

Letter to the Editor: Class Struggle or Sexual Liberation?

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STRUGGLESSESSIONS

By the Struggle Sessions Editorial Board



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The Struggle Sessions Editorial Board has received several messages about two of our recent essays concerning sex and sexuality. We have been asked what our position is on gay, trans and non-binary people, with some messages coinciding with assumptions that the journal is antagonistic and exclusionary to certain sections of the people.

We take the class stand of the proletariat, applying Marxism to our conditions and putting proletarian politics at the center of our theoretical work. Questions of sex and sexuality are secondary to the collective demands of revolutionary politics, in particular here the mobilization of working women for their emancipation through socialist revolution.

Postmodernism raises the specter of sexual liberation to combat the proletarian line of women's emancipation through socialist revolution, creating a false politicization of sex which in fact functions to depoliticize, to remove the question of class standpoint and political struggle. With postmodernism, all questions are reduced to the interpersonal and the interpersonal, frequently, is reduced to sexual relations. This reduction to the interpersonal means stripping away the basis which determines social relations, i.e. the basis in production, the struggle for existence. Decadence, promiscuity, and non-conformity are hailed as liberatory while organizing

women and the working class for collective liberation is labeled exclusionary and reductionist.

We call this what it is: hedonism, individualism, the personal liberation of the petite-bourgeoisie opposed to the collective liberation of the proletariat. Sex and personal relationships cannot be revolutionized except through subordinating them to proletarian discipline. Marxists do not view sexuality as a private affair, since humans are social animals and all things are subject to criticism from the standpoint of the proletariat. At the same time, we seek precisely to avoid the overemphasis on sex and personal identity that postmodernism uses to evade the question of class struggle and to replace political struggle with individual choice.

We repeat Lenin, who pointed out that an overemphasis on questions of sex plays a destructive role, especially among the youth and the petite-bourgeoisie.

Dissoluteness in sexual life is bourgeois, is a phenomenon of decay. The proletariat is a rising class. It doesn't need intoxication as a narcotic or a stimulus. Intoxication as little by sexual exaggeration as by alcohol. [Lenin on the Women's Question]

Capitalism alienates people from one another, and creates relationships based on economic calculation and base physical and emotional needs as a rule. Postmodernism worships these alienated relationships under the guise of individual choice, subordinating the collective to the individual instead of subordinating the individual to the collective.

Only repeated cultural revolutions under socialism will create a new man and woman and a new society, allowing the development of authentic relationships on the basis of love and social need. This orientation places the political question at the forefront: the struggle for socialist revolution followed by repeated cultural revolutions, and the subordination of personal relationships to the political needs of the revolution.

The facts of biological reproduction and the oppression of women rooted in private property divide society into men and women. While biological reproduction is the basis, which is reflected for instance in the struggle over reproductive rights, humans are primarily social animals and so social relationships conditioned by class society are primarily determinate on sex and sexuality. Hence homosexuality and transition to the social role of the opposite sex has an objective existence that is conditioned by the historical development of society.

On the other hand, the ideology that underlies non-binary identification is rooted in idealism and reactionary postmodernism. It argues that one can escape the contradiction between men and women at an individual level through personal feeling and superficial changes in presentation. This is positioned as progressive and liberating. We see this as part of the 'sexual liberation' thesis that one can change society solely by changing one's ideas or behavior, or that the only thing which matters is one's ideas or behaviors, a total idealism opposed to materialism. It obscures the basis of women's emancipation which is an essential question for revolution.

The metaphysics behind the non-binary concept in fact ossifies the categories of men and women into a set of superficial traits. Rather than a historical materialist approach which studies how the man-woman contradiction as it exists today came into being conditioned by private property, and thus studies how it will pass away with the abolition of private property, this ideology poses that, for instance, women simply are a set of prescribed traits and to deviate from said traits is to deviate from womanhood. Instead of combating the negative traits associated with manhood and womanhood as part of understanding the historical basis and development of the man-woman contradiction, manhood and womanhood itself is combated, a metaphysical viewpoint that is distant from the reality of the masses. Marx puts this reality as such:

[A]s soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. [The German Ideology]

We assert that men and women must be remolded in the process of revolution and social transformation to create a new socialist man and new socialist woman. Militarization and the reorganization of society have a transformative effect on men and women: the negative traits associated with manhood and womanhood will be combated not because men and women are to be abolished, but to serve the needs of the revolution. Personal relationships will be transformed on an egalitarian basis, not for their own sake detached from class struggle, but precisely to subordinate them to the demands of proletarian discipline and organization.

Contrary to postmodernism, Marxism places politics as primary and rejects the view that issues affecting a minority population without a key role in production is determinate in politics. LGBT people are not a distinct social force and do not have a decisive role in politics as such. Imperialism does not depend on the discrimination of LGBT people, and today 'pink-washes' itself by giving LGBT people a large degree of legal equality in order to create a false image of progressivism—the productive forces are developed enough in the imperialist countries that capitalism has lost its pressing need to reproduce the oppressed class as not every family needs to produce children to maintain a socially-necessary proletarian population. The most advanced revolutionary movements have arisen in the less 'developed' countries, and thus the question of reproduction plays a more prominent role. We should look at these phenomena in the context of economic development and remember that the new is born stamped with the old, and never as a 'pure' new thing.

We reiterate the message of the essay *Consumer Options* that monogamy and polyamory both are bourgeois and backwards; similarly both heterosexuality—understood as the superstructural support reproducing the economic unit of the family—and 'queerness' are old bourgeois forms that oppose the new, socialist social relations. In both cases the latter is pushed by postmodernism as the more progressive option, a new fad to jump onto. Just as the bourgeoisie cynically uses the people's alienation and dissatisfaction with twisted and corrupted personal relationships to push false solutions like polyamory and 'queerness,' the monopoly media uses identity in their cultural productions to

push the false solutions of inclusivity and positivity. This is the context in which non-binary was used in our recent essay *Bourgeois Culture is a Cadaver*, showing it to be a hip term cynically used by the bourgeoisie to paper over people's subjective dissatisfaction and their oppression.

We urge our readers to think critically, to apply materialism and to put communist politics at the center of everything they do. We cannot achieve liberation through our personal identity, expression or relationships, but only through subordinating our individuality to the concrete tasks of collective liberation through people's war until communism.

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