



Voices of 1968

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LIBERATION FROM THE TOILET (1970)

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*In 1970, a new kind of women's liberation movement, ūman ribu, arose across Japan, adding to the cacophony of voices revolting against patriarchal authority around the world. These Japanese activists reappropriated and reworked Marxist and Black Power concepts to politicize sexuality and sex-based power relations akin to other radical feminists of the Global North. The manifesto excerpted below became one of the most iconic texts of the Japanese radical women's liberation movement. It was authored by Tanaka Mitsu, a leading figure of the movement and a member of a cell called Group of Fighting Women (Gurūpu Tatakau Onna). This Tokyo-based group served as one of the key organizing and communication centers for a nationwide movement that denounced the patriarchal structure of Japanese society and the masculinist culture of the Japanese left.*

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## Introduction

In our class society, every woman is born possessing one property. That property is virginity. If she can deal with it skillfully and sell it at a high price, her life is set.

However, virginity is ranked according to a woman's inherent and acquired characteristics. In other words, depending on a woman's family status, wealth, her appearance, her level of education, her virginity's market value can vary significantly. Strangely enough, it actually doesn't matter that much whether or not she is really a virgin.

What is important is if she *acts like a virgin*. [...] Now, whether or not one acts like a virgin is the dividing road as to whether one is going to declare one's rebellion toward men and society. Women's liberation means that we reject this "virgin-like" performance [...] and we will develop our struggle as women by presenting our true selves against this society and the men who try to measure our worth as women by this criteria of virgin-likeness.

[...]

### **"Women's Liberation Movement" – Why it Sounds So Lame**

[...]

For women who have had the belief, "marriage is a woman's happiness" seep into the marrow of their bones, this society has the imperative to shape women as such, based on this system of private property, which has as its highest order to maintain purity of blood to ensure the preservation and succession of property; regarding children, for men their existence is such that they have to believe that children originated from them. Accordingly, those women who are not satisfied with marriage, men, and society, who dare to revolt, are bashed and made into bad examples. As a method of maintaining this system, first, on the one hand, men are told not to choose this kind of woman, and the consciousness of these kind of men is precisely the mind of the dominant class. On the other hand, the family and schools are made as places that function to produce women who flatter and prostrate themselves before such men in order to reproduce this discriminatory structure of masculinity and femininity. [...]

[...]

[...] When we consider how in previous times women were under a multitude of oppressions [...] when the emphasis in the struggle was placed on women to gain their economic independence, to earn fundamental human rights such as the freedom to divorce, universal suffrage, the freedom to choose one's employment—in the midst of this struggle to acquire the rights equal to men, as human rather than as cattle, these women who manned the movement had to hack away and discard their own sexuality [...]

[...]

[...] As for our struggle, which aims toward human liberation, as we continue to interrogate women's sexuality and reproduction, what kind of undesirableness will be ours as we develop our movement? But before we think about this, we would like to consider how sex is used to control men and women, how the one-husband-one-wife system is maintained through the way that women and men relate to each other and in total, how sex has been used as a fundamental means to make humans into a slave-like class.

Servile Consciousness is Produced

This economic system that aims at the preservation and the inheritance of property binds women's sexual desire to men and the patriarchal family in order to guarantee the purity of blood. Thus, the rule of the one-husband-one-wife system only applies to women. [...] Insofar as the one-husband-one-wife system has been essentially made to limit and confine women's economic independence and women's sexual desire, the structure of consciousness that despises sex is even more oppressive toward women's sexuality.

[...]

Authoritarianism [...], which is the basis of the ideology that exercises class domination, is reproduced through patriarchal marriage, in other words, in the day to day relations between men and women in the family. [...]

### **I'm the Toilet and You're the Excrement ... Our Miserable Sex**

[...] What does it mean that the structure of consciousness that denies sex is even more oppressive to women? This structure, which uses sex as a fundamental means to subjugate humans is mediated by a male consciousness, which in turn, regulates male sexuality by oppressing female sexuality. In addition to the fact that women's sex is endowed with reproduction, women's sex is much more powerful, with essentially anarchistic potential. This is likely the reason for the production of this structure.

[...]

For men, women are either Mother, maternal tenderness, or Toilet, the vessel to dispose of sexual urges; women's image is divided into these two. Male consciousness abstracts the holistic figure of woman into two sides—Mother (tenderness) and the Other (SEX)—and assigns antithetical emotions to each. Within the context of human history, where the marriage system existed alongside prostitution and slavery, the one-husband-one-wife system has despised sex and supported this structure of consciousness that separates sexuality and spirituality. [...]

Whether you are a man's mother or a man's toilet, this consciousness is expressed by whether in actuality you are being targeted for marriage or simply an object for a man to fool around with. And in order to be seen as an object to marry, and not to be selected as a sexual playmate, a woman has to act as though she sees nothing, hears nothing, and says nothing about sex, just like an innocent cute little girl, and in doing so woman oppresses herself by betraying her totality that possesses both tenderness and her natural sexual desire.

Woman, who possesses both the tenderness and sexual desire as a whole, has been divided by man's split consciousness, which has been produced according to the demands of the ruling class, and she is coerced to only live as a part of herself. But man, who only allows woman to live as a part of herself, is also oppressing himself because he too is also allowing himself to only live a part of himself. [...]

[...]

Women are oppressed by this male consciousness that divides women between a toilet and a mother, which amounts to a virginism that is meant to maintain the purity of bloodlines.

Nowadays, if you do not behave virgin-like as the object of marriage, you have to be resigned to suffer a variety of losses, and given the fact that most women expect the possibility of finding happiness in material comforts and in social status, these women act in such a way to keep up the display of this virgin-likeness, rather than living their own *true self*. [...]

### **The Women's New Attitude and Struggle**

[...]

[...] This male consciousness that divides women between mother and toilet comes from the structure of consciousness that denies sex and this is the root of whether you are seen as an object of sex to play with, or as an object to marry.

Whether you are a mother or a toilet, they are both raccoons in the same den. When, regardless of which one you are seen as, you realize that they both essentially amount to the same thing, women start to challenge authoritarian male dominant society. [...]

[...]

Since we will achieve the liberation of women as a part of the proletariat liberation, we must develop our struggle against authority toward world revolution. For this struggle against authority must have totality due to its inherent globality and universality, and our relations with men constitute a part of this struggle [...]. Without continually questioning our personal relationship with men, children, and the family, and the contradictions inherent to these relations, in the tense struggle against authority, we will not be able to grasp the means to universalize what it means to be human [...].

[...] We can understand that the mistake of the women's struggle thus far lies in the fact that it has departed from a place which only grasped women's existence, in the past, present, and future terms, through the terminology of Marxism. While the perspective of class conflict is fundamental, to only take this perspective to understand women completely misses so many crucial points. By taking care of men who are worn down through the survival of the fittest, and caring for them by creating a comfortable, relaxing home, in order to send them out again into the market as a commodified labor force, women also execute the task of slave dealers.

[...]

[...] Our struggle does not begin with what in Marxist terms would be a pure revolutionary woman, who in fact exists nowhere, but it begins with me, here and now, with all the contradictions that defy reason. It is through casting back our grudges against men and the powers that be that we can begin as women to construct our theory of liberation for women. [...]

[...]

### **Women Give Birth, Men Don't**

The future of the world will depend on which side can integrate women—the side that is for the system or against it. If women's strength of stability is mobilized, it can become a truly radical power, but if it is used as a conservative force, it can serve as a basis of the dominant system. [...]

[...]

Virgin-Likeness Sustains Aggression and Anti-Revolutionary Forces

[...]

[...] The human foundation of this class society is based on the one-husband-one-wife system which oppresses women's sexual desire; it denies women's sexuality and makes it taboo. By treating women who don't act *virgin-like* below those who *act virgin-like*, and debasing their value as a toilet, this male dominant society has thus punished them and thereby thoroughly confined and regulated women's sexual desires. [...] [...]

[...] For women, the ruling authority's strategy regarding sex materializes through the toiletization of their sex. Thus, women return to their virgin-likeness as a reactionary facade that coincides with toiletization of their sex. It is this structure of consciousness that denies sex that makes the extreme opposites of the chastity of the wives of the military nation versus the comfort women's vaginas defiled by semen! The aggression of the ruling powers and counter-revolution are sustained through the oppositional pairing of chaste women and comfort women.

### **The Truth Spoken by Sex Organs is All the More the Truth**

Even in movements that aim toward human liberation, women drop out from the frontlines because there is no theory of struggle that addresses male and female sexuality, and given our servile dispositions, the struggle for liberation becomes thoroughly masculinist and male-centered [...].

[...] Marx's various theories regarding the slave-like relationship between capitalists and workers fail to recognize how profoundly these relations are mutually mediated through sex. Thus, the liberation of the proletariat wears out [...]. Women are at a loss for their own words in the face of the structures of male logic who distinguish women from humans, and without any question talk about solidarity, proletarian internationalism, and unified will.

[...]

Women's worship of men renders male logic the absolute truth. [...] Why has this ridiculous discriminatory structure that has divided women comrades been allowed to continue until now! Now is the time for women to assert that the non-logic of the *here-existing woman* is fine and beautiful.

Needless to say, this does not mean that women's logic is superior to men's logic. Rather our outcry for the restoration of women's logic is the necessary antithesis to the fact that until now patriarchal society's male exclusivism has only approved men's logic as good and legitimate. As African-Americans have asserted that "Black is beautiful," we must claim that "Women's (il)logic is beautiful." Since our struggle is based on women's historical burden, which cannot be easily expressed by words, based on our anger and resentment toward men and society, we must assert, "Our irrationality is beautiful" in the face of our male colleagues who continue to try to evaluate our struggle for its effectiveness and productivity.

[...]

We declare the liberation of women as a liberation of sex.

We declare it is a self-liberation from the structure of consciousness that denies sex. [...]

From woman to woman, from Toilet to Toilet!

Unity Empowers Women!

So we gonna go for it?

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