

No forced sterilization

Fifth Estate Collective

1971

We know that sterilization was used as a technique of genocide by Nazi doctors. Today in the U.S. welfare mothers are being punished by forced sterilization. Often in New York, women must choose between sterilization or loss of welfare payments. Elsewhere, poor women must agree to sterilization before they can receive an abortion.

The Young Lords (a revolutionary Puerto Rican organization) position paper on women states: "We feel that genocide is being committed against our people. The practice of sterilization in Puerto Rico goes back to the 1930's when doctors pushed it as the only means of contraception. In 1947-1948, 7% of the women were sterilized; between 1953-1954, four out of every twenty-five; and in 1965 the number had increased to about 1 out of every 3 women. In many cases our sisters are told that their tubes are going to be tied, but are not told that the tubes can never be untied.

"Part of this genocide is also the use of birth control pills which were tested for 15 years on Puerto Rican sisters (guinea pigs) before being sold on the market in the U.S....We believe that abortions should be legal if they are community controlled, if they are safe, if our people are educated about the risks, and if doctors do not sterilize our sisters while performing abortions. **WE SAY, CHANGE THE SYSTEM SO THAT WOMEN CAN BE FREELY ALLOWED TO HAVE AS MANY CHILDREN AS THEY WANT WITHOUT SUFFERING ANY CONSEQUENCES.**"

We must demand no forced sterilization so that abortion cannot be used against any of our sisters. When we take our demands to Lansing, we can't let the legislators overlook the sterilization that poor women know and fear. Abortion must be free and legal-genocide must be impossible.

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