kinds of sex workers, namely trans and gay male sex workers, also suffering from police violence, economic precarity, and social marginalization. A more thorough analysis of patriarchy would extend the discussion of compulsory heterosexuality — so eloquently discussed by the Wages Due Lesbians groups and Black Women for Wages for Housework — to include gay men, and show how the enforcement of heterosexuality within families and other institutions often forced queer youth to become economically independent and to seek out prostitution as one of the few well-paying jobs available to them that also allowed for some degree of sexual autonomy.

A stronger analysis would also integrate into its understanding of patriarchy an examination of the virulent police crackdown on trans women, both as sex workers and as “crossdressers” under statutes that made illegal the “impersonation” of a member of the “opposite gender.” At the time of the 1977 crackdown a significant number of trans women and gay men worked on the streets of San Francisco — and had long been publicly resisting violence and harassment, most famously during the Compton’s Cafeteria riot of 1966. (For a discussion of this statute and its enforcement by police in the Bay Area, and of trans and queer resistance to police violence, see the next text in this journal — excerpts from an interview with Suzan Cooke.) Although some of the manifestos leave open the possibility that trans women were included within the category of “women prostitutes,” the absence of any explicit discussion implicitly defines prostitutes as cis women.

Thus these manifestos also point to the shortcomings of Marxist feminist analysis and practice at the time. Their understanding of patriarchy was based on an experience of organizing between and amongst cis women, and of identifying the category “woman” as the sole oppressed category under a patriarchal system.

They failed to identify the complexity of patriarchy under capitalism, which produces multiple subordinated categories of human beings, including gay men and trans people. The feminist struggle against criminalization in San Francisco thus excluded many sex workers in its failure to acknowledge these interrelated forms of exploitation and oppression, and took the form of a movement of cis-female prostitutes rather than all prostitutes.

What is important and unusual about these documents is how they shifted the ground of feminist debates about liberation. By focusing on the state as an apparatus designed to regulate divisions of labor and sexuality through its ability to criminalize, imprison, and otherwise punish certain types of women, these manifestos challenge the logic of pro-criminalization feminists. For if criminalization draws a line between legitimate and illegitimate behavior, is not the criminalization of prostitution an attempt to draw a line between legitimate and illegitimate women — and therefore to regulate the behavior of all women in order to maintain a division of labor beneficial to capital accumulation? The flip side to Catherine MacKinnon's argument that sex work is a violation of women's civil rights is the assumption that the other (paid and unpaid) work that women do is somehow legitimate, acceptable, and free from relations of domination. This logic, like that of the state, draws a dividing line between sex workers and other women. By challenging the logic of criminalization these manifestos erase that line, revealing the material basis for solidarity between housewives, sex workers, lesbians, welfare recipients, women who work for wages, women of color, and all those who inhabit more than one of these categories.

AN ATTACK ON PROSTITUTES IS AN ATTACK ON ALL WOMEN

San Francisco Wages for Housework
Feb 1977

The recent attack on street prostitutes in San Francisco is one more attempt by the government to deny women access to money of our own. The supervisors are raising the flag of morality to justify their "cleaning up the streets." In fact, they are protecting the profits of the

Union Square hotels which run their own pimping services. The supervisors' morality is not offended when big business pimps nor when the government takes its share through fines on prostitutes. It is only offended when we refuse to give them a cut. The power of the hotels, like that of all pimps, is threatened by the growing struggle prostitutes are making to abolish the laws against prostitution.

In many parts of the world governments are harassing prostitutes because prostitution exposes our sexuality as work which should be paid for. Recently stated by the English Collective of Prostitutes:

"Sex is supposed to be personal, always a free choice, different from work. But it's not a free choice when we are dependent on men for money. We women are expected to be sexual service stations, and because of that sex becomes a bargaining point between ourselves and men. When any of us sleeps with men, at least to some degree we are forced to consider what we are going to get in return for 'giving' — money, the rent, or better treatment in other ways. Whether we enjoy it or not, we are making a calculation. Those of us who are prostitutes not only calculate, but put a price on our services and make men meet it. The line between paid and unpaid sex is a question of what we get in return."

Business makes money off our sexuality. Destroyed by the work they are compelled to do, men come to us for the sexual and emotional gratification they need to continue working, making profits for business. When we work outside the home, on top of housework, our bosses use our sexuality to please customers and make sales. The advertising industry is based on linking products with hints that our sexual 'favors' go with them. Our lives are consumed so that business can profit.

More and more women are refusing to be exploited — to work in the home for free and to work outside the home for low pay. Wherever we are demanding our wages — from the Welfare Department, in the street, at the job outside the home — we are fighting for money for all our work.

Prostitution is one way of getting our wages. Although the government tries to isolate our struggles, we

refuse to be divided. All work is prostitution and we are all prostitutes. We are forced to sell our bodies — for room and board or for cash — in marriage, in the street, in typing pools or in factories. And as we win wages for all the work we do, we develop the power to refuse prostitution — in any of its forms.

WE DEMAND AN END TO THE HARASSMENT OF PROSTITUTES. WE DEMAND THE ABOLITION OF ALL THE LAWS AGAINST PROSTITUTION.

SUPPORTING STATEMENT BY THE ENGLISH COLLECTIVE OF PROSTITUTES

London 1977

The Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committee in connection with the London Wages for Housework Committee has informed us about the proposals of the San Francisco supervisors to the California legislature to increase penalties for soliciting to \$1000 or one year in prison and we have also heard about the increase of arrests of prostitute women. In England and France, as in other countries, governments are trying to increase fines and jail sentences for soliciting, or already have, making it more difficult for prostitute women to get money. The governments are punishing us because we refuse to be dependent on the little money the boyfriends, husbands, brothers, lovers and families give us in exchange for the housework of looking after them. They are punishing us because when we go into hooking, we are refusing the low standard of living that employers offer us and our children when we do “respectable” work — as secretaries, waitresses, nurses, factory workers, farm workers, teachers, domestic workers and so on. And when they punish us, they are also punishing our children.

All women are, in one way or another, fighting for financial independence and prostitution is the way that prostitute women have found to get the same thing. By attacking prostitute women the governments are telling all women that if we are not good girls, if we do not continue to be the servants of the world, and if we ask for anything for ourselves, we will be punished. But in the past few years an incredible number of women have

gone into prostitution and many struggles of prostitute women have exploded and become public.

More and more, they will not be able to confront us in isolation. They will have to deal with us all together — women who work on the street, call girls, women who work in massage parlors, in hotels, in brothels, in nightclubs, in casinos, in holiday resorts, in escort agencies, in bars; women who work in the countryside and small towns, women who work in big cities, young women, older women, mothers, non-mothers, lesbian women, straight women, part-time prostitutes, full-time prostitutes, married women, single women, immigrant and non-immigrant women, and women of all different races and nationalities.

Like all women, we prostitutes have always fought to get something for ourselves and it has never been easy. But when we look back, we can see that in the end we have always won something. And — we are afraid for the governments — that nothing is going to kill our struggle and nothing will stop us from winning. Power to prostitute women all over the world — power to all women.

E.C.P.

English Collective of Prostitutes

SUPPORTING STATEMENTS BY WAGES DUE LESBIANS

Wages Due Lesbians, London:

We fully endorse the statement in support of the San Francisco prostitutes, and urge all other organizations to do the same.

The attack which governments are organizing against prostitute women everywhere in the world is an attack on every woman's right to determine whether, and on what terms, she will have sexual relations with men. As lesbian women we, like prostitute women, refuse to accept that it is women's “nature” to sleep with men and to sleep with them “for love” — i.e. for free. And like prostitute women we face continual harassment by police, employers, schools, individual men, and all those in authority for the crime of shaping our sexual

life according to our own needs, of taking something for ourselves.

Many lesbian women have totally refused to do the work of meeting men's sexual demands, and all the other housework that goes along with sexual relations with men. Others of us have been forced by lack of money to marry or to stay in a marriage, at the expense of the relationships we would like, in order to maintain ourselves or ourselves and our children. Others of us have become hookers in order to get the money we need and are entitled to.

Women, lesbian or "straight," prostitute or not, are everywhere houseworkers, the servants of the world. We are all entitled to money for this work, and entitled to obtain it in any way open to us as women. Wherever women succeed in winning some of the wages due us, it is a strength to all of us and proof that women's services cannot be taken for granted.

London, 1977

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Wages Due Lesbians, Toronto:

Here in Canada, we have recently seen a media campaign against the numbers of women "turning to prostitution" in this time of economic crisis. The push has come from the same quarters as in the U.S. — from the police, politicians, and businessmen, all of whom have something to gain from women working for nothing or only low pay.

Lesbian women are also harassed for the same reason as prostitute women. We are intimidated and isolated from other women for refusing to be sexually available for free to husbands, bosses, and any man on the street. Any woman who steps out of line gets the same treatment. And we're fighting all the time against this, whether we are married, single prostitute or lesbian.

Many women who work as prostitutes are also lesbians. They are making the same fight against free sex on command when they refuse heterosexuality "off the job." The only choices women now have are to "give it" for free for our daily survival, to demand some money for it in exchange, or to try to refuse it altogether — and

we pay a high price for all three. We refuse to keep footing the bill.

Whether gay or straight, we all need our own money to determine our lives and what our sexuality will be. We all need Wages for Housework. We urge all lesbian groups and individuals to support the struggle of prostitute women against these crackdowns.

Toronto, Canada, 1977

MONEY FOR PROSTITUTES IS MONEY FOR BLACK WOMEN

The Black Women for Wages for Housework group fully endorses the statement of Wages for Housework – San Francisco and the Los Angeles Wages for Housework Committee that AN ATTACK AGAINST PROSTITUTES IS AN ATTACK ON ALL WOMEN. We make this endorsement because the struggles of prostitute women against police harassment on the streets, against beatings, against fines and jails, against being declared "unfit" mothers in the courts and having our children taken away, against being treated like animals and outcasts, against pimps, racketeers, and businesses that profit from our misery, and, what is key to all these attacks, against not having any money to call our own, are struggles that we as Black women are all forced to make.

Prostitution is not a game — it is WORK — the work of serving men sexually to get the means to live. It is the work of being at the disposal of men's sexual needs and their fantasies of what a woman is supposed to look like, supposed to do, supposed to be. Prostitution is work that Black women were forced to do on the plantations and that we are forced to do today. It is our work that some men "make their living" on — we don't play at prostitution. We are forced to sell our sexual services on the streets, in hotels and massage parlours, or in our apartments — to take on the second job of prostitution — because we are not paid for the first job we all do as women, housework, the job of producing and taking care of everybody so that we all can work and make profits for the Man. Prostitution is one way that Black women are using increasingly to refuse our

poverty and dependency on men which is brought about by not getting paid for our first job.

To turn back the rising tide of our refusal to be penniless, the Man makes sure that part of the job of being a prostitute is to be used as a sign to other women of where the bottom is — to be labeled a whore and an unfit mother, a Negress (which they used to call us), a loose woman. So that part of the work of being a prostitute is to be made an example of what it costs us to refuse the poverty the Man forces us to live in, to be a whip against other women to make sure that they strive always to be “respectable” though poor. And this means that part of the work of being a prostitute must also be living with not only the contempt but the envy of other women for having the little bit of money, the little bit of independence, that they don’t have.

Who among us, as Black women, is above prostitution? Racism — our being forced as Black women always to have the least money, the least possibility of getting a job, the least access to school, the worst housing, and the first “opportunity” to be fired, fined, or jailed — already means that all Black women are suspected of being or expected to be prostitutes anyway! In a sweep arrest — when women who are just walking down the street can be arrested as prostitutes — who gets swept up first? It’s always open season on Black women.

The terrorism that is practiced by the Man and by individual men against prostitute women is a terror we all know, a terror in the Black community that always falls first and heaviest on Black women. Whether it is the terror of being beaten in the bedroom or in a parked car, on the street or in the jail, or the terror of not being able to find a decent place to live where the police don’t feel free to break down the door, it is terror rooted in our having to be at everyone’s disposal because we don’t have the money to be able to say NO, to be able to choose where and how we want to live and whom we want to sleep with.

A ghetto is built around prostitutes like the ghetto in which all Black women, in one way or another, are forced to live. It is a ghetto where we are branded, denied our legal rights, and isolated from other women. If we are on welfare, doing the work of taking care of our men and ourselves that all women do, we are branded

as cheats, as we are getting something for nothing. If we are lesbians, refusing to sleep with men as a way to have some independence in our lives, we are branded as freaks. It is a ghetto where if we are not dependent on an individual man to protect us — whether it’s a husband, a boyfriend, or a pimp — we are considered fair game. It is a ghetto where even if we don’t work the streets as prostitutes, we are often forced to sell our sexual services in exchange for rent, for food, for gas and lights, and in exchange for being “left alone” by the police.

For us the ghetto has always been a place of few choices and no security, the place we are all trying to get the money to get out of. It means being at the mercy of butchers who pass themselves off as doctors and deny us any real health care. So that as black women — especially if we’re on welfare — we’re likely to be sterilized, as if we are prostitutes somehow “guilty” of polluting the environment with our children and our sex. The ghetto is the place where black teenage women, who have the highest unemployment rate of any group in the USA (as high as 60%), are unable to find any other kind of job but prostitution, and where they are being arrested and booked daily in droves as so-called “juvenile offenders.” It is the place where increasingly Black women who are struggling against tuition and cutbacks in the colleges and universities are forced to supplement their income by prostitution in order to stay in school. It is the place where Black women who are no US citizens, who came to this country because they had no money back home and who are increasingly being fired from their low-paying jobs here, are forced to be on the run, to make a living by prostitution, or be deported. The ghetto is the place where we are forced to be anonymous, whether we take names to use “in the game” or not, because being Black women we’re not supposed to have any past, present, or future, any struggle or victory we can call our own.

The ghetto is where Black women are divided against each other according to how we get our money, how much work we can refuse to do and still get by, and according to the money and power the men we’re attached to have — just as prostitutes are divided according to whether they work on the street, in the massage parlour, or in a private apartment, whether they service a dozen small customers or only one big one

per night. The ghetto means that our “options” as Black women in the labor market run most often from the toilet, to the kitchen, to the sweatshop, to the switchboard, to the typing pool, and that to be a prostitute at this point in time might just seem to be a better deal. And whether we work as prostitutes or not, to get and keep any of these jobs always means always means keeping up appearances of what — as women in this society — we’re supposed to be. Above all, the ghetto is wherever Black women are living from hand to mouth in constant crisis — and that is everywhere, whether we work as prostitutes or not.

And it is because all Black women, including prostitutes, are refusing to accept the Man’s crisis as the way we are supposed to live that the attack on prostitute women is being stepped up right now. They are looking for ways to turn all of us around, to make us go back, to give up what we’ve won. Because all of us are using the money, the power that we have already won to refuse to settle for any less and demand more. Just as Black women who get welfare — which is the first wage women have won in this country for the work we do in our homes — are resisting the welfare cuts and demanding more money, everywhere we are refusing to take only what the Man dictates we should have. We are refusing to settle for the sweatshop just because the Man tells us it’s a “respectable” job: “respectable” or not, we demand cash money. We are refusing all the cuts, refusing to be pushed out of school, refusing to live only on welfare or unemployment, refusing the closing of daycare centers and hospitals, refusing to force our children to eat less and go without. More and more we are refusing to be at the disposal of men — whether as lesbians by refusing sex with men altogether, or as straight women by demanding satisfaction for ourselves in our relationships, or as prostitutes by demanding to be paid for our sexual services. More and more we are refusing to be isolated and divided from other women as if there is something wrong with us for refusing to be poor — as demanding money for our work becomes the rule, not the exception.

The welfare struggle organized by Black women in the sixties and continuing today, like all the struggles by Black women against the Man in whatever form He takes — whether it’s the telephone company, the gas company, the health care industry, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the landlord, the

transit authority, or the jip-joint businesses — are a tremendous source of power prostitutes, for all women. Prostitutes are organizing a massive struggle around the world to demand their money: in Ethiopia in 1974, prostitutes began organizing a union to demand a basic rate of pay. In Australia, prostitutes demonstrated in front of the Anglican cathedral. And in June of ’75, prostitutes went on strike all throughout France, occupying churches, rejecting the moral hypocrisy of the church just as Black women in this country have rejected its racist hypocrisy. By organizing themselves, by being public in their organizations whenever they can, prostitutes, like Black women, are saying by our actions that we have a story to tell, a story about the struggle we are making to be independent. In their statement in Lyons, the French prostitutes said: “We are women like all women.”

The struggle of prostitutes is the same struggle Black women are making. It is the struggle to have the money — which is the power to be independent:

To determine all the conditions of our lives;

To determine whom we want to sleep with;

To determine whether we have children or not and to be able to keep our children;

To satisfy our own needs and to build a life for ourselves.

It is the struggle to be paid for all the work we do as women, including sexual work.

The Black Women for Wages for Housework group joins women throughout the world in saying:

NO to the attack on prostitutes in San Francisco.

NO to the attack on prostitutes in New York.

NO to the attack on prostitutes everywhere.

When prostitutes win, all women win. MONEY FOR PROSTITUTES IS MONEY FOR BLACK WOMEN.

Brooklyn, NY
1977