

SOLIDARITY STATEMENT

The 500th anniversary of the colonial invasion of the Americas is drawing to a close. As women who believe in the right of self-determination, liberation and justice for all oppressed people, this is a moment to dedicate ourselves to struggling that there not be another 100 years of U.S. and European imperialist domination over the Americas or any other part of the world.

Today we celebrate women political prisoners and prisoners of war, saluting our sisters imprisoned around the world. We also remember why this particular day was chosen -- to honor the liberation of Assata Shakur, to inspire us in the ongoing struggle to free all political prisoners. How joyful it would be to be celebrating the release of all women political prisoners, along with our comrades, worldwide! That challenge still awaits us.

Some countries are negotiating the release of political prisoners in recognition of the changed political conditions around the world. Even Germany has begun to release some of the prisoners of the RAF and other political-military organizations. Just 5 years ago this would have been inconceivable; however, the radical and revolutionary political sectors in the FRG did not cease their efforts, nor allow the prisoners, even in the most isolated conditions, to be separated or excluded from the struggle and its demands.

Meanwhile, the U.S. still refuses to recognize us as political prisoners or prisoners of war. Recently the U.S. government again refused Italy's petition to transfer Silvia Baraldini home, lying about the nature of her conviction in order to criminalize her. But the campaign here continues, and millions of Italians continue to press the U.S. to honor its treaty and release Silvia to Italy.

Women have played central roles in all the liberation struggles, particularly in this last half of the 20th century. We have had glimpses of the breadth of human liberation -- that along with national liberation, it must include women's liberation and lesbian and gay liberation. As women from the oppressor nation, we can't separate our own liberation from that of the colonized. It is our responsibility -- and our salvation -- to break with white supremacy and stand in solidarity with the struggles of all oppressed people. It is a matter of justice, and necessary to our survival.

As political prisoners we are not separate from these ongoing struggles. We remain a part of struggle even behind the walls -- every injustice and ill in society exists here: white supremacy and racism, AIDS, the debasement and denigration of women, the particular attacks on lesbians, national oppression, and the daily, grinding repression define our existence. We confront them all. The more relationship we have to the movement and struggles outside, the more empowered we are. Communication with people in the AIDS movement has been crucial to the work we have organized inside. Our empowerment can only strengthen the work being done outside the walls.

Our conditions may be different from those of our men comrades, and of men prisoners in general. Women prisoners are not usually treated with the same degree of physical violence as men. We are treated paternalistically, like overgrown children not in full command of our mental and emotional faculties. We confront the daily invasion of our privacy and our bodies through pat searches by male guards, and the constant threat of sexual attack. We confront a high and constant level of psychological violence. The desired results on the part of the state are not so different, whatever the means -- to control, to crush our strength and resistance, to change us into compliant, contrite women who will adhere to the social contract and expectations. A very political process, not only against women political prisoners and prisoners of war, but against all women prisoners. The definition of repression must include the particular repression of women in the prisons. We need your continued support. We need your voices raised with our own, to support all women political prisoners and prisoners of war.

VENCEREMOS!

Silvia Baraldini, Marilyn Buck, Susan Rosenberg and Laura Whitehorn
Shawnee Control Unit for Women, Marianna, FL

Linda Evans, FCI Pleasanton women's prison, Dublin, CA

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