

The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride

REPORT



July 23 - August 20, 2013
Fighting for Abortion On Demand
and Without Apology

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Table of Contents

Introduction ...page 3

Part I – The Situation We Encounter: Abortion Rights are in a State of Emergency ...page 4

Our Goals ...5

Drawing Inspiration From the Original Freedom Rides ...5

Our Launch and Our Route ...5

Part II – What We Learned About the Terrain Surrounding Abortion Rights Nationwide:

It's Worse Than You Think... Clinics, Doctors and Women Under Many-Sided Attack ...page 7

An Avalanche of Legal Restrictions ...7

A Siege at Every Clinic ...8

Threats of Violence Continue ...9

Abortion Stigma, the Cult of Motherhood, and the The Need to Reclaim the Moral High Ground ...10

The Deadly Paralysis of Official Politics: Looking for Help in All the Wrong Places ...11

Part III – On the Road to Transformation: Assessing Our Three Over-Arching Goals ...page 13

More on Changing THINKING About Abortion: This Fight is About Women's Liberation or Women's Enslavement. Women MUST have Abortion On Demand and Without Apology! ...15

Challenging Racism and Bigotry ...17

Bitter Memories of Illegal Abortions and Prescient Warnings for the Future ...19

Appreciating the Abortion Doctors, Staff and Escorts Who Risk Their Lives Every Day for Women ...20

Anti-Abortion Forces Did Not Directly Confront the Ride ...21

Conclusion ...22

Appendix 1 – Abortion On Demand and Without Apology Statement ...page 23

Appendix 2 – Comments from Statement Signers ...page 24

Appendix 3 – Statements of Support ...page 26

Eve Ensler ...26

Gloria Steinem ...26

Mark Ruffalo ...27

Merle Hoffman ...28

Janeane Garofolo ...28

David Gunn, Jr. ...28

Sikivu Hutchinson ...29

Susan Brownmiller ...30

Donna Schaper ...30

Kathleen Barry ...31

Finn Mackay ...31

Eleanor Bader ...31

Cecile Pineda ...31

Laura X ...31

Table of Contents, cont'd

Appendix 4 – Key Articles: Created For or Throughout the Course of This Project ...page 32

Abortion Rights Are at a Crossroads, by Sunsara Taylor & David Gunn, Jr ...32

Still Crazy After All These Years, by Ginny ...34

A Day in a Mall in Wichita, by Sunsara Taylor ...35

Why I Oppose a 20-Week Ban, by Mary Lou Singleton ...38

Where Does This War on Women Come From? Why is it So Vicious? Real Revolution Could Not Come a Minute Too Soon!, by Sunsara Taylor ...39

I Use the Truth as My Guiding Principle and Strategy, by David Gunn, Jr. ...41

Taking On the Anti-Abortion Siege in Albuquerque, by a member of the Revolution Club and Abortion Rights Freedom Rider ...42

If Women Are Not Free, Then No One Is Free, from a photospread in *Revolution* Newspaper ...45

Appendix 5 – Media Report ...page 49

Appendix 6 – Fundraising:

A Crucial Part of the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride – and a Big Advance ...page 51

Appendix 7 – Stop Patriarchy’s Full Call to Action:

End Pornography & Patriarchy: The Enslavement and Degradation of Women ...page 53

Thank You! ...page 54

Introduction

In the summer of 2013, the movement to End Pornography and Patriarchy: The Enslavement and Degradation of Women (StopPatriarchy.org) set out to turn the tide on the national state of emergency surrounding abortion rights by launching a national Abortion Rights Freedom Ride. Traveling from both coasts and down the middle of the country, through fifteen states and nearly 10,000 miles, over two dozen people caravanned, hundreds rallied, and thousands took part in other ways to stand up for abortion on demand and without apology.

In this report you will find an overview of our understanding of this state of emergency, what we set out to accomplish, what we learned and transformed, the voices of many who joined with us, and a rich collection of articles from our travels.

In **Part I** we explain the reasons for organizing the ride and the overall events of the summer. In **Part II** we outline the conditions that we encountered as we traveled throughout this nation. In **Part III** we address specific areas of action: ways that we fought to change the terms of the fight over abortion, and the advances that were made in organizing a movement that relies on ourselves to wage massive political resistance to defeat the war on women. **Appendix 1** is the “Abortion On Demand and Without Apology” statement, the core uniting document of this project, signed by over 850 people around the country and beyond. **Appendices 2 & 3** highlight some of the comments sent in from signers of the statement for Abortion on Demand & Without Apology, as well as some of the statements of support sent to the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride from prominent thinkers and cultural figures. **Appendix 4** presents some key articles created either for or throughout the course of this project. **Appendices 5 & 6** “zoom in” on the impact of this project as evidenced through media coverage and fundraising. **Appendix 7** is the Call to Action for the larger movement to Stop Patriarchy. And finally, our special thanks and acknowledgements to the people who contributed to the launching of this much-needed ride.

I. The Situation We Encounter:

Abortion Rights are in a State of Emergency

Across the country, abortion rights are in a state of emergency. Coming after decades of mounting assault on women's right to abortion, the last three years have seen record restrictions on access to abortion nationwide and more than 50 abortion clinics have been forced to close their doors. Five states have only one abortion clinic left; two of these five remain open only because of temporary orders from judges. 97% of rural counties have no abortion provider at all. Over 80% of abortion clinics have experienced violence, threats, or harassment; eight doctors and staff have been murdered. Abortion has never been more stigmatized, more difficult to access, or more dangerous to provide than at any point in the last 40 years since it became legal nationwide in 1973.

At its core, the fight over abortion has never been about babies; it has always been about control over women. The fight to defend and expand access to abortion on demand and without apology is a central part of the fight for women's full liberation. As Gloria Steinem put it in her statement of support for the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, "If women can't decide the fate of our bodies from the skin in, we can't control our lives from the skin out. Reproductive justice is the single greatest determinant of whether we are healthy or not, educated or not, in the paid labor force or not, and how long she lives. Involuntary pregnancy is the most intimate form of involuntary servitude, and the right to give birth is a human right" (read full statement on page 26).

Those leading the assault on women's right to abortion seek to force women back into the role they occupied for millennia, that of breeders of children and property of men. They do this as one part of a highly repressive and openly

"Abortion is an issue that divides this country. This is no accident. How one thinks and feels about abortion flows fundamentally from how one views women."

~Abortion On Demand Statement

"[We] recognize that women are full human beings who must have the right - through unrestricted and unstigmatized access to birth control and abortion - to decide for themselves when and whether they will have children."

~Abortion On Demand Statement

fascist program which includes the celebration of U.S. domination and aggression throughout the world, the assault on science and denial of global climate change, even greater punishment and repression aimed at Black people, Latinos, and the poor, bigotry and denial of basic rights to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and more.

Stop Patriarchy sees these growing attacks on abortion as one front of an intensifying war on women which includes the mushrooming sex industry with its increasingly violent and degrading pornography, the global epidemic of rape and rape culture, shaming of women who have sex, and other forms of violence and discrimination against women. We see no fundamental difference between reducing women to breeders by denying

the right to birth control and abortion and reducing women to objects to be plundered for the sexual gratification of men (read full Call to Action on page 53). At the same time, recognizing the state of emergency regarding abortion and birth control rights, we initiated the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride to focus on the need for "Abortion On Demand and Without Apology" and united with and involved many in this effort who may not share our views on other issues.

StopPatriarchy.org and those we united with in this Abortion Rights Freedom Ride recognize that women are full human beings who must have the right - through unrestricted and unstigmatized access to birth control and abortion - to decide for themselves when and whether they will have children.

Without this right, women are no more than slaves. And if women are not free, then no one is free.

Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!

Our Goals

Flowing from this, we identified three main things we aimed to accomplish with the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride. As this was put in a piece authored by Sunsara Taylor and David Gunn, Jr. (read full article on page 32):

1. **“...we must move beyond localized fights and launch a national counter-offensive;**
2. **“...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;**
3. **“lastly, and of paramount importance, we must call forth the mass independent political resistance that is necessary to defeat this war on women.”**

With these goals in mind, we rented vans, borrowed cars, and caravanned across the country, stopping in towns and cities where abortion rights were most under attack.

Drawing Inspiration from the Original Freedom Rides

We called ourselves Freedom Riders out of respect for the Freedom Riders of the 1960s. Those riders were civil rights activists who rode buses into the segregated south, directly challenging Jim Crow (white supremacist and segregationist) laws and customs and drawing national attention to the racism that was still accepted and enforced in many parts of the south. Despite the fact that the Supreme Court had made segregation illegal on interstate transportation, segregation was still enforced by local law enforcement. Meanwhile, the Federal government in many ways gave tacit support for this ongoing segregation, and turned a blind eye to extra-legal terror. The Freedom Riders of 1961 knew that it was necessary to call attention to the state of emergency even if it meant putting their bodies on the line and going to where Black people’s rights were most under attack.

We in 2013 saw this as an appropriate model for calling attention to the continuing war on women in the 21st century. Despite the fact that the Supreme Court guaranteed women’s right to abortion across the U.S. in their 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, abortion access is increasingly denied through state and local legislatures as well as extra-legal attacks. Meanwhile, at the Federal level, politicians either join – or do little to stop – these assaults. The stakes are whether women will be treated as full human beings or whether women will be enslaved to their reproduction. In the spirit of the original Freedom Rides, we traveled to the places where women’s right to abortion is most severely restricted and where violence against clinics and doctors has taken place, to wake up the country, to stand with those on the front lines, and to demand the full equality and liberation of women.

Our Launch and Our Route

The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride began with rallies on July 23rd, 2013 in New York City and San Francisco to bring together support and launch the Ride. Two vans took off the next day — one from the west coast and one from the east coast — crossed the entire country and then traveled together from Fargo, North Dakota, through Wichita, Kansas, all the way to Jackson, Mississippi, and then returned to both coasts. Altogether, the Freedom Riders stopped in fifteen cities where we held rallies, honored and appreciated abortion providers, did broad outreach, protested anti-abortion forces, garnered local media attention, held forums, blogged, made videos, and in

other ways launched a national movement for abortion on demand and without apology.

We chose our route to highlight the national character of the attacks on abortion and to rally a national counter-offensive. This included stops in all five states that have only one abortion clinic left. We gave Abortion Providers Are Heroes certificates to eight abortion clinics along our route. We spent close to a week and organized protests in the three locations we identified as facing some of the most extreme conditions: Fargo, ND, Wichita, KS, and Jackson, MS. (Others cities we stopped in included: Cleveland,

Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Minneapolis, MN; Bellevue, Nebraska; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Little Rock, Arkansas; Jackson, Wyoming; Salt Lake City, Utah; Livingston, Montana; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Charlotte, North Carolina.)

The last clinic in North Dakota, located in Fargo, faced the threat of being closed by extreme new anti-abortion laws which were set to go into effect on August 1st, 2013. The Freedom Ride held a protest at the county courthouse the day before, July 31st, where an

injunction was granted which temporarily stayed part of the law and allowed the clinic to stay open. For several days we did outreach in the downtown area and at progressive social events throughout the city. On Saturday, August 3rd we held a protest which drew about 45 people including staff and supporters from the local clinic, folks from a local atheist group, members of the Minneapolis NOW chapter who drove four hours to be there, a contingent who came down from Grand Forks, and others from around the Fargo area, and got great media coverage.

We spent almost a week in Wichita, KS. This is where Dr. George Tiller lived and worked for decades until he was assassinated on May 31st, 2009 by an anti-abortion fanatic. This is also where the Christian-fascist group, Operation Rescue, has its national headquarters. The new abortion clinic which has finally opened its doors this year (after an aggressive and multi-sided campaign to prevent it) faces serious new threats.

There are also new laws restricting and institutionalizing stigma and ignorance against abortion such as the Kansas Right to Know law which requires doctors to tell women that "life begins at fertilization," and that abortion "increases the risk of breast cancer." Abortion is banned at 20 weeks. In

Wichita, we did active social investigation in one of the local malls (read full article on page 35), we visited and wrote about one of the Crisis Pregnancy Centers, we protested the national headquarters of Operation Rescue, and we held a rally on Saturday, August 10th in downtown Wichita which also got great local coverage.



The last major stop on the Freedom Ride was Jackson, Mississippi where the governor and most of the legislature have made it their goal to make abortion impossible in the state. The only thing keeping this last clinic in the state open is a Federal judge's

order temporarily blocking the medically unnecessary requirement that abortion doctors have admitting privileges at the local hospital. This law is a thinly disguised attempt to shut down the state's only abortion provider. The trial over whether this will be enforced is scheduled for March 3, 2014.

Clinic patients, an estimated 80% of whom are African American and the majority of whom are poor, have to pass by anti-abortion fanatics who scream at, taunt and attempt to shame women. One protest leader is regularly there with his sign that says "Abortion = Black Genocide."



We spent almost a week in Jackson where we met with local activists, did outreach, and joined in clinic escorting. August 17th was the culmination when over 100 people came together at Jackson Women's Health Organization in a spirited rally to stand up for the clinic and for

Abortion on Demand and Without Apology. There were Abortion Rights Freedom Riders, clinic staff and volunteer escorts, Mississippi NOW, Wake Up Mississippi! and the Hell No Campaign, along with unapologetic groups of Mississippi supporters, clinic defenders, activists; supporters traveled from Kentucky, Texas, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana for this rally. These efforts in Mississippi got both local and national news coverage.

II. What We Learned About the Terrain Surrounding Abortion Rights Nationwide:

It's Worse Than You Think... Clinics, Doctors and Women Under Many-Sided Attack

The abortion rights state of emergency is relentless and systematic and undeniable. Although abortion rights have been under attack for decades, the last few years have seen a nationally-coordinated escalation in this assault by extreme anti-abortion organizations, politicians, and ideologues. This is all-sided war, legal and extra-legal, in the legislature and in front of the clinics, with preachers, politicians and a battle to win hearts and minds and to permanently close clinics.

An Avalanche of Legal Restrictions

The legal assault is dizzying. Eve Ensler captured much of this in her statement supporting the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride where she said, "The near-daily laws restricting women's right to abortion, the chorus of Republicans belittling rape and shaming women, and the whole future they are aggressively fighting for are terrifying and an attempt to push us back to the dark ages. It is a state of emergency. Forced motherhood is a form of violence" (read full statement on page 26).

In 2012 alone, 43 abortion restrictions were enacted in 19 states. Over 50 clinics have closed since 2010. In addition to mandatory waiting periods and ultrasounds, states are passing so-called "TRAP" laws—the Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers. These laws often require clinics to undergo extensive and costly renovations in order to become ambulatory surgical centers – requirements which have no medical justification but have forced the closure of clinics which could not afford to comply. In 2013, almost 300 new TRAP laws flooded the legislatures. 28 states now have various medically unnecessary requirements for abortion clinics such as requiring them to have hospital admitting privileges (this, too, has closed clinics). A law passed in July in North Carolina will effectively close most of their 16 clinics because only one now meets the standards

*"It is a state of emergency. Forced motherhood is a form of violence."
~Eve Ensler*

In addition to closing off access to abortion to huge numbers of women, these legal restrictions and clinic closings have the effect of further shifting public opinion and normalizing public condemnation and interference with women's access to abortion.

of an outpatient surgical center. Three clinics have already closed in Texas due to the new law signed in July and more are expected to close before the end of the year.

In addition to closing off access to abortion to huge numbers of women, these legal restrictions and clinic closings have the effect of further shifting public opinion and normalizing public condemnation and interference with women's access to abortion. They codify this lack of access and state-backed criminalization of women's fundamental rights.

Unnecessary and costly ultrasounds, medically unnecessary waiting periods, dangerous parental consent and notification requirements, insurance bans, and state-required biased counseling mandates continue to be advocated for and passed state by state. Six states now require that abortion counselors tell women **the lie** that abortion will negatively effect future fertility. Abortion counselors in five states—Alaska, Kansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas—are required to say there is a link between abortion and breast cancer; another **utter lie!**

Eight states now ban abortion at 20 weeks based on the totally unscientific **myth** that the fetus can feel pain at that point. Most scientists, medical associations and

every credible study say that perception of pain is impossible without brain developments that occur well after 20 weeks. But in a climate where for decades people have been brainwashed to think of fetuses as “babies,” the notion of so-called “fetal pain” is hugely disorienting. Laws in 12 states now require that women be told that a fetus has the ability to feel pain.

There is a growing movement for “Personhood,” giving a zygote – the cell that is formed from a fertilized egg – full constitutional rights. Right now, five states—including Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, North Dakota and South Dakota—require that abortion counselors tell women that “personhood begins at conception”!

A Siege at Every Clinic

When we got on the ground the reality was repeatedly far more extreme and more of an emergency than almost anyone understands. Every single clinic we visited or heard from is under siege on many levels and from many angles from forces which have incredible initiative and are deeply rooted. Little is being done to actually counter the situation or change the overall political dynamic. Traveling through so many states, talking to so many people, and visiting so many clinics gave us a far deepened understanding of the similar nature of these attacks and the urgent need for a coherent national counter-offensive that changes the terms of this fight completely.

Every clinic has regular protesters whose life mission it is to shame women, turn them away from the clinic, intimidate the doctors and staff, and work to close the clinic. In Jackson, our volunteers were told repeatedly by these anti-abortion protesters (antis) to kill themselves, that they should have their uteruses torn out, that they don't deserve to have children, that they are “whores” and “sluts,” that women should stay home, that women don't even deserve the right to vote (politics, they argue, interferes with the “pure [i.e.: biblical] status” of women), and so much more garbage.

In Little Rock, there is only one clinic that does surgical abortions in the state and it has an encampment of extremely aggressive and Taliban-esque protesters. There is a physical line the antis cannot legally cross at the edge of the clinic's property, but they are there every single day that abortions are done and they have built a tower that they climb up on. The antis take pictures of the staff and women who come to the clinic and yell and lecture them all day long. They curse them and preach

97 percent of rural counties have no abortion provider. Often, the states with the fewest clinics also have more restrictions. 13 states prohibit the use of telemedicine, a method doctors use to prescribe medication (mifepristone) to terminate a pregnancy over a video chat, thereby drastically reducing access to abortion services in rural areas.

Vast stretches of this country are saturated in anti-abortion propaganda, where the question of the woman's life has been completely erased, and three-story high pictures of babies loom on billboards blaring, “18 days...a beating heart.”

Old Testament Bible verses. One of the protesters openly walks around with a firearm. They go after the men in particular, tell them not to let the woman “kill their child” and point out to the men that they are “stronger than the woman and should take charge.” There is no pretense of concern for the “unborn,” just vengeance and hatred for the “wickedness of woman.” Arkansas legislature passed by *12-week ban* on abortion this past March; now temporarily stopped by a court injunction.

In North Carolina, protesters are at the clinic we visited every single day. Their loudspeakers can be heard inside the clinic's waiting room and they scream lies like, “They call abortion a blind procedure because the doctor can't see what he is doing, it is blind as he rips the arms and limbs off your baby and then slips and rips right through your uterus. Do you know how many women DIE from abortion? You will probably DIE. Your child definitely will DIE. It is a slaughter going on inside your womb...” When the doctor arrives, they announce that on the loudspeaker as well. This is a form of terror against the doctor who knows that anyone who seeks to harm or kill him will be made aware of his exact moment of arrival and entrance into the building. Further, this is used against the women and men in the waiting room, as the harangue continues: “The abortionist is now parking, he is now getting out of his car and walking towards the building, it is not too late to turn around and save your baby...”

Every Friday these protesters bring an entire day-care full of children to the clinic and this serves a triple purpose. This is used to guilt and harass the women who, like all women in this society, are socialized from the day they are born and given a baby doll to feel that being a mother is

the “most important thing they will ever do with their lives.” And now are told that the fetus they are terminating is the same as the adorable little kids running all over. This is also a form of indoctrination of the small children who are organized to write things like, “Stop Murdering Babies,” on the sidewalk. Additionally, these kids run into the street and snarl up traffic so that all the passersby have to stop and listen to the LIES being spewed on the loudspeakers.

We spoke with one nurse who used to work with Dr. George Tiller before he was assassinated. She is going through a process right now where, because of wrongful but persistent challenges by antis, she is seriously worried about losing her license. Illegitimate lawsuits against abortion providers, doctors and nurses and challenges to their medical and business licenses are not uncommon. One example is the doctor who worked with Dr. Tiller in Wichita and provided the legally required second opinion on whether there was a medical need for a woman to have

a third-trimester abortion. She intentionally took a somewhat minimalist approach to filling out her patients’ medical records because she knew that the fascist district attorney was trying to open up patient records. When they did open up the records they revoked her medical license claiming she didn’t fill these forms out extensively enough! The doctor has been left with over \$90,000 in debt from legal battles with the state. We heard other similar stories of dedicated, well-trained providers put out of business through this kind of assault.

In Nebraska, the clinic we visited has trouble getting anyone to do maintenance on their building – including repainting the peeling exterior — because the contractors are afraid of repercussions if their vehicles are seen in the clinic parking lot. Every single thing this clinic does is spied on and gone after one way or another; this is the case at most clinics.

Threats of Violence Continue

Very importantly, the threat of violence and even death to doctors and clinic staff is ever-present; eight people have already been killed by anti-abortion violence and threats amass every day nationwide.

The woman who opened the new clinic in Wichita, KS has had public threats issued against her and protesters have shown up at her home with a pastor holding up a sign that read, “Where’s your church?”— an ominous reference to the fact that Dr. Tiller was assassinated in his church. One of the doctors who flies to Wichita to serve at this clinic was targeted with protests at the clinic where she worked in a suburb of Chicago to such a degree that she lost her job, and continues to have a difficult time finding any new institution that will hire her (given all the protest and hatred that now inevitably follows her).

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, where two of the only four remaining doctors in the country who openly provide third trimester abortions have their practice, Operation Rescue set up an outpost in 2010. Just this past August in Albuquerque – while we were on the Freedom Ride – Operation Rescue spearheaded nine days of dangerous and unrelenting protest. They stormed the Holocaust & Intolerance Museum to demand the installation of an exhibition on “the abortion holocaust.” They hung baby dolls from lamp-posts and held bloody signs of alleged

“fetuses” in public places across the city. They distributed “Wanted”-style postcards with the faces and home addresses of the doctors (clearly an invitation to others to visit violence upon these doctors) and they organized a protest at a midwife’s home and blockaded her and her children for hours while they were screamed at through a loudspeaker and all the neighbors had to listen as well.

In addition to attacks on clinic personnel there are direct and indirect threats to others associated with clinics and providers.

In Minneapolis we met a young woman whose father is an abortion doctor and she shared with us that she never tells that to anyone because she is so scared of what people will think. When she was in fifth grade she learned what her father did for a living when some older girls came up to her and said, “Your father kills babies” and then went on to spread this around the school. She very movingly explained how, for many years, she thought her dad was horrible and how this strained her relations with him. Then, she said, she got a bit older. She spoke about her own abortion and how much she grew to respect and love her father for what he does. After speaking with us she said, nearly in tears, “Wow, I think I am going to call my dad tonight and tell him about you guys and thank him.” Her father was friends with Dr. Tiller.

Abortion Stigma, the Cult of Motherhood, and the Need to Reclaim the Moral High Ground

It is critically important to understand that it is not only anti-abortion laws and threats to providers that endanger meaningful access to abortion rights. The stigma, shame, and moral condemnation of abortion, and of women who get abortions, are extremely high. For decades, the moral high ground has been ceded to the Christian fascists. Most people in this country either wrongly believe that “abortion is murder” or they feel that abortion, although sometimes necessary, is “morally undesirable” or “tragic.” Several generations have come of age never having heard anyone speak positively about abortion.

This is so extreme that at stop after stop, people of all ages would see our bold signs which declared Abortion on Demand and Without Apology and at first assume that we were against abortion. Why? Because they have never heard anyone use the word “abortion” unless they were condemning it. They did double-takes and had to read our signs more than once before the meaning of these signs – uncompromising support FOR abortion rights – penetrated their thinking.

In fact, there is absolutely nothing wrong with abortion when it is chosen freely by a woman. Fetuses are *not* babies, they are a subordinate part of a woman's body. It is up to her, and only her, whether or not she wants to carry a pregnancy to term. It is positive and liberating for women to be able to make this decision for themselves free of stigma and shame and this is why we *must* use the word “abortion” and popularize the slogan, the politics, and the morality of: Abortion on Demand and Without Apology. What is immoral is forcing women to have children against their will!

The stigma against abortion comes together with the heavy cult of motherhood, the idea that the most important thing a woman will ever do is to have a child. This idea is pushed on women all throughout society, from the moment they are born and a baby doll is

put in their hands. It is fostered among young women who face little prospect of climbing out of poverty, abuse, or other extreme conditions, and who come to believe that the thing that will give their lives meaning, bring them some love, or win them some respect is to have a child (even if it is at an extremely young age). It's a message conveyed in countless ways as well to even those women who are able to go through college and attain a career or place in public, but are still told (and often loudly echo) that “the most important job they'll ever have is to be a mother.”

This, too, is not so. Women are full human beings who must be able to participate fully and equally in every realm of society together with men. While being a parent can be a wonderful part of being human if one chooses, it is only *one part* of being human. And being *forced* to have a child against one's will is a form of female enslavement. When this happens women are forced to foreclose their dreams and other aspirations, trapped in abusive relationships, driven into poverty, or in many other ways devalued and irreparably harmed. Not only that, girls who grow up in a world where motherhood is deemed mandatory and more important than everything else are not even encouraged to develop dreams and plans and the ability to pursue a life that entails more than that.

All this to say that it is important to recognize that it is *both* of these ideological assaults on women – the tremendous shame, stigma, and moral condemnation surrounding abortion, *and* the profound and all-pervasive cult of motherhood – that come together to create a situation where, even where abortion is technically available, many women are already willing to go to dangerous extremes to try to

terminate a pregnancy without “getting an abortion.” As one of the Freedom Riders recalls, there were “women who chose fist fights over abortion to escape the hardship of waiting periods and travel, [and] also to simply avoid the

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stigma that surrounds a MEDICAL PROCEDURE.” Also, we repeatedly met very young women (and parents of very young women) who felt that it was perfectly responsible for 16 and 17 year olds to have babies. To be clear these were pro-choice people who told us, “If I got pregnant at 14, I'd have an abortion. 14 is too young. But at 16, I'm old enough. At this point if I got pregnant I would definitely have the baby.”

One Freedom Rider recalls our visit to a shopping mall in Wichita, Kansas:

“We learned about how young women just don't even consider not becoming a mother, and how their parents validate that notion, and no one is telling them that they themselves are human beings who have value in their own right. Women who don't want to be mothers, and have other dreams and plans for their lives need to know that is VALID and motherhood is NOT the best or only thing that their lives can and should be about. That they are human beings, capable of definition outside of familial roles. That they are more than mothers, more than daughters, more than sisters, more than aunts, or grandmas, or whatever. That they can dare to dream and dare to speak and think about the larger world, that in fact they can and should take responsibility for THIS, for looking at and being part of changing the whole world.”

Another Freedom Rider writes:

“In spite of my teaching about abortion for 13 years and finding most women and men had little or no understanding about abortion, what it is, how threatened it is, and how widespread it is, my experience on the tour (as limited as it was) found that so many young people had 'never heard anyone say anything positive about abortion.' And they were very happy to find out about us. It is pretty clear that a whole couple generations of people have been influenced so deeply by the Christian fascists that abortion is not even spoken of except as a 'sin' or 'murder' etc. I had thought that in LA because it is so available women had gotten complacent... but now it seems to me that the ideological offensive of the antis is much more responsible for that even in big cities.”

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The combination of fear, denial, and outright lies about abortion and women's rights makes clear the great need not just to beat back each restriction on abortion as they come down, but to rip the stigma off of abortion altogether.

We must change the terms of this debate society-wide by insisting on Abortion on Demand and Without Apology, and mobilize people to stand up in public mass resistance to this whole war on women.

The Deadly Paralysis of Official Politics: Looking For Help In All The Wrong Places

Everywhere we stopped, we met many pro-choice women and men agonizing over the attacks on abortion rights—and we know that hundreds of thousands of people right now share this anguish and a deep desire to see this state of affairs turned around. At the same time, we also found that most are stuck in the wrong framework with the dangerous notion that the decisive fight is in the electoral arena. But the reality is that “politics as usual” will bring not bring an end to the assault on abortion rights, in part, because it does not begin to address the scope of the problems. The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride itself

challenged that framework, arguing for and modeling the path of building mass independent political resistance.

The statement for “Abortion On Demand & Without Apology: For Every Woman, In Every State — the Reversal of Abortion & Birth Control Rights Must Stop Now” (read full statement on page 32) says:

“For too long, millions have watched in alarm as yesterday's outrageous and unthinkable attack has become today's “compromise position” and tomorrow's

limit of what can be imagined. This dynamic must be broken. The political leaders of the Democratic Party cannot be relied on to do this. While posing as the last bastion of defense against these attacks, these “leaders” have in fact seriously undermined reproductive rights by seeking “common ground” with fascists and religious fanatics, by ceding the moral high ground, by severing abortion from women’s emancipation and by refusing to stand up when abortion providers are murdered.”

Taylor and Gunn further argue:

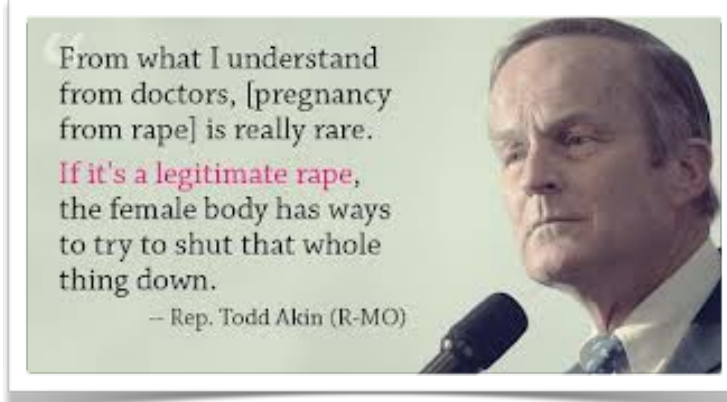
“[W]hile court cases are important—even essential—it is only through truly massive independent political struggle that we stand a chance at defeating the truly unyielding and powerful foe we face. Every setback the anti-abortion movement experiences only makes them more determined and every victory only makes them more aggressive. They will not be appeased if we lie low. No court case or election or new law will stop them. Not only has the existing power structure proven unwilling or unable to do so, people who believe they are on a “mission from God” are not bound by human laws and do not yield to public opinion.”

But they can be defeated. Forced motherhood is deeply opposed to the interests of humanity. If we get out there and tell the truth, if we resist, if we clarify the stakes of this battle, and if we mobilize wave upon wave of the masses to get off the sidelines and into the streets with us, we can win. There is a tremendous reservoir of people who can and must be called forth to join in this struggle.

People must confront the fact that the political and moral terms on which the leading voices of both the Republicans and the Democrats discuss abortion are utterly unacceptable. The vicious views of Republicans like Todd Akin, who argued against abortions even in the situation of

rape by claiming that women cannot get pregnant through “legitimate rape,” cannot be dismissed as the “crazy fringe.” The Republican Party’s official platform is to ban all abortions (without any note of any exceptions even for rape, incest, or life of the woman).

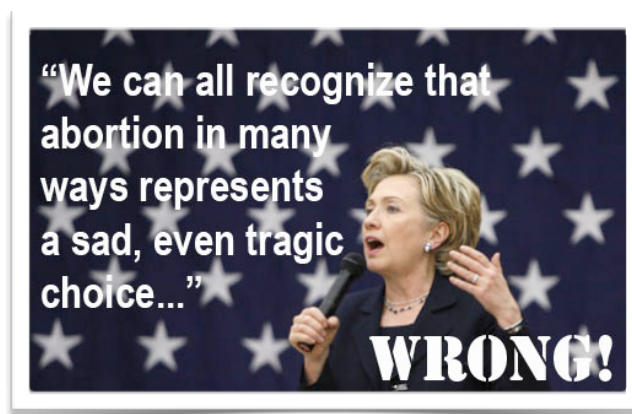
But here’s the cold truth: It is simply not part of the Democratic Party’s political calculus to mobilize for the kind of massive, uncompromising, nationwide political resistance necessary to dislodge and defeat the vicious, relentless assault on abortion and the lives of women.



Starting with Bill Clinton’s presidency, Democratic Party leaders have asserted that abortion

should be “safe, legal, and rare.” Hillary Clinton has called abortion “tragic,” implying that there is something wrong with abortion when in fact there is not. As we stated repeatedly throughout the Ride: Fetuses are not babies, abortion is not murder, and women are not incubators. Yet, no major Democratic leader – including Barack Obama – will say these simple truths. While some declare their belief in the right of women to make their own private

reproductive decisions, they have not waged a fight over the positive morality of abortion and they have not fought to defeat the rolling assault on abortion providers and access across the country.



Another glaring outrage: Year after year the Hyde Amendment (the 1976 law forbidding federal funds for abortion) is allowed to stand, and the Democrats *refuse* to wage a fight to overturn it. The

Hyde Amendment is responsible for a situation in which already one in four poor women who seeks an abortion cannot afford it and ends up with a child she did not want and many others are forced to desperate and degrading measures to come up with the funds. In 2010, Obama issued an executive order affirming that the Hyde Amendment would *extend* to the Affordable Health Care

Act, once again sacrificing women's fundamental rights to political expediency.

Taken as a whole, the Democratic Party leaders' "opposition" to these Dark Ages misogynist politics is conciliatory at best. And the Democrats have repeatedly taken the approach of seeking "common ground" with religious fanatics and fascists.

Not only has this failed to stop the assault on abortion, it has disoriented several generations of young people, feeding and fueling the very crippling and demobilizing stigma against abortion and cult of motherhood we earlier spoke about.

Further, when people restrict their political activity to voting and to giving money to groups whose main political work is to lobby these very politicians, they are kept isolated and atomized and politically passive. In contrast, when people stand together in public protest and resistance, they begin to see each other, to reinforce and deepen their own determination and understanding, and to change themselves all while bringing forward an uplifting culture based on a morality of standing up for women's liberation.

It is long past time people stopped looking "up," looking for "leaders" who are restricted by the deadly terms of what is possible within electoral politics.

Also, by standing up they become open to the bigger questions of where this vicious assault is really coming from and what it will take to defeat it and they collectively have a powerful impact and influence on the thinking of thousands and millions of others who begin to wonder what is moving these resisters to step out so boldly.

It is long past time people stopped looking "up," looking for "leaders" who are restricted by the deadly terms of what is possible within electoral politics. It is not acceptable to allow the truly moral position of winning women's full liberation and control over their own reproduction to be suffocated by what is "politically acceptable" to the powers that be. It is time people start looking "out" – at each other, the millions and millions of people in this country who will be affected by the outcome of this war on women and who have the potential power to turn the tide on this war if we act independently of, and in opposition to, the terms and the channels of official politics to declare and fight for Abortion on Demand and Without Apology!

III. On the Road to Transformation:

Assessing Our Three Over-Arching Goals

In many different dimensions, significant advances were made on each of the three main goals we set out to accomplish: to launch a national counter-offensive to this national state of emergency surrounding abortion rights, to radically reset the political and moral terms of this fight by declaring the positive and liberating value of abortion rights, and to lead and organize thousands and eventually millions of people in the kind of massive political resistance necessary to defeat this war on women. This is very significant even as the scale and scope of these advances must be built upon and multiplied manifold to have the necessary national impact to turn the tide and win abortion on demand and without apology.

First, we made significant strides in waking up many among the broad public who have absolutely no idea about the state of emergency surrounding abortion

rights. We brought a national perspective and were able to show the commonalities of the challenges being confronted across the country to those who had, up until then, been only aware or active around the attacks happening in their local areas. We also were able to show that what happens in any one place is part of a national assault and affects women everywhere and everyone has a responsibility to act wherever they are. Throughout the country, and in every place we visited, people began to see and join in this national counter-offensive.

Second, we brought political and moral clarity through our slogans, and the arguments for the slogans, "Abortion on Demand and Without Apology" and "Forced Motherhood Is Female Enslavement." Hundreds of people reached out to us from all across the country because they were attracted to the truth and clarity

of these slogans. “Finally, someone is saying this without apology!” was a common refrain among many who share this understanding but for too long have felt isolated and silenced. Through our broad outreach, through various websites (most notably StopPatriarchy.org and revcom.us, but others as well), through many media interviews and considerable local media coverage in every major stop, and through social media, we reached tens of thousands of people with this basic message. A powerful mix of people came together: from revolutionary communists Sunsara Taylor and others, to doctors and providers on the frontlines, feminist leaders like Gloria Steinem, Merle Hoffman, Susan Brownmiller, Kathleen Barry and more, prominent thinkers and cultural figures Eve Ensler, Mark Ruffalo, Janeane Garafolo; from the dozens of volunteers who traveled on the Freedom Ride to the hundreds of “virtual” Freedom Riders who supported this effort in diverse ways – all these voices were brought together and made a crucial leap to influence broad public opinion and forge a new road.

Many people's thinking was directly transformed through the Ride. This was expressed in the messages we received, in our conversations with people throughout the Ride, and exhibited in blogposts by people we never spoke directly with who wrote how the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride had changed their thinking about abortion. Far more, who do not yet agree with this message, heard it for the first time and now have this approach circulating in their minds – something to build on as we go forward.

Third, many hundreds were involved in beginning to forge a movement of mass society-wide resistance that breaks with the dead-end strategy of relying on the Democratic Party and its leaders, and instead relies on ourselves and mass political resistance. This includes people who signed the Abortion On Demand & Without Apology statement, donated and helped to raise funds, provided legal assistance, attended and helped organize local rallies and events, sent statements and testimonials, housed and fed Freedom Riders, spread the word on social media, shared their abortion stories, and stepped forward in many other ways. People stepped

outside the framework of relying on electoral politics by joining in protests which boldly upheld Abortion On Demand and women's liberation and attending events in churches and cafes. Prominent figures contributed powerful statements and everyday people shared personal stories. Our arguments against seeking “common ground” with those who would deny women their most fundamental rights and against “laying low” in the face of attack circulated far and wide and influenced the thinking of many thousands. Many came to understand the harm of these failed strategies and to actively see the possibility of changing the current trajectory through our own independent political actions.

At every single stop, people told us that they had never understood what the fight over abortion was really about until they met us, and they had never been so motivated to join with the fight either.

At every single stop, people told us that they had never understood what the fight over abortion was really about until they met us, and they had never been so motivated to join with the fight either.

Several chapters of the National Organization for Women brought contingents to and spoke at the rallies, others met with the Ride as we traveled through their areas and provided meals and other forms of support as well as deep strategizing. Other important fighters in the struggle for women's reproductive freedom reached out to and related to the Ride in some

way, including reproductive justice activists in Oklahoma City, Little Rock, Madison, and Albuquerque. In this way, more people and organized forces were brought together for an uncompromising stand for women's right to abortion on demand and without apology. These connections must be not only maintained but strengthened across the nation, through national acts of resistance, national forums for debate, ideological struggle, and the continuing sharing of experiences for the purpose of taking all this to a higher level, and turning the tide on the trajectory we are on, which is accelerating toward nothing short of female enslavement.

While much more urgently cries out to be done, all this marks a significant and crucial leap in forging the kind of massive, society wide, political resistance that can turn the tide and defeat the war on women.

More on Changing THINKING About Abortion: This Fight is About Women's Liberation or Women's Enslavement. Women MUST have Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!

We popularized the just demand for Abortion On Demand and Without Apology to many tens of thousands throughout the country and drew forward hundreds actively to fight for this position, thus making a very significant leap in the fight to change public opinion around abortion. This is absolutely essential if we are to defend and expand this right and win the liberation of women.

This approach, while welcomed by a great many, was also extremely controversial – including within the existing “pro-choice movement.”

Many of the more active pro-choice forces that we interacted with through this Ride looked at the political, ideological and moral ground that we have been describing (where so many are defensive *at best* about abortion) and argued that we should abandon the slogan “Abortion on Demand and Without Apology.” Some told us that they privately agreed with the slogan but that, “You can’t say that in [Fargo... Wichita... Albuquerque... fill in the place.]” Others openly disagreed with the slogan, themselves arguing that there it was “too extreme” or that there is something “sad” and “regrettable” about abortion. They argued for the approach of seeking “common ground” by downplaying abortion and emphasizing “women’s health” or “women’s privacy” or focusing mainly on the extreme and dangerous tactics of the worst anti-abortion forces.

We strongly disagreed.

As Sunsara Taylor crystallized in a short polemic she wrote for *Revolution Newspaper*:

“To those who consider themselves ‘pro-choice’ but say that ‘Abortion On Demand and Without Apology’ is ‘too extreme’: Which women do you think should apologize and

feel guilty for their abortions? Which women would you force to have children against their will?”

Further...

Abortion cannot be reduced to the question of health care. Health care in this country is an incredibly polarizing topic BUT the attacks on abortion are not about attacks on health care. There exist national and local organizations all across this country dedicated specifically to ending abortion and birth control because they are opposed to the freedom *this* particular form of healthcare provides women.

Abortion cannot be reduced to a question of “privacy.” While a woman’s choice as to whether or not she will get an abortion *should* be a private matter between her and her doctor, it is not privacy in some general sense that is under assault. It is the right to abortion and birth control and the freedom these services provide to women that is under assault.

Abortion cannot be reduced to simply a question of “choice.” Again, it is not choice – or even “women’s choices” – in some abstract sense that are under assault. It is the *particular* choices to have an abortion, to access and use birth control, to dare to have sex that is not tied to procreation, and to dare not to become a mother at a particular time or at all — that are under attack. These particular choices, not choice in some abstract sense, are under attack because at its core the anti-abortion movement is driven by the desire to see women returned to the traditional role of breeder of children and property of men.

Importantly, the anti-abortion movement must be opposed not simply because of their terroristic

“To those who say that ‘Abortion On Demand and Without Apology’ is ‘too extreme’:

Which women do you think should apologize and feel guilty for their abortions?

Which women would you force to have children against their will?”

~Sunsara Taylor

tactics, but because their mission and goal of criminalizing and demonizing abortion enslaves women. The fact that the anti-abortion movement employs tactics of terrorism is an indictment of their morality and goals and must be exposed and firmly opposed. But, it is the content of their program and what those tactics are in the service of which is the greatest danger. It is no more legitimate or acceptable to close an abortion clinic through a TRAP law (targeted regulation of abortion providers law) than it is to close it down through bombs or other violence. If we do not take on their political goals straight up, people will be demobilized as the antis' tactics shift and they achieve the same ends through "legal" means.

We need to change hearts and minds; we need to tell the truth! It is very dangerous that so many people are so misinformed about abortion. The widespread opposition to abortion among approximately half of the population, combined with the tremendous defensiveness about abortion among those who *support* this right, are a major part of what has enabled the anti-abortion movement to gain so much ground. If we want to change this dangerous situation **we must change people's minds.** We must tell the truth: the fight over abortion is not a fight about babies. It is about women's liberation or women's enslavement. There is no common ground between those who view women as fully human (and who therefore deserve the right to control their own reproduction) and those who view women as breeders of children and property of men.

We must, and we *did*, bring people truths that they have never heard before and it had an enormous – even if still beginning – impact on those who heard our message. We must raise the slogan Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!

Jon Lindgren, former mayor of Fargo, North Dakota, reflected the broader impact on the thinking of many people by this Ride in his post for the Red River [North Dakota] FreethinkersBlog:



"I was pleased to hear the speakers at the rally communicate their message in the most simple and direct terms. It is that taking away a woman's control over her reproduction is not moral, will not be tolerated and women will not apologize to anyone for having abortions.

I like this message better than the one Hillary Clinton and others have used, 'Abortion should be rare.' The implication of this latter message is that birth control and education should eliminate most abortions.

This 'abortion should be rare' puts abortion over into the category of a bad thing that should be avoided. Like other medical procedures, it is neither bad nor good, just something that needs to be done.

The truth is, abortion is the exclusive decision of the woman. To take away that right is to take from women their ability to live their own lives unregulated by other men and/or women."

The following is an excerpt of a blogpost titled, "How The 'Freedom Ride' Changed My View On Abortion" from a woman who heard Sunsara Taylor interviewed on The Michael Slate Show which broadcasts out of Los Angeles and is syndicated around the country:

"A fetus is not a human being, it's part of a woman's body," said Sunsara Taylor on the Michael Slate Show the other day while I was listening in the car. She probably says that phrase several times a week as one of the initiators of the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, an American national

"I've pulled the cobwebs of my indoctrination aside to recognize that the hypocrisy I was feeling was just a product of the right wing message that's been drilled into my head for so long that I had not only internalized it, but was beating myself up with it."

movement to resist and reject the unacceptable economic, political, and social conditions of women, currently touring America. **But for me, it was a paradigm shift in my personal attitude toward abortion. Something clicked, and I suddenly realized what a victim of patriarchal structure I've become...**

*I've always fought for subtlety of message—I over-explain everything to [my child]... But sometimes things are black and white. Sometimes you have to pick sides. **So I thank the Freedom Riders for clearing that up for me, and hitting home the weight of this issue. I've pulled the***

cobwebs of my indoctrination aside to recognize that the hypocrisy I was feeling was just a product of the right wing message that's been drilled into my head for so long that I had not only internalized it, but was beating myself up with it. My personal choices have always aligned with my politics, and I have nothing to apologize for, just like every other woman in America." [emphasis added]

This transformation of understanding was also spurred on by the stories shared by others along the way.

Challenging Racism and Bigotry

At every stop, we made the connections for people between the fight for full abortion and reproductive rights for women and the fight against all forms of oppression and exploitation. In particular, we challenged the notion that abortion is a form of "Black genocide" both by defending the rights of Black, Latino, and other oppressed to full reproductive freedom and by highlighting the real forms of racist oppression and actual genocide against oppressed peoples. As Sunsara Taylor put it in an interview before the Ride:

"First of all [the idea that abortion is "Black Genocide"] is a lie. A Black woman, a Latino woman, any woman who chooses to terminate a pregnancy is not killing a baby. That's just a fact: fetuses are NOT babies. Fetuses of Black women are NOT Black babies. Fetuses of Latino women are not Latino babies. All those fetuses are subordinate parts of the woman's body. And when a woman voluntarily undergoes an abortion, that is just her making a decision over her own reproduction and her life as a whole. Her right to do this is a positive thing. And the anti-abortion movement is against sex education and against birth control, so they don't really get any right to fucking speak about this. Even more fundamentally, I don't care how many abortions a woman gets or how often it goes on among any particular section of women, if women don't have the right to determine for themselves when and whether they will have children, they are not free. And if women are not free, then no one is free—and this applies to oppressed peoples as well, if Black women are enslaved to their

reproduction, if they are reduced to breeders and forced to have children against their wills, then there is no way that Black people as a whole can get free... Women's role is not to "make babies"—it is to "hold up half the sky" (as they used to say in revolutionary China) to join together with men to rise up against all the many forms of oppression and exploitation, to be just as involved in learning about and fighting to change the whole world, and to be treated with respect and equality by men in this whole process and in every realm.

"...if Black women are enslaved to their reproduction. if they are reduced to breeders and forced to have children against their wills, then there is no way that Black people as a whole can get free..."

~Sunsara Taylor

Having said that, we do have to come back to the fact that this is America. There is not only a whole history of the most horrific and brutal oppression of Black people and Latinos and Native Americans and other oppressed peoples right here within these borders (and this goes along with the subjugation of whole nations and peoples by the U.S. around the world), this oppression continues and is intensifying today. One of the forms this has taken is the coercive sterilization of oppressed women. There is a whole history of

Puerto Rican women, Black women, Native American women, and other oppressed-nationality women within this country being [tricked,] coerced or outright forced into undergoing sterilization... That is racist; frankly it's genocidal. But that is very, very different—it is a world apart—from women among the oppressed deciding for themselves which pregnancies to carry to term and which ones they do not want to continue.

“Women’s role is not to ‘make babies’ – it is to ‘hold up half the sky’...”
~Sunsara Taylor

And today one of the main forms this oppression is taking—speaking of genocide—is the actual genocide of mass incarceration, criminalization, caste-like segregation of the formerly incarcerated, and rampant police terror, brutality and murder...

devices. In a culture in which women of color are expected to sacrifice, total self-determination has always been a revolutionary act. The current climate of Christian fascist anti-abortion terrorism is a mortal threat to communities of color and all working class people nationwide. It is an affront to the valiant activism of scores of anonymous women who died in back alleys from “illegal” abortions rather than be shackled to the dehumanizing gender hierarchies of the state, patriarchy and the church. The brutal crackdown on reproductive health care, abortion providers and clinics in Texas, the Midwest and throughout the Deep South is a reminder of the blood price women of color and working class women must pay to be free, to even be considered human in this so-called post-feminist society...

These fascists who put up these billboards and make these claims [that abortion is “Black Genocide”], they never talk about any of this—and because they don’t, they are actually covering for the real genocide that is going on, directing oppressed people’s attention away from the system and towards further blaming and shaming the very women hit hardest in many ways by this system. And then all this blame and shame against Black and Latino women is used as a bludgeon to further strip all women of the right to abortion.

These rich white male guardians of death are in league with a regime which is the most prolific jailer and executioner of Black people in the capitalist world. They care nothing about the scores of children of color in foster care, on the streets, and in prisons. For them, children of color are only useful as political pawns in the anti-welfare state public policy and propaganda war; demonized as collateral damage, welfare queens, savages, and criminals a la Trayvon Martin, a beautiful Black boy lynched twice by the criminal justice system...” (read full statement on page 29).

So, this kind of shit really must not be tolerated—and the influence of this ideological poison (especially its influence among sections of Black and Latino masses of people) has to be fought and turned around”. (This full interview is available at <http://www.revcom.us/a/307/sunsara-taylor-on-abortion-rights-freedom-ride-en-en.html>)

“These rich white male guardians of death are in league with a regime which is the most prolific jailer and executioner of Black people in the capitalist world. For them, children of color are only useful as political pawns in the anti-welfare state public policy and propaganda war; demonized as collateral damage, welfare queens, savages, and criminals...”

~Sikivu Hutchinson

Sikivu Hutchinson’s statement, “Statement in Solidarity w/Abortion Freedom Rides: The Shadow of the Plantation” powerfully brings alive from another angle the particular stakes for Black, Latino, and other oppressed nationality women in this fight for reproductive rights as well as important truths about the nature of this country both historically and today:

“...Some of us are here because our foremothers were enslaved, raped and forced to bear children they didn’t want. Some of us are here because our foremothers did everything possible to salvage their lives and self-dignity with alternative medicine and often dangerous aborting

These themes, of the deep connections between the struggle for women’s reproductive rights and full liberation, and the struggle to end racial and other forms of oppression and exploitation in this country were returned to throughout our trip and in our work, especially when we reached the Deep South.

Among those who particularly appreciated the way the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride was drawing the connections between the struggle for women’s reproductive rights and the ongoing struggle

against the oppression of Black people was a doctor who was honored by the Freedom Ride while it was in Chicago. As Sunsara Taylor wrote for *Revolution Newspaper*:

“[W]e held an incredible event with one of the doctors who flies in from out of state to do abortions here in Jackson.

At the Unity Temple in Oak Park, he explained how he got involved with the Freedom Ride. As soon as he heard the slogan Abortion On Demand and Without Apology he knew he wanted to work with us. He was even more pleased when he heard the idea for an Abortion Rights Freedom Ride. For too long, he explained, the anti-abortion movement had attempted to claim the legacy of the Civil Rights movement. As a Black man who grew up

in Alabama, as well as someone deeply committed to women's liberation, he felt very strongly that it was correct for the mantle of the Civil Rights and the Freedom Rides to be taken up by those fighting FOR women and for women's right to abortion. It is undeniably true that forced motherhood is a form of female enslavement and that when women are not free then no one is free."

Bitter Memories of Illegal Abortions and Prescient Warnings for the Future

One of the most moving elements of this ride was the tremendous courage of women (and some men) at every stop along our journey (and a great many more who wrote in through the web) who told the stories of their own abortions before it was legal – or the stories of friends who died due to unsafe illegal abortions.

In North Dakota, a woman shared the story of her friend who bled to death in a parking lot because she was too ashamed to call an ambulance and have her parents find out that she had gone to Mexico for an illegal abortion. In New York, a woman shook with tears as she told a public rally of how her best childhood friend back in Biloxi, Mississippi had shot and killed herself at age 16 after finding out she was pregnant because of the shame of having to tell her strict Catholic parents. In Chicago, Wichita, and other places women told harrowing stories of their own illegal abortions, of humiliation and shame, of danger both of arrest and of death and sexual assault. A few told of the tremendous courage of doctors and friends who assisted them in getting safe illegal abortions and of how this differed from the experience of most women. Before Roe v. Wade, thousands of women died each year in the U.S. from botched illegal abortions.

Actor Mark Ruffalo made headlines all over the world after he shared (with his courageous mother's permission) her



experience of an illegal abortion before Roe v. Wade:

"...I have a mother who was forced to illegally have an abortion in her state where abortion was illegal when she was a very young woman. It cost \$600 cash. It was a traumatizing thing for her. It was shameful and sleazy and demeaning. When I heard the story I was aghast by the lowliness of a society that would make a woman do that. I could not understand its lack of humanity; today is no different.

...I don't want to turn back the hands of time to when women shuttled across state lines in the thick of night to resolve an unwanted pregnancy, in a cheap hotel room just south of the state line. Where a transaction of \$600 cash becomes the worth of a young woman's life. So that is why I am lending my voice to you and your movement today..." (read full statement on page 27).

The women and men who shared these stories are a significant part of the reservoir of society who know what it means for abortion to be made illegal and who do not want to see us forced back to those days. Their voices had a tremendous impact everywhere they reached, especially among the younger generations who overwhelmingly do not know anything about this past.

"...I don't want to turn back the hands of time to when women shuttled across state lines in the thick of night to resolve an unwanted pregnancy, in a cheap hotel room just south of the state line. Where a transaction of \$600 cash becomes the worth of a young woman's life. So that is why I am lending my voice to you and your movement today."

~Mark Ruffalo

Appreciating the Abortion Doctors, Staff and Escorts Who Risk Their Lives Every Day for Women

We were also able to break through some of the silence and sense of isolation by many on the front lines by recognizing the important work done by providers, clinic staff and escorts. It was deeply inspiring to hear providers speak of the tremendous impact they have on the women they serve and how that is what sustains them. At the same time, the anti-abortionists' threats and efforts to demonize and isolate doctors and providers are relentless and dangerous. The toll on people's personal lives is enormous, even when they have become used to it.

In Fargo, when we asked the last clinic in the state of North Dakota, if we could come and express appreciation for what they do every day, they welcomed us in to take a tour of the facility. One of the youngest Freedom Riders told the clinic director and staff:

"I'm 17 years old ... growing up now where there's no sex-ed, and the culture is dominated by the fact that [the anti-abortion movement] has the moral high ground. They like to say this generation has never been more pro-life. I like to say that we are the liberation generation, and I've really come to understand what happens when women don't have access to abortion... and the measures they have to revert to, and what it means to be able to access safe and legal abortion. That really matters as a young person, knowing that, that that's an option... So, just being in here and seeing this environment here, it really matters that women have access to this. ...As a member of the liberation generation, and as a supporter of everything that you do, I want to thank you for fighting the legal battles that need to be fought, and providing women with the service that they so desperately need."

On August 17 in Jackson MS, when a reporter asked the clinic director how it felt to have so much noisy support, the clinic director answered, "It's been a long time

coming." Another provider told us she got tears in her eyes when she was cheered by us on her way into court; she is so used to be harassed and hated, this was

something totally different and made a difference to be able to tell the judge. When crews of Freedom Riders came on pre-arranged visits to clinics in both Little Rock, AK and Charlotte, NC, we watched security guards do "double-takes" in disbelief that a whole group of people walking up to the clinic was actually coming to show support. The fact is that, aside from their patients, the overwhelming majority of people who abortion providers see outside their clinics are people who are on a mission to stop them from providing reproductive services. This has got to change for the assault on abortion rights to be defeated. The understanding that abortion providers are heroes who should be honored and defended must be spread far and wide.



As Merle Hoffman, herself a courageous abortion provider of many decades as the Founder/President of Choices Women's Medical Center in Jamaica, New York, put it in her message to the Mississippi rally:

"I stand with the Jackson Women's Health Organization, with Diana Derzis and all the doctors, clinic staff and escorts.

I stand with the women of Mississippi who must travel long distances to realize a very basic human and civil right, the right to decide when or if to give birth — and with the women in so many states who should not have to go through such difficulties.

And I stand with the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride who courageously call for a pro-choice counteroffensive to the attacks on abortion rights, including upholding and promoting the call for "Abortion On Demand and Without Apology" (read full statement on page 28).

We brought a huge "Abortion Providers Are Heroes" banner to every stop. In church basements, on city street corners, at welcome dinners, at rallies and more, hundreds of people signed it and added messages, like:



“An abortion saved my life. Thank you for your important work.”...

“You defend women’s lives, their futures and their hopes & dreams: definition of a hero.”...

“I am old enough to remember young women looking for back alley abortions. NO MORE. WE WON’T GO BACK”...

“No choice = No Voice = Chattel”...

“Abortion: How many? As many as necessary”, and...

“Fuck yeah!”

From Livingston, MT to Fargo, ND, from Bellevue, NE to Little Rock, AR, from Jackson MS to Charlotte, NC to Albuquerque, NM and more, Freedom Riders visited clinics to present “Abortion Providers Are Heroes” certificates to providers and staff, and made a leap in popularizing this sentiment throughout the whole Freedom Ride.

Anti-Abortion Forces Did Not Directly Confront The Ride

It was striking that at no stop did anti-abortion forces mobilize in any major way to visibly oppose us. In fact, not only did they not mobilize against us, they repeatedly canceled and seemed to change their schedules to avoid a direct political confrontation.

In Fargo, the head of the North Dakota Family Alliance was scheduled to debate Sunsara Taylor on WDAY, the TV station associated with the Forum of Fargo-Moorhead, the main newspaper in town. In Wichita, after we announced our planned protest of Operation Rescue’s Crisis Pregnancy Center (a fake clinic designed to persuade women against getting an abortion), they completely closed their national office and the CPC – despite their publicly posted regular hours. This didn’t stop one of their national leaders from showing up at the protest to surreptitiously take our pictures. In Little Rock, the day that we visited the clinic the regular encampment that harasses and preaches Old Testament Bible verses at women was not there. In Jackson, Mississippi, the regular anti-abortion protesters did their routine harassment of women at the clinic every day, but they did not organize any broader mobilization despite having applied for permits to counter-protest the Freedom Ride during our week in town. On August 17, the antis were completely absent once the protest got under way.

This is highly unusual. In each of these local areas – and nationally — the anti-abortion forces are extremely aggressive and not at all hesitant to mobilize people in public protest.

We cannot know for sure what went into their decisions, nor can we say for sure whether there was any national coordination among anti-abortion groups. However, our informed suspicion is that our uncompromising message and eagerness to expose the true anti-woman agenda of the anti-abortion movement is what influenced their decisions to everywhere avoid public political confrontation with us.

We will not conciliate or seek “common ground,” but instead expose that the true motivation of the anti-abortion movement is to enforce the biblical mandate that women be punished for allegedly causing “original sin” by being forced to bear children and obey their fathers and husbands. We are eager to expose how their agenda is one of forced motherhood. We are eager to marshal the scientific fact that fetuses are NOT babies and, flowing from that, that abortion is NOT murder.

It also could be the case that the anti-abortion forces decided not to counter-protest us in an effort not to bring

more attention to what we were doing – both broader media attention as well as broader forces potentially joining in standing up for abortion rights in the face of assault.

Several anti-abortion leaders did make an effort to attack, foster divisions among, slander, and contribute to setting up for harm, both the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride and the broader alliances forged through this effort. This included leaders of Operation Rescue and other extreme Right Wingers, and websites frequented by dangerous and threatening militia-types.

We will not conciliate or seek "common ground," but instead expose that the true motivation of the anti-abortion movement is to enforce the biblical mandate that women be punished for allegedly causing "original sin" by being forced to bear children and obey their fathers and husbands.

All of this – both the way the anti-abortion forces hid from the actual Freedom Ride while it was on the road and the way they attacked us online (and through threatening social media) – indicate that they took this very seriously, including recognizing that what we are bringing forward is something different and more difficult for them to answer. At the same time, it is unlikely that they will continue to "keep their distance" as we go forward to work together with many others to fulfill our responsibility to defeat this war on women and continue until women are fully liberated.

Conclusion

Without a doubt, this Abortion Rights Freedom Ride launched something new and very important. Strides were made in forging a national counter-offensive to the entire war on women, in radically resetting the terms of the fight around abortion rights, and in breaking growing numbers out of the killing confines of electoral politics and mobilizing them in active political resistance. A new ethos and morality that is completely unapologetic about women's liberation and uncompromising in the face of religious bigots and patriarchal fascists is taking hold. People from all walks of life have played an essential role in this beginning advance. In this movement can be seen the contours of the kind of truly massive, nation-wide rising that could turn the tide in this fight and send reverberations strengthening the fight against male supremacy and patriarchy in all forms around the world.

But the fight is far from won. Every day new attacks mount. Clinics and staff are threatened. Restrictions are introduced or passed. Women are harassed and shamed. Every day women who need abortions are driven to desperate measures or compelled to have children against

their will. This is neither acceptable, nor is it possible for things to remain as they are. At some point, one side or the other will win. The future will be one of women's enslavement or women's liberation.

Right now, many more need to step forward to join with this movement. Contribute your thinking and your time, your stories and your resources, your determination and your talents, your questions and your boldest ideas. Get in touch with us today.

We who led this Abortion Rights Freedom Ride have started something and we've made a commitment. We will continue to travel to the places most under attack, to wake people up nationwide and rally national support, to re-seize the moral high ground, to declare Abortion On Demand and Without Apology, and to link this up with the full liberation of women. We will not stop until this war has been won. We call on everyone who cares about the future of women – *of half of humanity* – to join us in this fight.

Appendix 1. Abortion On Demand Statement

This statement initiated by Stop Patriarchy in June 2013 has been signed by over 850 people from all across the country. Go to StopPatriarchy.org/abortionondemandstatement to add your name & personal message.

Abortion On Demand and Without Apology! For Every Woman in Every State The Reversal of Abortion and Birth Control Rights Must Stop Now! Reproductive rights are in a state of emergency.

Abortion is an issue that divides this country. This is no accident. How one thinks and feels about abortion flows fundamentally from how one views women.

We recognize that women are full human beings who must have the right – through unrestricted and unstigmatized access to birth control and abortion – to decide for themselves when and whether they will have children. We reject the view that a woman's highest purpose and fundamental "duty" is to bear children, even those she does not want or cannot care for.

For decades, a movement which calls itself "pro-life" has unleashed violence against abortion providers, shamed and humiliated women, and relentlessly restricted access to abortion, especially for poor women.

Over 80% of abortion clinics have experienced violence, threats, or harassment; eight doctors and staff have been murdered. Today, 97% of rural counties have no abortion provider. One in four poor women who seeks an abortion cannot afford it and is forced to have a child she does not want. Five states have only one abortion clinic left.

This assault has intensified, not slowed, under the Presidency of Obama. 2011 and 2012 saw record new legal restrictions on abortion. Already this year, 278 bills have been introduced to further restrict abortion, including laws set to go into effect that would shut down the last clinic in North Dakota on August 1. Added to this, the Obama administration fought relentlessly to keep emergency contraception ("Morning After Pill") off the shelves and out of the hands of the women and girls who desperately need it.

Reproductive rights are in a state of emergency.

If this direction is not reversed, women face being returned to the situation that prevailed for millennia – until only very recently – being forced to subordinate their dreams in order to have children against their will, or to risk their lives to avoid this. We are headed towards a situation like that in El Salvador where women face long imprisonment for abortion and where nurses and doctors must either turn women in or risk being imprisoned themselves.

This assault on the right to choose abortion is not driven by "concern for babies" or women. The fact is, this "pro-life" movement stands unanimous in its opposition to birth control

and comprehensive sex education, the most effective means of preventing unwanted pregnancies. Republican leaders in this movement have fanned hatred of women by shaming women who have sex, belittling the monstrous crime of rape, and in other ways.

The truth is: Fetuses are NOT babies. Abortion is NOT murder. Women are NOT incubators.

For too long, millions have watched in alarm as yesterday's outrageous and unthinkable attack has become today's "compromise position" and tomorrow's limit of what can be imagined. This dynamic must be broken. The political leaders of the Democratic Party cannot be relied on to do this. While posing as the last bastion of defense against these attacks, these "leaders" have in fact seriously undermined reproductive rights by seeking "common ground" with fascists and religious fanatics, by ceding the moral high ground, by severing abortion from women's emancipation and by refusing to stand up when abortion providers are murdered.

We must rely on ourselves. We call on people everywhere to:

- defend abortion providers who are under attack
- speak openly and positively about abortion, including their own
- mobilize mass protest against every new attack wherever it takes place
- **Finally, and most importantly**, find the ways to come together to wage a determined fight to defeat this entire war on women

In July and August 2013, an abortion rights caravan traveled across this country to many places where attacks are most severe, including to North Dakota where new laws were set to go into effect that would have criminalized abortion after six weeks and shut down the last clinic in the state.* We support this action as well as other efforts across the country to defend abortion providers and defeat similar laws in other states. **We pledge to resist and call on all who care about freedom, justice, and women's lives to do the same!**

Forced motherhood is female enslavement.

Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!

Appendix 2. Comments from Signers

Over 850 people from big cities and small towns across the country have signed the statement, and many have added their own personal comments and insights. Here are just a few...

I am more than just a future mother.

Lucy, Student, New Hampshire

Without clinics there is no choice. My abortion was my best decision I ever made.

Jean, Greenfield, CA

The legislation against women is fascist and radical. We need to be radical and stop pandering to the Right. Our lives are literally in the hands of these legislators and that is completely unacceptable. We need to stop making sure no one is offended. **WOMEN WILL DIE FROM THIS LEGISLATION.**

Heather, Grand Forks, ND

I thought I was all alone in wanting this. THANK YOU!

Lisa, Waddy, KY

Yes. No more of this "safe, legal, and rare" bullshit. Safe, legal, and accessible. No questions asked. No conditions. Abortion is not a tragedy. It's not a murder. It's not "sadly necessary." It's a non-issue for everyone but the woman who decides to have one. End of story. Liberals need to stop apologizing and compromising.

Josh, Winooski, VT

It's my body. Taking one of my kidneys out to transplant without my consent would be illegal. How can forcing me to keep a fetus I don't want be anything but criminal and morally repugnant?

Beatrice, Chicago, IL

I serve as a peace corps volunteer in a country without any abortion rights whatsoever. The results are horrific. Women die. Please don't make me come home to a similar situation.

Joanna

Every woman should have access to medical care for a safe abortion...period. In 1942 my aunt died from infection which was the result of a back room abortion. Single, pregnant at 22 years old, Irish Roman Catholic that was the only avenue open to her. Her death pretty much broke up the family. Times were so different then...we don't need to return to those dismal days.....

Jamie, Retired, Tuscaloosa, AL

I am not an incubator. I am not my husband's property. I am not here solely to have children. I am myself, I want to live the way I want, and being forced to have children is a crime against my autonomy. No woman should be forced to have a child she doesn't want, for whatever reason she doesn't want it.

Meg, Florence, KY

I'm a young ambitious woman who has seen the lives of many of my female friends completely derailed by having unwanted children. I grew up in a poor rural area where girls barely out of high school typically ended up married with children that they couldn't care for. I was lucky enough to get an education elsewhere through scholarships, but the futures for these women and their children is really dim and it saddens me to see these smart, loving, and kind women have their lives reduced to staying at home because they can't afford daycare

Nora, Cleveland, OH

The most urgent front in the War on Women. I also remember the "before time." All those thousands of women's names are not to be found on any monument or national memorial. They reside in the hearts of us that recall the days of coat hangers and exsanguinated young girls in every back alley and stairwell. Never Again!

Avra, Abolitionist, New York, NY

We know the anti-choice movement is not really pro-life, because they don't promote birth control. Their real core agenda is control of females, because they worship patriarchy as their stone-age guide to society. True freedom requires freedom from ancient myths.

Bruce, Professor of Chemistry, Tempe, AZ

An infant breathes air. A fetus does not. Say NO to fetus fetishizers and embryo idolizers.

Bruce, Los Angeles, CA

A 64 year old retired woman who remembers the days of coat hangers and backroom abortions and who says WE ARE NEVER GOING BACK!

Rhoda, Oak Park, IL

You cannot end abortion with legislation; you can only end safe abortions.

Rebecca, RN, Portland, OR

Women are not breeding animals to be forced to carry children to term if they do not wish to. Period.

Ray, Disabled, Computer Tech, Decatur, GA

I had an abortion, I consider it the most responsible thing I've ever done.

Carol, Retired, Oak Valley, NJ

Retired OB-Gyn who performed over 3000 abortions in a career of private practice and teaching for LSU School of Medicine in Baton Rouge. In my training in the 50's in Charity Hospital in New Orleans I watched women die from illegal abortions. We never want to return to those days.

Edwin, Freeport, FL

I've had to go through an emergency abortion 27 years ago this September. Even though I wanted the child, the placenta ruptured and came out but the fetus was still attached and the next morning the doctor did the abortion. I can understand women's need to be able to get this procedure when no other choice is viable for them. Including carrying a child full term and getting attached to it only to have the heartache of having to give it up to someone else.

Betty, Marietta, OK

My mother had an illegal abortion. It cost over \$2000 and the physician who performed it went to prison. Stop the degradation and the abuse of women!

Elizabeth, Scottsdale, AZ

I had an abortion during my relationship with a highly abusive partner in order to protect myself and my other children. I can't imagine being forced to keep a fetus that would put my family in danger. Every person has the right to choose if, when, and with whom to procreate. It's not a decision for the state.

Jennifer, Albany, CA

I had an abortion when I was 26 in 1973, when it was legal and safe. I have never felt guilty. I was not ready to be a mother. I was a waitress due to be fired if they found out I was pregnant. When I was 32, I had the first of my two sons. It was an amazing experience because I Wanted that baby. God bless you for publicly stating your rights, with No Apology! ...p.s. If a fetus feeling pain is a reason not to abort a baby, then the much worse pain of delivering a baby should be cause enough for an abortion on demand!!! or do they like the thought of women feeling pain?!?!?

Dana, Boulder, CO

Had an abortion in Mexico before Roe V Wade. It was illegal there too, but clinic paid off the cops. I have no regrets, no guilt, only fear for young women who will be put in that position again. A friend of mine returned to CA with an infection from her illegal abortion, and was interrogated by cops in the hospital. Do you really want to go there again? Hell No!!!

Harriet, Los Angeles, CA

I had an abortion and am THRIVING.

Katie, Austin, TX

Appendix 3. Statements of Support

Through the course of the Ride an impressive array of influential people used their prominence, respect, and public platform to shine a light on the state of emergency surrounding abortion rights and the work of the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride. In this way, they each brought to bear both their unique understanding and moral conviction and example and they lofted the visibility and impact of this effort significantly.

Eve Ensler

Playwright, performer, feminist, activist; author *The Vagina Monologues*, and *In the Body of the World: A Memoir*; founder of V-Day and One Billion Rising



“The near-daily laws restricting women’s right to abortion, the chorus of Republicans belittling rape and shaming women, and the whole future they are aggressively fighting for are terrifying and an attempt to push us back to the dark ages. It is a state of emergency. Forced motherhood is a form of violence.

But we must not be paralyzed by fear or sleepwalk in denial. WE MUST RISE.

I am proud of throngs rising in Texas. I am proud of the women and men who will be traveling from both coasts and down the middle of the country in this summer’s Abortion Rights Freedom Ride. I urge all to follow their daring and rise with them to reclaim our lives, our bodies, our own reproductive decisions, and our futures. There is no time to waste.”

Gloria Steinem

Feminist, journalist, and social and political activist; author *Revolution From Within: A Book of Self-Esteem and Moving Beyond Words*



“We live in a world in which inanimate property is better protected by law than is the human body, and crossing a national boundary is more likely to be punished than bodily invasion. The long struggle against chattel, sex and labor slavery are all part of giving each human being the right to bodily integrity.

Women’s bodies are the front lines of this struggle because we are the means of reproduction. Without controlling women’s bodies, it’s not possible to continue divisions of race and class and to produce cheap labor.

I say this to thank the Freedom Riders in Little Rock for protecting the only clinic in Arkansas — and in Jackson, the only clinic in Mississippi — that supports women’s reproductive freedom .If women can’t decide the fate of our bodies from the skin in, we can’t control our lives from the skin out.

Reproductive justice is the single greatest determinant of whether we are healthy or not, educated or not, in the paid labor force or not, and how long she lives. Involuntary pregnancy is the most intimate form of involuntary servitude, and the right to give birth is a human right. The power of state stops at our skins. I thank you for being Freedom Riders for reproductive freedom.”

Mark Ruffalo

Actor and director

To the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride — Rally in Jackson MS, August 17, 2013

“I am a man. I could say this has nothing to do with me. Except I have two daughters and I have a mother who was forced to illegally have an abortion in her state where abortion was illegal when she was a very young woman. It cost \$600 cash. It was a traumatizing thing for her. It was shameful and sleazy and demeaning. When I heard the story I was aghast by the lowliness of a society that would make a woman do that. I could not understand its lack of humanity; today is no different.



What happened to my mother was a relic of an America that was not free nor equal nor very kind. My mother's illegal abortion marked a time in America that we have worked long and hard to leave behind. It was a time when women were seen as second rate citizens who were not smart enough, nor responsible enough, nor capable enough to make decisions about their lives. It was a time that deserved to be left behind, and leave it behind we did, or so it seemed. We made abortion and a woman's ability to be her own master a Right. That Right was codified into law. That law was the law of the land for decades. My own mother fought to make herself more than a possession; she lived her life as a mother who chose when she would have children, and a wife who could earn a living if she so chose. I want my daughters to enjoy that same choice. I don't want to turn back the hands of time to when women shuttled across state lines in the thick of night to resolve an unwanted pregnancy, in a cheap hotel room just south of the state line. Where a transaction of \$600 cash becomes the worth of a young woman's life. So that is why I am lending my voice to you and your movement today. Because I actually trust the women I know. I trust them with their choices, I trust them with their bodies and I trust them with their children. I trust that they are decent enough and wise enough and worthy enough to carry the right of Abortion and not be forced to criminally exercise that Right at the risk of death or jail time.

There was no mistake us making Abortion legal and available on demand. That was what we call progress. Just like it was no mistake that we abolished institutional racism in this country around the same time. The easy thing to do is lay low, but then are we who we say we are? Do we actually stand for anything, if what we do stand for is under attack and we say nothing? There is nothing to be ashamed of here except to allow a radical and recessive group of people to bully and intimidate our mothers and sisters and daughters for exercising their right of choice. Or use terrorism and fanaticism to block their legal rights or take the lives of their caregivers. Or design legislation that would chip away at those rights disguised as reinforcing a woman's health. I invite you to find your voice and let it be known that you stand for abortion rights and the dignity of a woman to be the master of her own life and body. I invite you to search your soul and ask yourself if you actually stand for what you say you stand for. Thank you for being here today and thank you for standing up for the women in my life.”

Merle Hoffman

Founder / President of Choices Women's Medical Center, Jamaica, NY

"To the August 17, 2013 rally in Jackson, Mississippi:

Although I am not able to be with you in person today in Jackson, my heart is here with all of you who persevere in your services to women, providing abortion in the face of great challenges, hardships and threats to your very lives.

I stand with the Jackson Women's Health Organization, with Diana Derzis and all the doctors, clinic staff and escorts.

I stand with the women of Mississippi who must travel long distances to realize a very basic human and civil right, the right to decide when or if to give birth — and with the women in so many states who should not have to go through such difficulties.

And I stand with the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride who courageously call for a pro-choice counteroffensive to the attacks on abortion rights, including upholding and promoting the call for 'Abortion On Demand and Without Apology.'

Freedom and liberty must have NO boundaries. The Power of the State must stop at our skin. We cannot rest — and we will not stop — until reproductive justice is a reality for every woman and girl in this country."



Janeane Garofolo

Comedian, actor, activist and writer

Signed the Statement for Abortion On Demand and Without Apology and added her own personal message

"My desire is to stand-up for Human Rights/Reproductive and Social Justice! Thank you."



David Gunn, Jr.

Son of Dr. David Gunn, the first abortion doctor to be murdered by an anti-abortion fanatic

"When I first heard about the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, I knew immediately I would support the plan for many reasons. Primarily, though, my support came from what Dr. King referred to as "the fierce urgency of now" coupled with my dad's admonition to always pay attention to your surroundings. If anyone anywhere in this country is paying the remotest of attention they realize three immediate and concerning realities: 1) our personal liberty is on the line generally, 2) abortion rights are in a state of crisis and 3) those opposed to abortion keep killing our heroic doctors. I believe this ride has the potential to awaken the masses, refocus our energies on winning this battle, and will redouble our local and national efforts to keep our doctors—and their patients and staff—safe so that abortion services remain safe and legal."



Sikivu Hutchinson

Feminist atheist activist and author *Godless Americana: Race and Religious Rebels* and *Moral Combat: Black Atheists, Gender Politics, and the Values Wars*

Statement in Solidarity with Abortion Freedom Rides: Shadow of the Plantation

"In her book *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, Alice Walker writes, 'What did it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmother's time? Our great-grandmothers' day? Did you have a genius of a great-great-grandmother who died under some ignorant and depraved white overseer's lash? Or was her body broken and forced to bear children (who were more often than not sold away from her)—eight, ten, fifteen, twenty children—when her one joy was the thought of modeling heroic figures of rebellion?'

Some of us are here because our foremothers were enslaved, raped and forced to bear children they didn't want. Some of us are here because our foremothers did everything possible to salvage their lives and self-dignity with alternative medicine and often dangerous aborting devices. In a culture in which women of color are expected to sacrifice, total self-determination has always been a revolutionary act. The current climate of Christian fascist anti-abortion terrorism is a mortal threat to communities of color and all working class people nationwide. It is an affront to the valiant activism of scores of anonymous women who died in back alleys from "illegal" abortions rather than be shackled to the dehumanizing gender hierarchies of the state, patriarchy and the church. The brutal crackdown on reproductive health care, abortion providers and clinics in Texas, the Midwest and throughout the Deep South is a reminder of the blood price women of color and working class women must pay to be free, to even be considered human in this so-called post-feminist society. It is important that the reproductive justice movement not allow the pro-death, anti-abortion, anti-family values fascists of the right drive their biblical stake through women's bodies again by pimping the language of "protection" and "pro-life". Over



the past few years Christian fascists have labored fiercely to create conditions in which universal health care is deemed to be anti-American and Black and Latina women are criminalized as 'dangerous' wombs; mere breeders with no basic human rights. Outlandishly, they have gone so far as to compare fetuses to slaves, and, by implication, women of color to slave owners, stamping the 'Scarlet I' of immorality on our bodies. These rich white male guardians of death are in league with a regime which is the most prolific jailer and executioner of Black people in the capitalist world. They care nothing about the scores of children of color in foster care, on the streets, and in prisons. For them, children of color are only useful as political pawns in the anti-welfare state public policy and propaganda war; demonized as collateral damage, welfare queens, savages, and criminals a la Trayvon Martin, a beautiful Black boy lynched twice by the criminal justice system. In Texas, disproportionate numbers of Latinas rely on Medicaid, which is under attack by the Perry administration. And in Mississippi, disproportionate numbers of poor and working class African American women rely on the imperiled family planning clinic that currently hangs by a legal thread.

Decades after the end of Jim Crow, white people have over twenty times the wealth of Blacks and Latinos and the myth of the accessible American dream has turned into even more of a nightmare for people of color besotted with the delusion of democracy. The assault on women's abortion rights is yet another assault on economic and social justice and a betrayal of the foremothers who sacrificed so we would never know the shadow of the plantation."

Susan Brownmiller

Journalist, activist, author *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* and *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution*

"Greetings to the Abortion Caravan in Jackson. I am a survivor of three illegal abortions in 1960s, for which I needed to travel to Cuba and Puerto Rico because *Roe v. Wade*, the great Supreme Court ruling that affirmed women's rights, did not become the law of the land until the following decade.

Honor your feminist predecessors who led the fight for legalization. Honor their speakouts and disruptions of legislative hearings in those militant years. Honor their slogans "Abortion is a women's right" and "Free Abortion on Demand" that you have resurrected today.

Honor Nancy Stearns, who devised the strategy of class-action lawsuits in 30 states with thousands of complainants.

Honor the Chicago activists who called themselves "Jane" and began performing abortions themselves.

Honor the Los Angeles activists Carol Downer and Lorraine Rothman who perfected a vacuum aspiration technique they called "menstrual extraction".

Honor the Women's Liberation Center of Austin, Texas that reached out to two young Texas lawyers, Sarah Weddington and Linda Coffee. Honor Weddington and Coffee who filed the single-plaintiff suit, *Roe v. Wade*, that the Supreme Court finally ruled on in January 1973, in a 7 to 2 decision.

You are standing on the shoulders of remarkable women who never expected their amazing work could become undone a few decades later by evil coalitions of reactionary forces. The battle is now yours to fight and win again."

Donna Schaper

Senior Minister of Judson Memorial Church, New York City

Abortion Again and Again

"I wasn't the only one to get tired, fighting after *Roe*, to keep the (Ir)Religious Right from chipping away at our freedom. I had debated just one too many fanatical foes. I couldn't stand the screaming, the insults, the veiled threats that if I didn't come to their Jesus, that I or those I loved would be hurt. The discourtesies of the debate, the phone calls and letters at home, the picketing of my church all wore me down. Bluntly, the irreligious right fights dirty. Non-violence is what I tried to practice; they did not. The punishmentalists wore me out as well as down, and I realized that "civil discourse," was no longer possible. Perhaps it is never possible with people who think they are "RIGHT." Now that I am less exhausted, and more angry, and more convicted, I am ready to fight again, this time with more of a sense of the right for me and my kind of Christian. I gave tolerance too much credit, a mistake that people like me love to make.

My theology changed in this time of lost spirit, cuddled and coddled by the falsely applied virtue of tolerance. I realized that I was right about the right to choose. I realized that I was right in the name of Jesus. I realized that I was right in the names of biology and evolution and population control. I realized that I was right as a woman, coming out of a long and ancient and biblically sanctioned time when women were not considered fully human. By the power of the Holy Spirit's ongoing interpretation of scripture, through the God who is Still Speaking, and through the Living Word of God, we now see women as fully human, not as the ancillaries of the true humans, the men. This truth was so big, so historically radical, that it took a while to seep in. Now that it is in, I don't have to fear rude interruptions in debates so much. I can interrupt the debate myself. I don't have to go all the way to moralistic but I sure can use the word moral.

Like many, I took a long breather from the movement, focused on other things, kept my membership active in the religious and secular left. I tried to become more strategic, more focused. I did not anticipate that clinics would be closed, one after another, or that Texas would become absurd in abortion legislation. I didn't understand that Dr. Tiller would be killed and now I can not only know but also realize that he is dead. I forgot the larger truth, that as women emerge as full humans, we are pivotal to all the "issues" and to the saving of the sanity of the planet, if not the planet itself.

There is a new fierceness in the women's movement right now. It takes morning-after pills off the back shelf, by hand, in drug stores, in growing numbers of drug stores, and puts them on the front shelves. It insists that birth control be paid for by insurance companies. It is not an afterthought for women any more but a forethought. We have to stop letting them get away with murder, by which I mean the risks associated with unwanted or medically non-viable pregnancies as well as the cruel death of the spirit as well as the killing of the living Word of God. We are not the murderers, which we have been called, in what can only be called an Orwellian twistedness. The devil is downright sneaky.

I support and will attend the July/August Freedom's Ride to Wichita and North Dakota and Texas because I believe I am right about abortion, as a Christian, as a clergy person, as a woman, and as a woman who has had an abortion and believes I made the right decision. (See my Letter to the New York Times, Thursday, July 11, 2013.)

I do so as part of the great battle my tradition is engaging. The religious right would stifle the Holy Spirit and new interpretations of scripture that say women are people. That is the larger fight, and I have no intention of allowing them victory in it. God is still speaking and the living word of God cannot be stifled, by those afraid of the beauty and power of women."

Kathleen Barry, ph.D

Feminist, Human Rights Activist, author *Female Sexual Slavery; The Prostitution of Sexuality*, and *Unmaking War, Remaking Men*

Signed the Statement for Abortion On Demand and Without Apology and added her own personal message

“This campaign fills a desperate need of women and of the feminist movement. Women coming into this campaign refuse to be cowered by misogynist fanaticism which seeks to reverse women's liberation.”

Finn Mackay

Founder: London Feminist Network & revived London Reclaim the Night

“I am honoured and humbled to send a message of support and solidarity from the UK to your Abortion Rights Freedom Ride across the US. This feminist action is inspiring, innovative and exciting in the face of an old and tired patriarchy that fearfully seeks to control women's bodies at any cost. It is groups like yours who are pro-life; pro a world where every child is a wanted child, where every mother a willing mother and where families in all their diversity are supported by their state and community in the most important job of raising children. Those that seek to return women to the constraints of unwanted pregnancy, are anti-life, anti-dignity and anti-women. I salute your bravery and commitment, which is so urgent at this time as patriarchy bends, shifts, fractures; and inevitably strikes back, in ways old and new. I wish you good luck and safe passage, thank you for what you are doing for women and for freedom and social justice. Solidarity to you from the UK.”

Fleanor Bader

Activist, freelance writer, and co-author *Targets of Hatred: Anti-Abortion Terrorism*

“I am inspired by the hard work and intrepid spirit of our friends in Jackson. Standing up to bullies and misogynists day-in and day-out is a horrible job, but your fortitude is impressive. I hope you can continue to fight hard for the women of Mississippi. They need you desperately. As we well know, if the clinic closes, women will still end unwanted pregnancies but will rely on risky practices. Keeping the clinic open—and actually opening loads more women's reproductive care centers throughout the South—is imperative. Thanks, clinicians and advocates, for all you do, and thanks to the Freedom Riders for having their backs.”

Cecile Pineda

Author *Devil's Tango: How I Learned the Fukushima Step by Step*

“The integrity of women's bodies happens to be one of innumerable issues on which neoconservative politicians are playing out their endgame. All movements must embrace this issue as part of their platforms.”

Laura X

Founder/former director of Women's History Library/National Clearinghouse on Marital and Date Rape

Signed the Statement for Abortion On Demand and Without Apology and added her own personal message

“I was an opponent in Missouri of Todd Akin back in 1991 when he opposed legislation outlawing marital rape on the same you-can't-get-pregnant nonsense as he was up to in the last election. My picket sign for abortion in the sixties with nurse activist Pat Maginnis was ‘Every child a wanted child’ and I still agree!”

Appendix 4.

Key Articles from the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride

Abortion Rights Are at a Crossroads:

*This is NOT a Time to Lay Low—
It is Time for Massive Uncompromising Struggle!*

by Sunsara Taylor and David Gunn, Jr., July 6, 2013

<http://www.revcom.us/a/310/abortion-rights-are-at-a-crossroads-en.html>

Across the country, people are waking up to the state of emergency facing the right to abortion. As legislators in Texas push hard to close down 37 of 42 abortion clinics statewide, new laws in North Carolina would close four of their five remaining clinics. Meanwhile, Ohio's recently passed budget could close as many as three abortion clinics. North Dakota, on August 1, may become the first state to effectively ban abortion. Already Mississippi's last abortion clinic is merely an appellate ruling away from closure. We could go on.

If we do not reverse this trajectory now, we will condemn future generations of women and girls to forced motherhood, to lives of open enslavement, terror, and life-crushing shame. Women will be forced to have children they do not want, trapping them in abusive relationships, driving them into poverty, forcing them out of school, and extinguishing their dreams. Women will go to desperate and dangerous measures to terminate unwanted pregnancies, once again flooding emergency rooms and turning up dead women in cheap motels with blood caked between their legs.

We face two divergent roads: Either we seize control of the debate and reset the terms and whole trajectory of this fight; or we continue down the road of "established conventional wisdom," only to awaken before long to an unrecognizable and untenable situation for women. What each of us does matters, and matters tremendously.

It is in this context that we initiated an Abortion Rights Freedom Ride. Our echo of the Civil Rights Freedom Rides is intentional and fitting. Women who cannot decide for themselves if and when they have children are not free. On the contrary, they are mere child-bearing chattel whose purpose is to serve and not actively choose their destinies.

Volunteers on this Freedom Ride will caravan from both coasts to North Dakota, traverse through the middle of the country into Wichita, and head due south to Jackson, Mississippi. Our aim is threefold: 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.

As the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride evolved from conception to genesis, many have responded with enthusiastic and unequivocal support. Regular people from across the country as well as those who have been on the front lines of the abortion rights struggle are joining with us in demanding abortion rights without compromise and thanking us for daring to travel to where women's rights face the harshest threat.

However, some who share our passion for the cause have raised concerns and even opposition to this action. They fear the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride will be too confrontational, too vociferous for abortion, and may turn off avenues of support.

Some have argued that it is wrong for people to come into local areas from the outside. Others argue that mass political protest will endanger the chances of winning important court cases and that it is better to rely on official channels of politics.

Because the future of women is at stake, we feel it is critical to address these concerns head on. In fact, it is exactly the faulty logic at the root of these concerns that has contributed to all of us finding ourselves in such a dire situation.

First, while local ground conditions are different and unique in some ways, the fact that *every clinic* and *every state* is facing heightened assault is *not unique nor is it local*. We all face a national assault on abortion rights which requires a national counter-offensive. Not only is it utterly immoral for us to abandon the women living in the states most under direct duress, it is delusional to think that what happens in states like Arkansas, Mississippi, North Dakota and Kansas will not come soon to a theater near you. Our futures are bound together and we all share the responsibility to take this on and turn the tide where the attacks are the most severe.

Second, while it is true that a great many people—including many who support abortion rights—are defensive about abortion, they *should not be ashamed* and this defensiveness and shame is precisely something we must eradicate.

Among the reasons many are defensive about abortion are decades of propaganda by those who oppose women's equality but posture as defenders of "babies"; meanwhile, supporters of abortion rights have too often been conciliatory, muted, and compromising. This must stop. This fight has never been about babies. It has always been about controlling women. This is why there is not a single major anti-abortion organization that supports birth control.

If we want to turn the tide, we have to tell the truth: there is absolutely nothing wrong with abortion. Fetuses are NOT babies. Abortion is NOT murder. Women are NOT incubators.

A great many people are hungry for this message. They are furious and searching for a meaningful vehicle to make their outrage felt. It is only by asserting the positive morality of abortion rights that we can call forth and mobilize the tens of thousands who already share our resolve. Only through direct action and a polemical shift can all of us stand together and change how millions of others are thinking. Shouldn't this emergency situation awaken us to the need to *change public opinion*, not accommodate it?

History has proven that directly confronting oppressive social norms can be disruptive and scary; yet it is a necessary and uplifting part of making any significant positive change. Many argued that it was wiser for LGBT people to stay closeted until society was more accepting; others counseled against the Civil Rights Freedom Rides out of fear that it would only rile up the opposition, but it was only when people took that risk and got "in your face" that broader public opinion and actions began to change.

We must create a situation where being anti-abortion is seen to be as socially unacceptable as it is to advocate lynchings, anti-LGBT violence, or rape (although, if you listen to some on the Right, rape advocacy is not necessarily off their table). When we reach that summit, we will be on our way to turning the tide.

Third, while court cases are important—even essential—it is only through truly massive independent political struggle that we stand a chance at defeating the truly unyielding and powerful foe we face. Every setback the anti-abortion movement experiences only makes them more determined and every victory only makes them

more aggressive. They will not be appeased if we lie low. No court case or election or new law will stop them. Not only has the existing power structure proven unwilling or unable to do so, people who believe they are on a "mission from God" are not bound by human laws and do not yield to public opinion.

But they *can* be defeated. Forced motherhood is deeply opposed to the interests of humanity. If we get out there and tell the truth, if we *resist*, if we clarify the stakes of this battle, and if we mobilize wave upon wave of the masses to get off the sidelines and into the streets with us, we can win. There is a tremendous reservoir of people who can and must be called forth to join in this struggle. We have seen this vividly in Texas. Let us not underestimate the potential that exists in every state across this country.

We stand at a crossroads. For the future of women everywhere, let us refuse the worn pathways that have allowed us to lose so much ground. We must not lay low, hope these attacks will blow over, and allow women in some parts of the country to be forced into mandatory motherhood while hoping to preserve the rights of a shrinking few. We cannot continue to foster the attitude that abortion is the 21st century's Scarlet Letter while allowing abortion providers to be further stigmatized and demonized. We cannot recoil from the massive fight that urgently needs fighting at this moment in this time.

Now is the time for courage, for truth-telling, for stepping out and launching an uncompromising counter-offensive. We have right on our side. We call on everyone who cares about the future of women to join with us in strengthening the national impact and influence of this Abortion Rights Freedom Ride. Join with us at our kick-off rallies in New York City and San Francisco on July 23. Caravan to meet us in North Dakota, Wichita, Kansas, and Jackson, Mississippi. Send a donation or a message of support. Reach out to individuals and religious communities that can provide safe passage to the courageous individuals who are giving up their summers and putting everything they have into winning a different and far better future for women. Most importantly, let us together take the rough road to victory. It may be less traveled, but only through struggle can we reap the benefits of love's labor won.

Sunsara Taylor writes for *Revolution* newspaper (revcom.us) and is an initiator of the movement to *End Pornography and Patriarchy: The Enslavement and Degradation of Women* (StopPatriarchy.org)

David Gunn, Jr. is the son of David Gunn, Sr., the first abortion doctor to be assassinated by an anti-abortion gunman, and blogs for *Abortion.ws*

Still Crazy After All These Years:

How I Got Off the Couch and Onto the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride

by Ginny, Abortion Rights Freedom Rider from Minneapolis, August 5, 2013
<http://stoppatriarchy.tumblr.com/post/57451242634/stillcrazy>

That, of course, is the title of a 1975 Paul Simon song. One reviewer claims this song describes the “impotent rage” that many men and women feel as they get older. They watch the world pass by, are unhappy with the state of affairs but feel too detached or maybe too powerless to really care.

*Four in the morning,
Crapped out, yawning
Longing my life away
I'll never worry
Why should I?
It's all going to fade.*

I could very much be living in this Paul Simon song. I am more than middle aged, have been comfortably active in local and state issues, and have done my share of community work. Now it is someone else's turn. I'm old; it is time for the kids to care. Yes, there are important issues that demand my attention but I vote and I give some money to good causes. Yes I am angry about the injustice that I see in the world but what can I really do anyhow? I am the definition of “impotent rage.”

But now I have been on the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride (ARFR) for four days and I have a lot more to say about our ability to shake the apathy and to change our world.

These riders, from the west to the east, are truly inspiring. Men, women, older, younger: they are spending their time and committing their lives to struggle and change. This is not change in the way that I have imagined it in the past. It is a real change that must happen if we are to see lasting equality and justice.

This ride was organized to highlight the state of emergency that surrounds the issue of abortion. The new laws being passed in state after state suggest a chilling reality. Ninety-seven percent of rural counties have no abortion providers; five states have only one operating abortion clinic; and eight abortion providers have been killed. Unless people speak up and fight back, women will

see their rights systematically stripped away. We will go to sleep in 2013 but wake up in 1953.

But this assault on abortion rights is just part of a larger assault on women, and that, in turn, is part of an even larger assault on the people of this country. We can no longer sit back and wait for the political leaders to guide us out of the darkness. We cannot sit by hoping that some candidate or some party will be able to change the direction of this decline. I cannot sit at home watching the “good” news channel, railing against the “bad” news channel, and let my rage stay silent. I cannot wait for someone else to fight the battle for me. I have to get off the couch and get on the bus.

I was raised to be a good Democrat and I have held tight to the belief that the Democrats will one day defeat the evil Republicans. I have made excuses for years as Democrats give ground on human rights issues. I have been loyal to Democratic candidates who say they are going to fight for change but not just yet....maybe next month or next session or during their next term. I started this ride because I want to stop the assault on women. I continue on this ride because I realize that the fight must come from the people. I cannot wait any longer for change to come through the political system. The old saying goes “the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results.” Why should I vote over and over and expect that maybe the next time things will be different?

Riding across the upper Midwest with a growing group of riders is, indeed, a trip. There are constant conversations about lodging, food, and logistics. I haven't been “communal” for a long time but it is coming back to me. Working for a cause and living with a group is indeed still crazy after all these years. But at least I am giving voice to my anger. No longer impotent rage, I am at the beginning of an important journey. If you are on the couch reading this, please give voice to your outrage. You are not alone and it is not too late.

A Day in a Mall in Wichita

by Sunsara Taylor | August 13, 2013 | Revolution Newspaper | revcom.us

<http://www.revcom.us/movement-for-revolution/stop-patriarchy/a/313/mall-in-wichita-en.html>

In Wichita, a group of us from the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride went to one of the two major shopping malls to do active social investigation and learn what people think and feel about women's right to abortion. We took our uncompromising message of Abortion On Demand and Without Apology out to people unadulterated and we engaged them over this. What we learned through this active social investigation gave us a very rich window into how people are thinking in this city and only deepened our understanding of just how essential it is to bring this full undiluted truth to people everywhere, especially places like this. The people we met, especially the very, very young women, have never heard anyone speak unapologetically about abortion, they carry tremendous judgment towards if not outright condemnation and judgment for women who get abortions, and they overall lack any real understanding of science or the scientific method. What we learned has enriched our understanding of what kind of thinking we are fighting to transform through this Freedom Ride and it has deeply underscored precisely the need for major struggle throughout all corners of society to change how people are thinking.

The first woman that my team approached was a white woman in her late twenties who attends a vocational school in the mall. She seemed reluctant to talk at first, telling us, "I lost my ability to have children at age 24 so I am really against abortion." She insisted, "If you are blessed to have the ability to have a child you should do so and not complain or try to get out of it." We acknowledged that if you want to have a child and you aren't able to that can be a very difficult thing, but the fact that someone who wants a child can't have one doesn't mean that people who don't want to have children should be forced to do so. She switched her argument, insisting that fetuses are "people" from the moment of conception. We refuted this, pointing out that fetuses are a subordinate part of a woman's body—not a separate social or biological person. Then she told us how her sister had medical complications in her pregnancy and there had been only a 50 percent chance that both she and the fetus would survive. Despite all the risk, she followed her sister to the abortion clinic and begged her to not go through with the procedure. When asked how this had affected her relationship with her sister, she explained, "Well, I haven't really talked to her much in the years since then."

Before leaving, I said honestly that what she did to her sister was very wrong and damaging. I explained again that fetuses are not babies and abortion is not murder and that there is absolutely nothing wrong with having an abortion. I posed even more sharply and concretely that it can be wonderful to have a child when you want one, but to be forced to have one against one's will is enslaving to women.

This seemed to provoke new thinking from her and she responded, "Yeah, it's true. Some women are ready for kids but not everybody is. You shouldn't be forced to have a kid." I gently pointed out that this was different than what she said before and asked what had changed in her thinking. She couldn't or wouldn't answer this question. Instead she repeated that she knows not all women are always ready to have kids and hurried off to class.

In the mall's food court we approached a table with a middle-aged white man and woman. We let them read our Abortion On Demand shirts, told about the Freedom Ride and asked their thinking. The man immediately began proselytizing that "life begins at conception" and he is "prolife" in every circumstance, even rape and incest. He told us that his father delivered over a thousand babies as a physician and that "each of those babies became a baby at conception." We pointed out that the fact that his father delivered babies doesn't prove that "they were babies starting at conception," but this basic logic seemed to infuriate him. The woman with him tried to tone things down by saying that she thought people should pray about every decision. Then the man tried to dismiss us by saying, "I respect your right to feel the way you do, but you are wrong!" I pointed out that he is NOT respecting my right to feel the way I do because these rights are actively being taken away right now. When I went on to describe how fetuses are not babies, the man jumped up and declared, "This conversation is done!"

A couple groupings of young women with children refused to talk to us. The attitude they gave us indicated they thought it was inappropriate, and perhaps evil, to even be mentioning abortion.

Next we approached a young mother with two teenage daughters. The mother answered our first question by saying, "I am the mother of a teenage mother and a

grandmother to that new baby, so that is a lot of what I feel." The young woman told us that she was now 18 years old but had gotten pregnant when she was 17. She continued, "For some women it is not a good idea to have a kid, but I was ready and this was the right thing to do." This surprised me a bit because I had expected that if she had chosen to have a child so young it was because she was against abortion. In reality, they clearly thought there was something wrong with having an abortion themselves (even as they thought the right should be available), but even more they seemed (both mother and daughter) to think it was a good age for the young woman to have a child.

The mother volunteered that her own sister had had an abortion due to a medical complication. And the mother was extremely clear that she thought the right should be available for other women. When asked, she said she remembered Dr. Tiller and was very sad that he had been killed. She knew there were people who want to take away women's rights but didn't seem at all aware how many attacks are coming down. Before leaving I asked the thirteen-year-old what she thought of abortion and she shrugged. She indicated that she had never discussed it with anyone before. We thanked them all for taking the time to talk and gave them literature about the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride.

At the other end of the mall we struck up conversation with two very young looking 16-year-olds. When we brought up the subject of abortion they exclaimed, "We were just talking about this!" They had just heard something about how at a certain point in their development (they couldn't recall when) fetuses "feel pain." This must be something they heard from the LIES that are being promoted by anti-abortion forces to push a ban on abortion after 20 weeks. They both agreed that once a fetus hit that point, it would be wrong to have an abortion in their opinion. Our conversation lasted a long time so I won't explain all the back and forth, but the most striking part of it was when the two young women both insisted that if they found themselves pregnant they would definitely choose to have a baby. "Maybe when I was younger I wouldn't have been ready, but now I am old enough I definitely think I would keep the baby." Both of them, just like the other young woman and her mother, seemed to think that 16 years old was a good age to start having children!

I told these two young women outright that if they were pregnant and I was the one giving advice I would tell them in no uncertain terms that it was best to get an abortion. They were young, they should experience being young

and figure out who they want to be and be part of thinking about and impacting the world around them, not have their lives smashed down into mainly caring for a baby. One of them responded, "Yeah, my sister had a baby at 17 and she couldn't go to college and its true, having a baby would really suck." Still, they insisted that if they got pregnant right now they would have a child. Mostly it seemed they just didn't have any idea of making their lives about anything bigger than having a child.

They mentioned that one of their "ex-best friends" now has a one-year-old, but they don't hang out with her any more. The young woman with me from the Freedom Ride shared with them how many of her friends have foreclosed their whole larger lives when they had children as teens. I asked if they knew who Dr. Tiller was and neither of them did. When I explained that he was a doctor killed for doing abortions one of them sort of remembered the story and both of them seemed really alarmed.

One of them blurted out, "I don't see why anyone else should care. I mean, you want a boob job you can go to a doctor for that. You want an abortion, why shouldn't you be able to go to a doctor for that?"

I pointed out that not being able to get breast implants doesn't have the same life-long implications of being forced to have children. They laughed in recognition and we began breaking down how many restrictions have been passed to take away women's access to abortion. They didn't know any of this and thought this was wrong. Before leaving we invited them to be part of standing up for their generation and generations to come by coming out to our protest on Saturday. They said they would be scared and had never been to a protest. They had recently watched the movie *Hair* and wanted to know if people would be getting shoved and stuff. We told them that wasn't our plan at all and that while we cannot control what the anti-abortion forces do and they are vicious, that we would be out together having each others' backs and standing up for what was right. They seemed intrigued and took fliers.

Just as this conversation was ending, an older woman marched up to us. "Why do you think it's okay to kill people?" she demanded. We briefly laid out what we were about, but explained also that we were interested to hear her views and how they were formed. She insisted that she used to be "just like [us], hating god and thinking all Christians were stupid." She had been "tempted by the devil in the '70s" to support abortion and "turn against god." Over the years she insisted that her heart and mind had been changed by Jesus and by her study of history

and the Bible. Despite the fact that we were very patiently listening to her and occasionally asking a question or two to probe her thinking, she grew more and more impatient with us *and angry*. Before long, she was spilling out a truly insane theory about how Christians are the most persecuted grouping in society and her active, palpable sense of terror that she and all the other Christians are on the verge of being put into death camps. When she began attempting to draw lessons from Nazi Germany (claiming that "the Church" was the staunchest opponent of Hitler), I pointed out that Hitler was the father of the "right to life" movement, criminalizing abortion early on. This really set her off and then she returned to her active fear of being put into a camp.

"I was just talking with my son," she explained, "and I told him I am not brave enough to be a martyr. He told me I have to steel myself and be strong." I asked if she was talking about the End Times (the myth that Jesus is coming back and there will be a horrific bloodbath of judgment on earth). With indignation she waved her hand and sneered, "What? End times, that's for people who are 'out there,' I don't believe that, only Jesus knows that." The more we talked, the more she took issue with and was provoked by even the most mundane things that I said. When I told her plainly that I wasn't going to answer a personal question, she accused me of "deceiving [her] again!" By the time we were done listening to her (we did very little speaking as a whole) this woman was shaking with both fury *and* (totally unfounded) *fear*. As we walked away, she yelled after us to stop deceiving everyone and it looked like she was going to report us to mall security.

It was time to meet back up with the other team, but we were a few minutes early. We approached a group of three women from the local trade school who were having lunch. A young Black woman among them was clearly reading our shirts and so we spoke to her first. "I just had an abortion," she explained. "I never thought I'd become a baby-killer, but I already have four kids and didn't know what else to do." We insisted that she hadn't killed a baby, that abortion is not murder, and she responded, "But my faith tells me it is." Before we could go any further with her, one of the women in the group got up and dashed away from us. As she left, I asked the third woman what her thoughts were. "I had two of them," she said. "You know," I explained, "This is really common. 1 in 3 women has an abortion. Did you know that?" They both shook their heads no. "Did you know this about each other?" Again, they shook their heads no.

I asked if there had been anti-abortion protesters at the clinics when they went and they both said yes. The Black woman said she wasn't mad at them, that she actually agreed with them but they didn't know her circumstance. The other woman, who was white and just a little bit older, said the protesters made her very, very angry. "I wanted to run up on them and smack them," she explained. You could tell the anger was still active even though the abortions were a while ago. The Black woman seemed very intrigued by this anger.

I asked if they knew who Dr. Tiller was and the white woman said, "Yeah, he's the one who gave me my abortions. I was so mad when they killed him." The Black woman said she thought it was wrong that he was killed and thought people should mind their own business and let people do their jobs or have their kids or get their abortions or whatever they needed. Then she explained how she had had to travel to Kansas City to get her abortion because she hadn't been able to get one in Wichita after Tiller's death.

Finally, the other team met up with us and we had to get going. 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.

Why I Oppose a 20-week Ban on Abortion: Because I Love and Care For the Health of Women

by Mary Lou Singleton, August 20, 2013

<http://revcom.us/movement-for-revolution/stop-patriarchy/a/314/dangers-of-20-week-abortion-ban-en.html>

Following is the transcript of a speech by MaryLou Singleton, woman's healthcare provider, and signer on the statement for Abortion on Demand & Without Apology, delivered at the Aug 20, 2013 rally in Albuquerque NM to protest Operation Rescue.

MaryLou gave permission for this transcript to be shared broadly, and although she was not part of the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, we're including this speech in our report because of its clear and extremely helpful explanation on the dangers of a 20-week ban on abortion. The views expressed in the speech are, of course, MaryLou's own and she is not responsible for the views published elsewhere in this Report. As of now, 8 states have passed laws which ban abortions at 20 weeks. This Nov 19, 2013, Operation Rescue is returning full-force to Albuquerque, as residents prepare to vote on a 20-week ban on abortion. If passed, this would close HALF the services available in the U.S. to women with dangerous complications late in their pregnancies or who face other extreme circumstances. StopPatriarchy is mobilizing people to come to Albuquerque Nov 15-19, 2013 to fight against the proposed ban and for Abortion on Demand and Without Apology.

I want to thank all of you who have shown up today in support of women, health care providers and the Jewish community. I'm speaking today as a women's healthcare provider and as a person who was raised in the anti-choice movement. My parents were the co-chairs of Pennsylvanians for Human Life and worked tirelessly to take the legal right to choose abortion away from American women. My sister was a member of Operation Rescue. I know the arguments of the anti-choice side forward and backward because their talking points were the daily discourse in my home while growing up. Like the teenagers who came to our town and bullied women at clinics, harassed our Holocaust museum, and terrorized a doctor's family in their private residence, as a child I too believed what my parents and other authority figures told me about abortion.

Then I grew up. And I became a midwife. And I began to fully understand the complicated reality of actual women's lives. Over one-third of the women I served as a midwife had at some point made the decision to have an abortion. And they all had very good reasons for making these choices. And they obviously weren't murderers. They were loving, compassionate, intelligent people who had made the appropriate choice for themselves and their families.

Because I love and care for the health of women, I want to talk to you about abortion. I want to explain to you that the ballot measure being pushed on our town by out-of-state religious extremists will hurt women's lives. This measure is being billed as a referendum on "late-term abortion" but any woman who has been pregnant can tell you that 20 weeks into a pregnancy is by no means "late term." Twenty weeks is the middle of pregnancy, which lasts an average of 40 weeks. Twenty weeks is also the point in pregnancy when women carrying fetuses with problems often begin to get very sick, because sick pregnancies frequently result in very sick mothers. Some of these women become so sick, it becomes necessary to end the pregnancy to save their lives. If this ballot measure passes, women will be forced to continue these potentially life-threatening pregnancies.

Twenty weeks is also the point in pregnancy where it becomes possible to diagnose severe and often lethal birth defects. On

multiple occasions, I have been the midwife for a woman who has just found out that her very wanted baby is missing a brain, or kidneys, or lungs and will not survive for more than a few minutes outside of the womb. I have sat with and comforted these women as they made the agonizing decision of what to do in such horrible circumstances. While every woman's choice may be different, I can say from deep within my heart that no one has the right to make this choice but the woman carrying the pregnancy.

If this ballot initiative passes, our city will have decided that we will force these women to carry pregnancies which will inevitably end in heartbreak and tragedy for up to another five months. We will see cases like the one in El Salvador last spring, where a woman with lupus who was carrying a baby without a brain was denied an abortion even though the pregnancy was causing her to go into kidney failure. Like the ballot measure being pushed on our town, the law in El Salvador states that physicians must work just as hard to save the life of the fetus as the life of the mother, even in cases where it is known that the baby will die immediately after birth.

This ballot measure would endanger women's lives in ways that should terrify even women who believe they personally would never choose an abortion. If the measure passes, women will be denied life-saving care if they are miscarrying after 20 weeks and the fetus still has a heartbeat. What this means is that women will die. The world witnessed just such a death last year when a 31-year-old dentist in Ireland died because the country's laws which were similar to this ballot measure forbade doctors from intervening when she was miscarrying. If this ballot measure passes, women could also be denied chemotherapy and radiation should they be diagnosed with cancer more than 20 weeks into a pregnancy. Last year a pregnant teenager in the Dominican Republic, another Catholic country that bans all abortion, died of leukemia after being denied cancer treatment on the grounds that it would harm the fetus she was carrying. These laws are horrific.

I ask all of you to work together to defeat this ballot measure and protect the lives of women. Medical decisions should not be made in the voting booth.

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 | July 30, 2013 | Revolution Newspaper | revcom.us

<http://revcom.us/a/312/sunsara-taylor-from-abortion-rights-freedom-ride-july30-en.html>

Last night in Minneapolis, a woman came up to me at the church where we held a stop on the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride and said, "I am old enough to remember back when abortion was illegal and I never thought we'd end up back here. How did this happen and what is it going to take to make sure that when you are my age you aren't still having to fight this?"

This is a common sentiment that we have run into on this Abortion Rights Freedom Ride. Along with the tremendous courage and depth of support that has poured forward from women and men of all ages, including women very courageously sharing their stories of getting abortions back when it was illegal, has been tremendous searching and questioning as to where these attacks are really coming from, why they are so vicious, and what—if anything—can be done to really defeat and bring into being a world where women are actually treated as full human beings. This has come up not only among those who went through the '60s and '70s but also from younger people who are just waking up to political life.

So what is it going to take to ensure that future generations don't have to keep fighting this battle?

It is going to take revolution, nothing less. In particular, it is going to take communist revolution as it has been re-envisioned by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party.

Interestingly, there are a great many people who are immediately intrigued and eager to get into that. They are clearly hungering for deeper answers, and I intend to write more about this interaction in the days to come. But here I want to speak to the way that this truth-telling from me gets some people nervous. "Abortion is controversial enough, please don't bring communism into it," is the sentiment these people express.

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 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.

As such, the very notion that a woman would choose to pursue something other than child-bearing is deemed "selfish." Choosing to terminate a pregnancy is viewed as deviating from this "essential role" and, really, the "only acceptable role" for women. Bearing children is still viewed by millions and millions in this society, by the dominant culture which is shaped by the capitalist-imperialist and deeply patriarchal system we live under, as the only way women can redeem themselves for the crime of being born female. (No, this is not merely an outmoded and horrific mandate written into the Bible—though it is that—it is also a cohering and dominant norm of the society we live in.)

Not only this, but this whole system is going through major changes on a global scale driven by the workings of capitalism-imperialism itself—massive migrations of

people searching for work and survival, the ever-deeper penetration of imperialist markets into the Third World, the tremendous destruction of wars, and much more. This has brought the question of the role and position of women ever more acutely to the fore in every part of the world—and the question of whether women will be further enslaved and pushed backwards or whether millions will rise to challenge and shatter these outmoded generations of oppression is ever more sharply posed.

This is why there are so many attacks right now on abortion. It is also why so many, even among those who support this right, are defensive about abortion. But it is also why there is a tremendous material basis for millions upon millions to see and to act on the fact that the world no longer has to be this way, if there is a core that fights for this understanding with scientific certitude and the confidence to lead.

All this actually underscores why we **MUST** bring communism and real communist revolution into this fight. Because, as important and essential as it is to be standing up against the attacks on abortion rights, to be challenging the stigma on abortion, to be defending the doctors who risk their lives every day to provide abortions, to be resisting each new attack (and there are so, so many these days) on women's access to abortion, to be connecting all this up in a massive, uncompromising, nationwide, totally undefensive resistance that mobilizes millions and changes the terms all throughout society on this fight, *it is only through revolution that the soil which gives rise to this war on women will be dug up once and for all.*

Real revolution, communist revolution as it has been re-envisioned by Bob Avakian goes to the roots of this war on women, and male domination more generally, in the system of capitalism-imperialism and all systems before it that have been divided into antagonistic classes. This revolution provides the only real means to get rid of the relations of production and economic base of society that requires and gives rise to the putrid culture which has, as one very essential element in it, the constant degradation and subordination of women. And this new synthesis of revolution and communism that Bob Avakian has brought forward has the most thoroughgoing approach to really tapping into and unleashing the fury of women as a mighty force for revolution—grasping that real liberation for anyone is impossible without the full liberation of women, and recognizing the positive and driving force for revolution that is this struggle against all forms of male domination, patriarchy, and the degradation of women.

And besides, as most people know, the war on women is *far* from the only crime of this system—whether you want to talk about the modern-day, state-sanctioned lynching of Trayvon Martin and all that it concentrates about the fate of Black and Brown youth everywhere, or the environmental destruction which is an inevitable outgrowth of a profit-before-all system, or the unending wars of aggression and drones and spying and solitary confinement and war on immigrants and horrific everyday exploitation that is woven into the clothes we wear and the cars we drive and the cell phones we talk on and all the rest (because this is the only way things get produced on a mass scale under capitalism).

So, while it is very important to stress to everyone that whether you are a communist or not, if you care about women you really must join with the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride and fight for it to be as strong and as galvanizing as possible with reverberations all throughout society... while it is important that people join with this effort based on the extreme state of emergency and based on the fact that this Freedom Ride is speaking to and acting to meet the great need of this moment to call forward mass public resistance to turn the tide in this war on women... and while it is very, very wrong to allow anyone to scare you away from this just because there are communists involved or because this might make things more controversial...

Even more fundamentally and importantly for all who want to see a way out of this nightmare once and for all, you should *welcome* the fact that there are communists at the core of this movement, you should *welcome* the fact that the Revolutionary Communist Party has a program and strategy to put an *end* to all this horror and oppression that has been the fate of those born female in every part of the world for thousands of years, you should eagerly engage with the new synthesis of communism brought forward by Bob Avakian through decades of rigorous and dedicated struggle, and you should start relating to and strengthening the movement for revolution that is being built now, and you should join with us in giving everything we can to strengthening this fight to defeat the war on women in a way that lays the basis for, organizes people into, the real solution that humanity needs. A very good place to start this engagement is [*A Declaration: For Women's Liberation and the Emancipation of All Humanity.*](#)

Fight the power, and transform the people, for revolution.

The real revolution could not come a minute too soon!

I Use the Truth as my Guiding Principle and Strategy

by David Gunn, Jr., September 1, 2013

<http://www.revcom.us/a/315/david-gunn-jr-i-use-the-truth-as-my-guiding-principle-and-strategy-en.html>

I was recently asked the following question by a friend and fellow activist. I shared my answer to the question with Sunsara Taylor who asked that we make it available to a broader audience...

- David—What strategy do you use to develop effective messaging? And what do you consider to be an effective message, depending on the strategy?

My response:

In simplest terms, I use the truth as my guiding principle and strategy. If our goal, and I think it is, is to protect and provide safe abortion services to women nationwide when their particular causes and conditions necessitate the service, I do not think talking openly and honestly about a perfectly legal medical procedure which has been practiced for years with little risk to the patient in a manner that is clear and concise is at all radical or fanatical as some would cast it.

"Abortion on Demand and Without Apology" is empowering, clearly states what it is you support, and does not connote shame in any way. Some consider the slogan radical. Some say it is too confrontational. I ask, how is it radical to state what you believe, and, also, why is it controversial or confrontational to support a perfectly legal medical decision which a woman makes after consulting with herself first, her higher power—if she believes in one, her doctor, and her partner? There may be another slogan which accomplishes the same truth, but it seems to me too many on our side are scared to say abortion as if it is Lord Voldemort or Sauron, or Satan, or some other metaphysical mythological cursed deity.

On the other hand, I do not support, and have never supported, the slogan "safe, legal, and rare" because it implies, somehow, abortions are not safe, are something to be ashamed about having undergone, and are questionably legal in some offhand way. The question becomes, on whose terms do we decide rarity in that context—the anti-abortionists', the patients', the government's; there are too many variables. I also abhor NARAL having changed its name from National Abortion Rights Action League to simply "Pro-Choice NARAL" as if that is to say they are for choice but not abortion. When you say you are pro-choice it means you support abortion, period, correct?

Even if one is personally against abortion or would not elect that option, if you are pro-choice you support a woman's right to choose abortion which means you support abortion. It does not mean you go out and recruit people to have abortions, it does not mean you are some sort of monster, it simply means you support a woman's constitutionally protected right to have an abortion—regardless of whether or not you would have one yourself.

The point is, we support abortion as a medical procedure, so why hide it in some semantical gymnastic handspring by equating Choice with Abortion but using the former to camouflage the latter! Where we have gone wrong, in my opinion, is playing some semantical hide the nutshell game where we talk all around what it is we support but are too ashamed, embarrassed, or afraid to plainly state "I support abortion rights without restriction." Why we continue to debate this issue on the antis' terms is beyond me and is offensive. We allow them to own "life" while we adopt the shame they try to instill about a

legal medical procedure we all support. If we are ashamed to use the word abortion, how does that make patients, providers, and clinic staff feel? Do they feel empowered and proud of the valuable work they do? Or are they deep down shamed by having to dance around what it is they do? If we spoke openly, honestly, and consistently—and that is important—about our unequivocal support for abortion, would that attitude change? Would it result in less guilt? If we are ashamed to honestly state what we believe in, how do we ever expect to build a truly national movement to counter theirs?

I know each locality has its own quirks and nuances. Yet, we have to start viewing this from the prism of combating a national coordinated attack on women by a bunch of fucking terrorists—excuse me, but I'm pretty passionate on that point—who do kill people and shed real blood.

As I've written on another post, I consistently ask myself WWDD (what would dad do?). His example is my answer: he confronted the antis at one of the clinics where he worked on 1/22/93—or about two months before he was assassinated—and sang "Happy Birthday to You *Roe v. Wade*." He then played them Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down." He was unapologetic about what he did, was proud of the service he provided, and courageous for his actions in the face of the wanted posters carrying his name and schedule posted all over the Southeast, the constant stalking, and daily protests at his workplaces (dad worked in six clinics in three states and hit each one weekly living in a suitcase). He was honest about the job he did, was unashamed of the service he provided, and was absolutely dedicated to providing abortions to women who needed them when they needed them and under the circumstances in which they needed them. I believe Dr. Tiller shared that passion and drive and it is why he carried on after Shelley Shannon attempted to kill him in 1994 (or so if memory serves).

Don't we owe it to the fallen in this war to be honest about what we are fighting for? I did not mean to get all lengthy on you, but I hope I answered your question. I feel I did and did so honestly. I Support Abortion Services! Perhaps that's better sloganeering than Abortion on Demand and Without Apology; yet, if you elect to have the procedure due to your individual causes and conditions and your doctor feels it is correct, what is there to be ashamed of but someone else's twisted morality we internalize? Aren't they (antis), then, the ones to be ashamed for woman shaming and verbal abuse? In actuality, they cause more feelings of guilt than the procedure especially if the patient is religious. In the end, they are the only ones with innocent blood on their hands, hate in their heart, and misogyny in their minds.

The last 20 years illustrate a need to honestly and vociferously call out their demeaning agenda, and we should proudly state our support for abortion en masse and often. Nothing fanatical there... again, sorry for the book. It's time, though, to fight back and do so publicly in large numbers because we outnumber them 3:1. Love, to you my friend. Hope my 3:30 ramblings are sensible and coherent.

Taking on the Anti-Abortion Siege in Albuquerque, New Mexico

by a member of the Revolution Club and Abortion Rights Freedom Rider, September 15, 2013
<http://revcom.us/a/316/taking-on-the-anti-abortion-siege-in-albuquerque-NM-en.html>

Albuquerque, New Mexico has become a national focal point in the struggle over abortion rights in this country because it is the city where two out of the four doctors left in the country who perform later abortions practice. As described in the piece below, this city was targeted for threatening and woman-hating protest by the fascist anti-abortion group Operation Rescue during mid-August and it will remain the focus of the anti-abortion movement as they work to close these abortion providers down. Albuquerque was also one of the final stops on the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride.

The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride was happy to be invited to a rally on August 20 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to denounce the anti-abortion organization "Operation Rescue" as terrorists. The organizers put this rally together in six days, after Operation Rescue descended on their town: circulating "Wanted Poster"-style postcards complete with abortion doctors' faces and home addresses, terrorizing the Holocaust and Intolerance Museum and demanding they install an exhibit on the "abortion holocaust," hanging baby dolls from lampposts, and screaming "murderer!" outside the clinic, the homes of providers, and other local pro-choice medical facilities. This nightmare week was part of a push led by Operation Rescue to pass a bill to ban abortion in Albuquerque after a woman reaches 20 weeks of pregnancy. Albuquerque is the only city in the state with abortion clinics, and is home to two of the four doctors in the whole nation who openly provide late-term abortions to women who need them.

Here is some important history about Operation Rescue, and their murderous intentions when it comes to the targeting of late-term abortion providers. In 2006, Troy Newman, leader of Operation Rescue, said about their focus on passing restrictions in Kansas, "We also want to give the women driving up from Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma about 2½ hours to think about what they're doing, and maybe change their minds." Then, in 2009, the murder of Dr. George Tiller in his church in Wichita, Kansas sent a clear and chilling message to abortion providers that provide women with the opportunity to end their pregnancy at any point (a.k.a. "late term" abortion). Scott Roeder, the anti-abortion gunman who murdered Dr. Tiller, had gotten Tiller's home address as well as the address of his church from Cheryl Sullenger, the Senior Policy Advisor for Operation Rescue. Sullenger served two years in prison for attempting to bomb an abortion clinic!

The anti-abortion siege on Albuquerque, and the targeting of late-term abortion providers, is part of a long-term and nationwide strategy for Operation Rescue to create "States of Refuge," meaning states with absolutely no access to abortion: where no woman can decide when and whether she becomes a mother, without great cost, traveling long distances, being subjected to threats and harassment and stigma, or resorting to dangerous illegal methods. This is nothing short of a misogynist, fascist, and patriarchal program. This returns women to where they were for thousands of years, until only very recently: in a subordinate position, enslaved to their reproductive organs, and locked into subhuman status, as incubators who don't even dare to dream or aspire to be the leaders, fighters, or thinkers they could be if they lived in a society that upheld and reinforced their full humanity.

Many of the organizers of the protest against Operation Rescue were thrilled to hear we were coming and asked us to bring all our "Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!" signs. But when we arrived, there were other ideas from different pro-choice forces about what could and should be said out loud.

At the protest, we were immediately met by two women wearing purple shirts that said, "Pro-child, Pro-family, Pro-choice." They told us sternly that we needed to take down the beautiful and bold banner

which read "Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!" because it was not "on message." They explained to us, with a rigid condescension, that they had conducted polls, and done research, and concluded that the people of Albuquerque were "not ready" to hear "Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!" These women insisted instead that the message "Respect Albuquerque Women" was most likely to get people to vote against the 20-week ban on abortion. They invited us to hold signs that said, "Pro-family, Pro-child, Pro-choice" explaining that many voters did not believe in abortion, so they were focusing on Operation Rescue's tactics instead of their goals, calling them "outsider extremists" (instead of, for example, Christian fascists or woman-haters), and leaving the word "abortion" out of the picture!

We asked them bluntly: "If you don't agree with 'Abortion On Demand and Without Apology', then which women do you feel should be denied abortions and forced to have children against their will and which women do you think should be made to feel ashamed for their abortions?" They insisted they personally agreed with the slogan, but were sure that nobody else in Albuquerque would.

This is wrong on many levels, as we explained on the spot. First, it is wrong to refuse to say out loud, stand behind, and fight for a just demand.

Second, people are always wrong when they start talking about what "everybody but them" is able to understand. Many people have not even heard this argument, and need to. And yes, many will think—as these women did—that this is "too extreme," but it is not too extreme. There really are two choices, forced motherhood or women's liberation which requires abortion on demand, and de-stigmatized. What is actually needed to win this fight is to change backward and defensive thinking, not accommodate to it. If you want abortion to be de-stigmatized, you have to stop stigmatizing it yourself! It is not "murder" as the anti-abortion movement says, it is not "a tragic choice" as the Clintons insisted, it is not a dirty word. So let's say it out loud!

Third, this is not just something that is needed in Albuquerque, but across the nation.

Compare and contrast with "Pro-child, Pro-family, Pro-choice." That slogan actually accepts the terms of the anti-abortion movement, accepting that somehow this fight is about babies and that we have to prove that we love babies and we love families. In reality, this has never been about babies, it has always been about control over women and this slogan leaves the woman out of it. Abortion rights are essential because without them women cannot act as full human beings with control over their bodies and their destinies. This is why this right is under attack and this is why we must defend it. But the slogan "Pro-child, Pro-family, Pro-choice" actively reinforces the same horrible notion that women and women's rights should be valued only in order to benefit children and families—once again keeping women's worth and value locked within, and subjugated to, their role as breeders and domestics. Having children and being part of a family—if that family is forged on the basis of mutual respect and equality, which

in this society requires continuous struggle and active desire on all parts—can be wonderful parts of being fully human, which women and men should both be able to experience and have responsibility for fostering. However, being stripped of the rest of your humanity and reduced to these roles (or having your rights defended only to the degree that they strengthen these roles) is enslaving and dehumanizing to women. It's not that everyone who raises this "Pro-child, Pro-family, Pro-choice" slogan feels this way, but this is the logic of the slogan and as such it does not set the needed terms for people to understand what this fight is all about, and it doesn't challenge or change decades of wrong thinking in such a way that people can take conscious initiative in fighting for these rights.

But, after we explained these arguments, these two women responded in a way that has happened far too often, and is very revealing: rather than either making an argument as to why they disagreed with putting this message out and challenging people's thinking, or coming around to uphold this—these two women changed the subject to something that is completely irrelevant, and actually totally contrary to what is needed. In other words, they fell back on petty localism: "WE are the ones that live here," they said. "WE are the ones that will be affected by this 20-week ban, WE know what the locals want, and YOU are outsiders too," implying that we are like Operation Rescue! We told them sharply, "Operation Rescue is about the enslavement of women, and we are about the liberation of women, what are you about?" Further, we posed the stark reality that the reason Albuquerque was being targeted by Operation Rescue in the first place is because the anti-abortion movement is working on a national strategy. When the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride visited Operation Rescue's national office in Wichita, they had a map of the whole country, and had pinpointed clinics and providers who they were focusing their attacks on. They targeted this city in order to shut down 50 percent of the late term abortion providers that women all over the country have to rely on. Even on that level—this is definitely NOT of only local concern!

Furthermore, what kind of logic says that women in Albuquerque are incapable of or are not "ready" for liberation? Arguing to shelter your town from the truth, to hide the full humanity of women from your town, and to cover over the fact that abortion is moral, responsible, and the ability to get one is essential, in fear of shaking things up too much? There are modes of thinking and being that desperately need to be shaken up, and actually the oppression of women needs to be shattered to its core. Don't tell women anywhere that's "not for you"!

The truth is, there is a real need for everyone who cares about the liberation of women to throw off these watered down slogans and these apologetic approaches. The anti-abortion movement is a national movement with a national strategy. What happens on the national stage, who is on the political and moral offensive and who is on the defensive nationally as a movement, affects what happens in your town, too. Not only do these organizational leaders have an obligation to confront this reality—really grapple with what it will take to end the attacks on abortion, and to stop leading people into a dead end with their losing strategies—but actually, the responsibility is on every single one of us, whether this or that leader casts off these wrong approaches or not. We all must resist the pulls to "lay low" and wait for these horrendous attacks to "blow over," or be satisfied with "small victories."

We all must confront reality: abortion rights are at a crossroads, right now. Down one path is forced motherhood and female enslavement, and down the other, is abortion on demand and without apology. It is possible to wage a fierce struggle and win this whole battle, but if we do nothing, the future is clear. The wrong side is winning. The anti-abortion movement is uncompromising, unapologetic, and they claim the moral high ground. All of us who are fighting for reproductive rights are the ones who stand for women's lives, women's futures, and

women's liberation. We are the ones that have right on our side—and we must reclaim the moral high ground!

The response of these "pro-choice organizers," who we were later told were with Planned Parenthood locally, was that they plan to set a legal precedent nationally, that if the pro-choice community in Albuquerque stays "on message" (because directly talking about abortion was "distracting") it will set a precedent and make it impossible for Operation Rescue to do this anywhere else. We called bullshit! We responded, you know they did this in Wichita, right? They moved their missionaries and their national office out there, held their "Summers of Mercy," terrorized the town, circulated home addresses of providers, isolated and threatened and demonized the clinic, until Dr. Tiller was murdered!

Beating back this one restriction is important, but doing it on such a morally flimsy basis is going to do absolutely nothing on the national level! If you cede the moral high ground, you basically concede to the very untrue notion that this is a debate about babies, that childbearing is the most important and essential aspect of a woman's existence; by refusing to even use the word "abortion," you bury the whole issue deeper into the stigma that has been laid on top of it! We need to rip that stigma off like a dirty old Band-Aid that is holding in a festering infection.

The anti-abortion movement has spent a lot of time, energy, and money setting the terms in this way: Operation Rescue and others wrongly claim that women who decide not to be mothers are irresponsible. As if a woman's mandated duty and highest aspiration in life should be to bear and raise children. Ultimately, this reduces women to objects, denying the possibility of women being multi-dimensional, complex, and capable—the way men are perceived and represented. In this framework, "male" is human (if you are the right nationality and religion, that is), and "woman" is incubator and housekeeper: slave. Rejecting this whole anti-abortion and ultimately anti-woman framework is necessary if we are going to get to another kind of society, where women are actually liberated, or even to defeat the attacks on abortion rights!

Perhaps in the short term it is true that Planned Parenthood and the rest of the pro-choicers in Albuquerque can defeat this initiative and get people "to the polls" without mentioning abortion... and then where do you end up? In Wichita they recently re-opened Dr. Tiller's clinic, but the decades of Operation Rescue's propaganda campaign has taken the option of abortion off the table in the hearts and minds of many. When the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride was in Wichita, we learned about pregnant teens throwing themselves down flights of stairs, or looking to get into a fistfight in the hopes that this would make them miscarry—that is how big the stigma and guilt associated with abortion already is! If people have become convinced that abortion is murder (which it just isn't), then many who do not want to identify as murderers won't even consider it. If those are the terms on which women are "choosing," then "pro-choice" is a very confusing thing to be, and impossible to fight for unapologetically till victory. While opening the new abortion clinic there is tremendously important, there is still no voice that is loudly telling the whole truth about abortion: fetuses are not babies, women are not incubators, and abortion is not murder. What does the absence of that basic truth do for millions of women?

Take as another example of a political move that fails to set different, honest, and liberating terms, or a moral precedent, nation-wide: the situation in Virginia last year with the ultrasound laws. First, a bill was going to be passed that required women considering abortion to go through a mandatory, invasive vaginal ultrasound (nothing short of state-mandated rape), saying that women have the "right to know" what the fetus looks like. Any kind of forced ultrasound under the title "right to know"—this is like saying you have the "right to move" out of your residence, but actually that means you are evicted. After a

national uproar, the bill was modified so that the ultra-sound would still happen but not inside the woman's vagina. This new bill passed. This is still horrible—women should not be required to go through an ultrasound if they don't want to! But changing the method by which they are now required to look at the fetus (while whoever is administering the ultrasound is free to narrate and embellish however they please), was considered by many pro-choice people as a great victory precedent! How low are our standards? This is indeed a national precedent, but it is one of shaving off the edge of the latest assault as the bulk of that assault gets hammered into place, and we are all further demobilized as the next even more powerful assault comes... then pro-choice organizations step back and call it progress or victory!

Returning to the rally in Albuquerque: In the end, and still without a solid argument against it, these Planned Parenthood reps took down

our banner that said "Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!," hiding this message from the people at the rally and the cameras that projected this rally out to people who weren't there. This action and those like it actually disarm people, in all the ways spoken to already, and contribute to the shame and confusion and defensiveness and passivity of the very broad sections of people that are needed urgently, right now, to have clarity, certitude, and be stirred and organized into the political fight!

The reason why this interaction in Albuquerque is so important to expose and dissect, is that this exact same dynamic, and the pull of the wrong approach, exists in every single area in the nation that is the most under siege. We encountered it all along the route of the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, and it is the daily reality for people across the nation who are waking up to the larger situation we are in.

Abortion rights are in an utter state of emergency.

- In 2012 alone, 43 abortion restrictions were enacted in 19 states.
- In 2013, almost 300 new "TRAP" (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws have flooded the legislatures.
- Unnecessary ultrasounds, medically unnecessary waiting periods, dangerous parental consent and notification requirements, insurance bans, and state-required biased counseling mandates continue to be advocated for and passed state by state.
- A growing movement for "Personhood" (giving a zygote—the cell that is formed from a fertilized egg—full constitutional rights) would dehumanize women on the constitutional level and ban abortion federally.
- 97 percent of rural counties have no abortion provider, and vast stretches of this country are saturated in anti-abortion propaganda, where the question of the woman's life has been completely erased, and three-story high pictures of babies loom on billboards.
- Right now, five states have only one abortion clinic in the entire state. That is not including some states with more than one provider but only one that offers a payment plan, or states like New Mexico with more than one provider, that are all located in the same city.

This is the reality, and most people have no idea this is even going on. Among those who support the right to abortion, there is a huge amount of defensiveness about it, and this has contributed enormously to people being passive, and often not even recognizing the significance of the many attacks that are coming right now. Among those who are outraged and who have clarity, there is a tremendous amount of isolation and suffocation—people told the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride over and over again that they are really with us but "could never say so" to their friends, family, or co-workers. And then, among those who do have more of the national picture, there is the repeated and widespread desire to duck from the full scope of this, to lay low, to find linguistic or other "common ground" with the opposition, to think only in the short term, to accept the terms that have been set by the likes of Operation Rescue as well as very powerful forces within the halls of power, and to actively suppress—as happened here in Albuquerque—the message and voices of those who will get out there and fight unapologetically for abortion on demand and rally forth a nation-wide movement to rely on ourselves through mass, independent, political resistance.

This whole situation is one we must take the responsibility to change. Every person reading this article—whether you have been an active part of carrying out the wrong approach, whether you have felt stifled and impatient with the kinds of wrong approaches described but haven't seen a way to forge another path that can win, or whether you've been tuned out of this struggle completely until now...

Right now, if you consider yourself a person who stands for what is right, for the rights and lives of women in a world where they are systemically used and abused, it is time to take a stand. It is time to declare boldly to the world that women must have Abortion On Demand and Without Apology and that Forced Motherhood Is Female Enslavement. And it is time to fight for others to come to see this as well, and to act on it through massive resistance in many different ways. Take a stand at your job, at your school, at the clinics, and in the streets. Argue it out with anyone and everyone. Refuse to cede the moral high ground to a movement that promotes slavery in its oldest form, and refuse to follow along even as some remain paralyzed and willing to look the other way as we return to the times when 8,000 women died every year of illegal abortions, and many more didn't ever dream of themselves as anything other than a house slave. Everyone has a responsibility to deal with reality and act accordingly. Otherwise, are we who we say we are? You are not alone, and together we can win. Reach out to StopPatriarchy.org with your stories, ideas, and questions. If we who know or have a hunch that laying low is leading nowhere—and that right now, as you read this, women are being slammed backwards into a codified position of subjugation—do nothing, we will soon awake to a world that is defined by the likes of Operation Rescue and the Old Testament. That is unacceptable, and what's more, it is totally unnecessary! The future is unwritten. Which one we get is up to us.

Abortion On Demand and Without Apology!

StopPatriarchy.org

If Women Are Not Free, Then No One Is Free

Abortion Rights Freedom Ride: Summer 2013

Taking on the emergency of the war on 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.*:

1. "...we must move beyond localized fights and launch a national counter-offensive;
2. "...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;
3. "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.

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.

Below: Abortion Rights Freedom Ride Rally in downtown Chicago, July 30 2013.
Photo: Special to *Revolution*



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

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.

If Women Are Not Free, Then No One Is Free

Abortion Rights Freedom Ride: Summer 2013

Taking on the emergency of the war on women

“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 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.)



Above: Minneapolis, August 1. Photo: Special to *Revolution*

Below: 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

If Women Are Not Free, Then No One Is Free

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

“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.)



Above: A rally in front of the clinic in Jackson—last remaining clinic providing abortions to women in all of Mississippi.
Photo: Special to *Revolution*

If Women Are Not Free, Then No One Is Free

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

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



Above: New York City, at the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride send-off rally. Photo: Bud Korotzer

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*.)

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.



Left: Protest against gang rape in New Delhi, India, December 2012.

Appendix 5. Media Report

Pro-Abortion Activists Going on Freedom Ride to Call For 'Abortion on Demand'

The 'freedom riders' will visit every state with just one abortion clinic

the guardian THE Nation.

"The Freedom Riders" rode into Fargo today

Fargo, ND (WDAY TV)— A caravan of well-traveled abortion-rights activists know as, "the freedom Riders," rode into Fargo today to rally support around their message.

By: WDAY Staff



Abortion Rights Freedom Ride draws local support

By Elizabeth Miller

AP Associated Press



90.1 FM KPFT PACIFICA RADIO HOUSTON TEXAS



90.1 FM KKFI Kansas City's Community Radio

KGNU 88.5 FM & 1350 AM Community Radio

Abortion Rights Freedom Ride makes stop in Jackson for rally outside clinic



THE MISSISSIPPI PRESS



Black Skeptics



KALW LOCAL PUBLIC RADIO 91.7 FM IN SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco Chronicle

WEEKLY

Us



PACIFICA RADIO KPFK 90.7 FM Since 1959 LOS ANGELES

HIGH PLAINS READER & WORLD REPORT News



Fargo Feminist Spotlight: Abortion Rights Freedom Ride

By Mercedes Lee

DAILY KOS



salon.com

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B

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Over the course of the trip, the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride received a great deal of media coverage, both local and national, and appeared in over thirty distinct alternative and mainstream print, radio, and television outlets.

In much of this coverage, the central messages of “Abortion on Demand & Without Apology” and “Forced Motherhood is Female Enslavement” were clearly conveyed, and those watching, listening, or reading about this initiative would have begun to get a sense that this is a determined movement, national in its character, that is boldly confronting the attacks on abortion around the country and setting unapologetic new terms in the process. An early article in the mainstream “US News & World Report” quoted the StopPatriarchy website, “Women are not objects. Women are not things to be used for the sexual pleasure of men nor are they breeders of children.” In Wichita, a local TV station aired part of an interview with Sunsara Taylor where she challenged viewers to join the struggle: “If you support abortion rights but aren't out here fighting for abortion on demand and without apology you are letting these rights be taken away.” An AP story coming out of Jackson, MS that ran in numerous print and online outlets around the country contained quotes from the “Abortion on Demand & Without Apology Statement” and quoted a Freedom Rider, “Forced motherhood is a form of female enslavement...This is half of humanity we're talking about.” In Fargo, North Dakota, a local ABC affiliate centered its coverage of our demonstration around the idea that forced motherhood and attacks on women more broadly are forms of female enslavement.

As the trip was just beginning, Rachel Maddow brought this Freedom Ride up in an interview with Tammi Kromenaker (director of the only clinic in North Dakota), and both Maddow and Kromenaker discussed how important it is that these attacks on abortion rights gain more national attention. This coverage introduced many to the Freedom Ride, led to more people signing the “Abortion on Demand & Without Apology” Statement, and also led to a clinic in North Carolina contacting us to

request that a stop in Charlotte be added to our itinerary (which we did). In addition, coverage on *Democracy Now!* prominently featured the ride's slogan and Sunsara Taylor speaking to the state of emergency that exists around abortion rights and calling for massive resistance. This coverage aired in all the Pacific outlets around the country that carry *Democracy Now!*, and also led to other media and people finding out about this initiative.

Actor Mark Ruffalo sent the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride a powerful statement of support for women's right to abortion on the eve of the culminating rally in Jackson, MS. This statement was picked up broadly and received favorable coverage in numerous national media outlets, including The Guardian, US Weekly, MSNBC, Cosmopolitan, Jezebel, HuffPost, and many other online outlets. Many of these reports contained links to the full statement posted on StopPatriarchy's Tumblr site, and introduced many more to this initiative.



Other media highlights included: A weekly update with the Freedom Ride from a public radio station in Kansas. A powerful interview of Freedom Riders – on the eve of the trip – on KPFA's Hard Knock Radio with Davey D (nationally recognized hip hop journalist) that spoke to the state of emergency of abortion rights, and the relevance and appropriateness of the “Freedom Ride” name. A favorable blog on *The Nation* website by Allison Kilkenny. The article, “Abortion Rights are at a Crossroads: This is NOT a Time to Lay

Low – it is Time for Massive Uncompromising Struggle,” by Sunsara Taylor and David Gunn Jr., was republished on Truth-Out.Org, OpEdNews, and a number of other blogs. The Michael Slate Show on KPFK had the Freedom Riders on weekly. A local public radio station from the Bay Area had David Gunn on for an exchange/debate over the slogan Abortion On Demand and Without Apology. Sunsara Taylor was featured in an interview in *Vice Magazine* online.

While anti-abortion websites tried to slander and attack the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, media coverage was in the main positive, and these attacks themselves further prove the ride did in fact have a broad impact.

To see specific coverage on the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride, go to:

StopPatriarchy.org/Media

Appendix 6. Fundraising:

A Crucial Part of the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride - and a Big Advance

We knew when we launched this project that it would take sizable funds to see it through. This meant raising more money than we have done previously in this still beginning movement. But we did it! We reached the \$22,000 goal of the Indiegogo fundraising campaign and – as we said right on the Indiegogo page – we continued to raise funds during the month-long ride to cover the rest of the costs. Along with efforts of supporters along the way and sales of the special “Freedom Ride” and “Abortion on Demand” t-shirts enough funds were raised to cover fully the costs of the Freedom Ride. This is significant. It shows the strong basis for and some sense of the shape of the forces who need to be mobilized to win the fight for abortion on demand and without apology, and beyond that a whole movement to fight for the full liberation of women.

Over 200 individual donations were made to the Indiegogo campaign (including a few contributions made on our website). A few of the donations on Indiegogo were collections from events where many people made small donations, e.g. Warped Tour concerts nationwide, Venice Beach Boardwalk in Los Angeles, Dyke March in New York City, a music concert in Prospect Park, Brooklyn and more. So the actual number of people who donated during this time period was hundreds more. Reaching the campaign goal was possible both due to a small number of sizable contributions (\$1,000-\$2,500) from people with more means, along with many, many smaller donations. We pushed the campaign through mass emails, individual emails, on Facebook and twitter. But far and away, most important were one-on-one conversations, both in person and on the phone. We went to our friends, families, people who have expressed interest in Stop Patriarchy in the past, people we know from



other efforts to change the world, people from school, teachers, our hairdressers or co-workers, and many more. We met people at forums and cultural events and contacted signers of the Abortion on Demand & Without Apology statement.



The message of the Freedom Ride – Abortion on Demand & Without Apology – and an audacious plan to cross the country for abortion rights struck a deep chord with people. A sizable number of donors especially – but not only – women, came from the generation who remember when abortion was illegal. A signer of the statement from Florida who gave \$75 wrote, “I remember too well the time before

Roe v. Wade: the rich girls in my high school could get abortions overseas, poor girls ended up in the Florence Crittenden Home for Unwed Mothers..." Another donor from Colorado emailed us, "I speak as a 67 year old woman who at the age of 19 in 1967 had an abortion. I am furious that our health rights, our bodies rights our rights as women are being eroded chipped away and I need to take it to the street." Another: "We are never going back to the days of back alleys and coat hangers!" And another \$100 donor wrote: "I'm a doctor of Oriental medicine in New Mexico. I have experienced the pain of living in patriarchy and the shame/blame of having a legal abortion. Forced motherhood is female enslavement! I try to help other women heal from the emotional scars they have formed from living in this world of aggression and violence against women...There is no compromise here." Donations came from people from all across the U.S., and even from Canada.

A woman from L.A. who donated \$200, signed the AOD statement and wrote, "This is the best thing that's happened for women since Roe, and could turn out to be the best thing ever!"

Once on the road, significant funds were raised at the welcome the Abortion Rights Freedom Ride events in Cleveland, Chicago and Minneapolis and most especially in Chicago where Sunsara Taylor and an abortion doctor gave inspiring talks about this battle at a beautiful and well-attended reception. Along with this a powerful fund pitch was given by one of the hosts for the event.



That Stop Patriarchy has been boldly out on the ground among youth and that the Abortion Rights Freedom Riders included people in their 20's and younger was brought out vividly in the fantastic video for the Indiegogo campaign. This spurred many to support the Ride, e.g. a comment that came with one donation, "from 4 friends who have been in this battle for more than 40 years and are inspired by seeing young people stepping up to continue the fight for reproductive rights." At the same time, though we did receive donations from some younger people, there were almost twice as many \$100 donations on Indiegogo as \$10 donations! This is a reflection of more confusion and lower consciousness about abortion among younger people and we need to grapple more with the contradictions in fundraising among people under 30.

Another important aspect of fundraising were the "in-kind" donations that we received: people who contributed an abundance of food for the welcome dinners, the young woman and her grandmother who cooked us multiple meals in Fargo, people who bought pizzas, who welcomed us into their homes (and offices!) and the abortion provider who hosted us in one city on our way home. All of these were parts of making the Freedom Ride possible.

Appendix 7. Stop Patriarchy's Full Mission Statement

Call to Action -

End Pornography & Patriarchy: The Enslavement and Degradation of Women

<http://stoppatriarchy.org/call-to-action>

We are told that "equality for women has been won" and that "there are no limits to what girls can achieve." BULLSHIT!

Every 15 seconds a woman is beaten. Every day three to four women are killed by their partners. One out of four female college students will be raped or sexually assaulted while in college.

In recent years, **pornography has become increasingly violent, cruel, degrading towards women**; women are referred to as "cumdumpsters" and "fuckbuckets"; the "money shot" (ejaculation in a **woman's** face) is standard; humiliating cruelty—like violent "ass-to-mouth" penetration—is normalized, and racist bigotry is sexualized. Meanwhile, **the broader culture has been pornified**: pole dancing is taught at gyms, "sexting" is a national phenomenon among teens, and the strip club is the accepted backdrop to male bonding. All this is tied in with, and reinforces, **the trafficking of millions of women and girls as literal chattel in the international sex industry**. **This is NOT society becoming more comfortable with sex**. This is society becoming saturated with the sexualized degradation of women. If you can't imagine sex without porn, you're fucked.

At the same time, a Christian fundamentalist-driven assault is imperiling abortion, birth control, real sex education, and women's lives. Doctors are killed. Women who seek abortion (a safe, necessary, and perfectly moral medical procedure)—or even birth control—are stigmatized. 2011 saw the largest spate of legal restrictions on abortion since Roe v. Wade in 1973. Women who are not virgins or who do not choose to become mothers are shamed. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people who do not conform to traditional patriarchal gender and sexual norms are demonized and condemned.

ALL THIS MUST BE STOPPED!

Women are not objects. Women are not things to be used for the sexual pleasure of men NOR are they breeders of children. WOMEN ARE HUMAN BEINGS CAPABLE OF FULL EQUALITY IN EVERY REALM!

It is long past time that this new generation stand up, reject, and RESIST this culture of rape and pornography; this culture that labels women "selfish" if they choose not to become mothers and stigmatizes them for having abortions; this culture that reduces women and girls to sexualized objects while denying their full multi-dimensional humanity (including their right—as one essential part of this—to explore and experience mutually respectful and fulfilling sexuality without shame or stigma).

- **RESIST THE CULTURE OF RAPE AND PORNOGRAPHY**—Join in protest against the celebration of, and profit in, the degradation of women and the trade in women's flesh.
- **STAND UP FOR ABORTION RIGHTS**—Fetuses are not babies. Women are not incubators. Abortion is not murder.

Our purpose is NOT to lobby for new legislation to ban pornography ("decency laws" have always served to further repress homosexuality, boundary-challenging art, and scientific sex education). We oppose the criminalization of women in the sex industry.

Our mission is to challenge the new generation in particular to reject this culture of rape and pornography, to resist the shaming of women who have sex and/or abortions, to wage fierce cultural and political resistance to wake others up, and to celebrate, fight for, and win the full equality and liberation of women.

Thank You

The Abortion Rights Freedom Ride could only have happened because of support and participation in countless ways from hundreds of people. A wide range of individuals gave essential financial and legal support, bravely spoke out and moved others to speak out and act, opened their homes, opened their church floors and offices and opened their hearts.

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[* For identification purposes only]

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—Stop Patriarchy.org and the Abortion Rights Freedom Riders