FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY AND THE DOMINATION OF PATRIARCHY

By Maryann Kasina

I am Maryanne Kasina, a 28 year old woman born and raised in the informal settlements of Kayole. I am a mother of two children. As a survivor of Gender Based Violence, I had moments where I felt everything had failed, got frustrated, and I was desperate and a victim of fate and there was nothing I could do to change the turn of events in my life. I was motivated more in 2018 when we founded a community justice center with other young women who were also victims of similar conditions as mine.

Having grown in a society where inequality exists, I experienced poverty in my day to day lifestyle. When I was growing up I could hear and see people justify and romanticize poverty, saying "Mungu ana sababu zake", to mean it was God’s will. It kept tormenting me why were we poor and others rich. What was it we had not done to God that we were poor? What were the reasons for our poverty? I couldn't trace any until I joined progressive spaces and individuals that I got to learn, unlearn and relearn the purpose of having a clear political ideology. As Assata Shakur said, "No one is going to give you the education you need to overthrow them. Nobody is going to teach your true history nor your true heroes if they know that this knowledge will help set you free." This made me analyze the situation and the struggle of my people.

It was then that I got to understand why I was a victim of poverty, and that gives me the motivation to continue fighting. I stand firmly, unapologetically and authentically to fight capitalism and patriarchy that has exploited the labor of women and subjected them to conditions of poverty. Having been brought up in a society where women have been alienated from the products of their labor due to the capitalist system, the question is how much labor women produce for the Capitalist system that has exploited the labor of women, and owned the body of women.

It is so devastating how women lose their children in the hands of the police in the informal settlements where our children are being killed due to the conditions of poverty. The system tends to end the systematic killings through violence whereas the poor need basic needs, not guns and violence. It is in fact shocking that the president launched a manufacturing company of guns that would produce twelve thousands of guns per year, yet crime is rampant in the informal settlements.

Women are dying due to lack of proper maternal health, which is so costly that money defines the chances of the mother and the baby living. Access to menstrual products is a struggle for many women and girls and this continues to subject women to poverty and exploitation, while
the Capitalist System makes money out of women’s natural flow of menses. The Capitalist patriarchal system has denied us Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and it decides what happens to the body of the woman. It is because of this that we continue to fight until Capitalism and Patriarchy leave off the body of Women. We don't need to do Sex Work in exchange for basic needs. We all want to live a dignified life. We will continue to organize because we are not less human beings. We deserve to live better. We can’t normalize poverty which is violence and we cannot further the domination of Patriarchy. It is up to the men to support women in this fight against Patriarchy, to question in every space they find it male dominated and shed off their fragile toxic masculinity because they too are victims of the system. They have failed to protect women and children. We must unite our struggles and understand that we owe each other, our children and generations to come a dignified life. We have to demand the impossible! They say Socialism is impossible and that Capitalism is the only way. We say to the Capitalists, then it is the impossible we demand!