

If Women Are Not Free, Then No One Is Free



Special to Revolution

Abortion Rights Freedom Ride Rally in downtown Chicago, July 30, 2013.

After kickoff rallies in New York and San Francisco, the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride set out from both coasts to take the offensive and turn the tide against the nationwide reactionary assault on women's right to abortion—the basic right that all women must have to determine whether or not to bear a child. With more than 300 measures introduced in states around the country so far this year, measures designed to further restrict abortion and shut down clinics; with 97 percent of rural counties having no abortion providers; with eight people already killed for their involvement in providing abortions, women's reproductive freedom is in a state of extreme emergency.



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Minneapolis, August 1

"But the question must be asked, 'Why is abortion so controversial?' It is a safe, common, medical procedure that absolutely is NOT killing a baby and is totally a moral decision for a woman to make, so WHY is it controversial?"

"The reason that abortion is controversial is because we live in a society where women, despite the pronouncements of 'equality achieved' and advances made, are NOT viewed or treated as full human beings. We live in a society where women are socialized to find their worth in being attractive and useful to men, where men are socialized to view women as objects of sexual service or domestic care, where the cult of motherhood (the idea that women's highest achievement and duty in life is to bear and rear children) is alive and aggressively reasserting itself and where violence and disrespect against women is omnipresent and escalating. We live in a society, like all societies divided into classes

Abortion Rights Freedom Ride: Summer 2013 Taking on the emergency of the war against women

The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride brought together the contributions and active participation of people from many different perspectives, setting out to accomplish three aims as described by Sunsara Taylor and David Gunn, Jr.:

- "...one, we must move beyond localized fights and launch a national counter-offensive;
- "two, we must radically reset the political, moral, and ideological terms of this fight so that millions understand that this fight is about women's liberation or women's enslavement;
- "lastly, and of paramount importance, we must call forth the mass independent political resistance that is necessary to defeat this war on women."

*David Gunn, Jr.'s father was an abortion provider who was murdered by an anti-abortion fanatic in 1993.



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The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, together with local abortion supporters and members of Minnesota National Organization for Women, hold a rally on August 3 in Fargo, North Dakota. A court injunction allowed the last clinic in the state to remain open for now.

The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride traveled to many states—including North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Arkansas, and Mississippi, each of which has only one abortion clinic remaining—defending the clinics and providers, protesting against new laws that would bring draconian restrictions on abortion, and spreading the message of "Abortion on Demand and Without Apology" and "Forced Motherhood is Female Enslavement."

The bold and uncompromising stand of the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, standing up in the face of rabid anti-abortion fanatics, and unapologetically putting forward their demands, was a challenge to some who support the right to abortion but have become defensive and in some cases refuse to even say the word abortion, allowing those who would drive women back into the Dark Ages to act like they are the ones who have morality on their side.

The fight to defend abortion has everything to do with breaking with the notion that women's essential role is as breeders of children—fighting for women to be viewed and treated as full and equal human beings. And this has everything to do with ending all oppression and exploitation through communist revolution to bring about a truly liberated society and world for all of humanity.



Photo: AP

Protest against rape, New Delhi, India, May 2012.

before it, that requires patriarchy (that is, the systematic domination of women by men—including the control over women's reproduction, sexuality, and childbearing in particular) for its overall functioning. This society requires this kind of control over women and their reproduction in order to maintain property and inheritance lines, social position, and the distribution of wealth from one generation to the next, in this world where some possess obscene wealth while others scrape and starve and watch their children die by the millions of preventable disease. We live in a society which gives rise to and fosters and encourages the most vicious exploitation and oppression and degradation and humiliation of women." (From "Where Does this War Against Women Come From? Why is it so Vicious? Real Revolution Could Not Come a Minute too Soon!" by Sunsara Taylor, initiator of the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride.)



Photo: AP

International Women's Day, Mexico City, 2011. Revolution translation of sign: "Not one more, I want to go into the streets without fear."

You cannot break all the chains, except one. You cannot say you want to be free of exploitation and oppression, except you want to keep the oppression of women by men. You can't say you want to liberate humanity yet keep one half of the people enslaved to the other half. The oppression of women is completely bound up with the division of society into masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited, and the ending of all such conditions is impossible without the complete liberation of women. All this is why women have a tremendous role to play not only in making revolution but in making sure there is all-the-way revolution. The fury of women can and must be fully unleashed as a mighty force for proletarian revolution.

Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA
Basics 3:22

"I sat down with the director of Jackson Women's Health Organization.... She told me about her patients. About 80% of them are Black women, many of them travel from long distances, only about a third of them have a partner with them (some have a relative or friend, others come alone), and many of them are very young. Her voice filled with emotion when she told me about the 14-year-old who was brought in recently by her 27-year-old mother. The mother had only been 13 when she had her child and was determined not to see her daughter put through the same hardship. The director told of other women who have to bus in from the surrounding area, of all the degradation they have to go through to come up with the funds not only for the abortion but also for travel. She told of the mandatory waiting period of 24 hours and how many women cannot afford even a cheap motel and don't have anywhere to spend the night.

"She got visibly, and quite righteously, angry when discussing the anti-abortion protesters who surround her clinic and harass her patients every single day. We had experienced this ourselves in the past 24 hours, being told that we don't 'deserve to have children,' that we 'should have our uteruses ripped out,' that 'women should not be allowed to vote,' and, of course, called all sorts of vicious and woman-hating epithets." (From "Some Thoughts on Our Time in Mississippi, on the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, and Looking Forward" by Sunsara Taylor.)



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A rally in front of the clinic in Jackson—last remaining clinic providing abortions to women in all of Mississippi.

The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride traveled to Wichita, Kansas, where Dr. George Tiller, one of very few doctors who still performed late-term abortions, was shot and killed by an anti-abortion assassin on May 31, 2009.

"What we learned here, and through the rest of our experiences in Wichita and in other places along this Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, revealed to us not only how much there needs to be a voice out there very loudly proclaiming that Fetuses are NOT babies, Abortion is NOT murder, and Women are NOT incubators and insisting on Abortion on Demand and Without Apology! But also how much there needs to be a fight to raise the sights of women and very young girls to more than simply having a baby as the only way of getting respect or love. There is just so much human potential in these women and young girls that is being squandered—and all of society is suffering for this. There is an urgent need NOW for a growing movement for revolution, and—at the soonest possible time—an actual successful revolution, to bring about a society and world where women and young girls are truly thinking about and contributing to every realm of human endeavor together fully and equally with men. Not only do women need the unfettered right to abortion, not only do they need to hear the message of this Freedom Ride, not only do they need a massive struggle throughout society to defeat the war on women—they need their fury unleashed and their many talents and contributions tapped as a mighty force in changing the whole world and in making the kind of revolution that can emancipate humanity." (From "A Day in a Mall in Wichita" by Sunsara Taylor.)



Photo: Brad Konitzer

New York City, at the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride send-off rally.

(To learn more about why fetuses are NOT babies, see: "What Is an Abortion and Why Women Must Have the Right to Choose" and "A Fetus Is Not a Baby! Abortion on Demand and Without Apology" on revcom.us. To get further into the revolution that is needed to liberate women and emancipate all humanity, see *A Declaration: For Women's Liberation and the Emancipation of All Humanity*, also on revcom.us.)

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