

Sampler Edition

Break ALL the Chains!

**Bob Avakian on the Emancipation of Women
and the Communist Revolution**

Copyright © 2014 Bob Avakian. All rights reserved.

RCP Publications
P.O. Box 3486
Merchandise Mart
Chicago, Illinois 60654-0486
www.revcom.us

Table of Contents

Selections from <i>Basics from the talks and writings of Bob Avakian</i> (2011).....	1
Additional Observations.....	4
Selections from <i>BA Speaks: REVOLUTION–Nothing Less! Bob Avakian Live</i> (film of a talk given in 2012).....	7
"More Postcards of the Hanging–The Horrors Perpetrated Against Women Under This System".....	7
"The Subjugation of Women and the Division of Society Into Masters and Slaves, Exploiters and Exploited".....	10
"The Oppression of Women: Bound Up With This System...A Driving Force for Revolution".....	13
"Rebelling Against 'Guy Culture,' Fighting to End All Oppression".....	17
"Can This System Do Away With, or Do Without, The Oppression of Women?–A Fundamental Question, a Scientific Approach to the Answer" (from previously unpublished correspondence, 2014).....	20
<i>Basics 3:22</i>.....	22
About the Author.....	23

Selections from *Basics from the talks and writings of Bob Avakian* (2011)

1:10

Look at all these beautiful children who are female in the world. And in addition to all the other outrages which I have referred to, in terms of children throughout the slums and shantytowns of the Third World, in addition to all the horrors that will be heaped on them—the actual living in garbage and human waste in the hundreds of millions as their fate, laid out before them, yes, even before they are born—there is, on top of this, for those children who are born female, the horror of everything that this will bring simply because they are female in a world of male domination. And this is true not only in the Third World. In "modern" countries like the U.S. as well, the statistics barely capture it: the millions who will be raped; the millions more who will be routinely demeaned, deceived, degraded, and all too often brutalized by those who are supposed to be their most intimate lovers; the way in which so many women will be shamed, hounded and harassed if they seek to exercise reproductive rights through abortion, or even birth control; the many who will be forced into prostitution and pornography; and all those who—if they do not have that particular fate, and even if they achieve some success in this "new world" where supposedly there are no barriers for women—will be surrounded on every side, and insulted at every moment, by a society and a culture which degrades women, on the streets, in the schools and workplaces, in the home, on a daily basis and in countless ways.

*Unresolved Contradictions, Driving Forces for Revolution—Part III:
"The New Synthesis and the Woman Question: The Emancipation
of Women and the Communist Revolution – Further Leaps and
Radical Ruptures," Revolution #194, March 7, 2010*

2:25

This brings up one very important factor in all this: the positive side of unresolved contradictions under socialism—the bringing to the fore of driving forces for revolutionary transformation in the socialist stage—forces on the cutting edge of contradictions that are coming to the fore as decisive questions in terms of whether society will be moved forward or dragged backward. A very important aspect of all this is the woman question, the struggle for the complete emancipation of women. This will be a decisive question giving rise to crucial struggle throughout the socialist period.

Along with this are other divisions and inequalities left over from the old society....Unleashing all these forces [related to these unresolved contradictions in socialist society] to speak out, rally forces, raise criticism, and rise in rebellion can be risky and messy. But such mass upheaval is no less essential under socialism than it is under capitalism. And certainly this is not something communists should fear!

"The End of a Stage – The Beginning of a New Stage" (1990)

2:30

This takes us back to the very important point from "The End of a Stage—The Beginning of a New Stage" about unresolved contradictions under socialism. What is said there is another way of expressing the understanding that the struggle for the complete emancipation of women will be a crucial part of "the final revolution." In other words, it will be a crucial component in propelling and driving forward not only the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the rule of capitalism-imperialism but to continue the revolution, within the new, socialist society itself, in order to advance on the road toward the final aim of communism. The point is that, among the unresolved contradictions which will remain in socialist society, and which can be a driving force propelling that revolution forward, the continuing ways in which the emancipation of women will need to be fought for and fought through will be one of the most decisive aspects and expressions of that.

*Unresolved Contradictions, Driving Forces for Revolution – Part III:
"The New Synthesis and the Woman Question: The Emancipation
of Women and the Communist Revolution – Further Leaps and
Radical Ruptures," Revolution #197, April 4, 2010*

From "Three Alternative Worlds" supplement in *Basics*

Marx and Engels said in the Communist Manifesto that the communist revolution represents a radical rupture with traditional property relations and with traditional ideas. And the one is not possible without the other. They are mutually reinforcing, one way or the other.

If you have a society in which the fundamental role of women is to be breeders of children, how can you have a society in which there is equality between men and women? You cannot. And if you don't attack and uproot the traditions, the morals, and so on, that reinforce that role, how can you transform the relations between men and women and abolish the deep-seated inequalities that are bound up with the whole division of society into oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited? You cannot.

"Three Alternative Worlds"
Observations on Art and Culture, Science and Philosophy (2005)

3:22

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.

Revolution #84, April 8, 2007

5:18

In many ways, and particularly for men, the woman question and whether you seek to completely abolish or to preserve the existing property and social relations and corresponding ideology that enslave women (or maybe "just a little bit" of them) is a touchstone question *among the oppressed themselves*. It is a dividing line between "wanting in" and really "wanting out": between fighting to end all oppression and exploitation—and the very division of society into classes—and seeking in the final analysis to get your part in this.

Revolution #158, March 8, 2009
(quote originally published 1984)

Additional Observations

The oppression of women, particularly in the form of this aggressive, violent pornography and the sex trade, and all that, as well as the enslavement of women in the form of seeking to deny them the right to have reproductive freedom, to be able to choose when and whether to have children, for god's sakes, if you'll pardon the expression—something as fundamental as that—denying them the right to that is tantamount to slavery, is virtually slavery, is a form, in fact, of enslaving them.

*What Humanity Needs:
Revolution, and the New Synthesis of Communism,
An Interview with Bob Avakian by A. Brooks (2012)*

And, even though things are different now [compared to the 1960s], there is an important potential role for radicalized women, particularly young women. This is so, even though right now many are caught up in a lot of nonsense, and even though what holds sway now—to a significant degree, not uniformly and unilaterally, but what has significant influence—is the idea of "empowerment." Instead of liberation, it's "empowerment"—and "empowerment" is basically reduced to the notion of increasing your value as a commodity in one form or another—this has all too much sway, particularly among younger women, but more generally as well. Still, even though things are not the same as in the time of the 1960s upsurge, and things right now are not very positive in terms of what is happening on the political terrain and the polarization in society, we should not look at things only in immediate terms, and in a short-sighted way—in an empiricist, pragmatic way—but should look at the underlying contradictions and the potential for things to be radically transformed on the basis of what in fact are driving forces that are embodied in these unresolved contradictions.

It is not the case that there is not a tremendous amount of alienation and anger—which is now largely pent-up—over these oppressive relations. It is that this is being directed and channeled into—and "spontaneously" finding—outlets in ways that are not leading toward emancipation and toward revolution which is necessary for that emancipation. But we should not therefore underestimate the potential radicalization and potential force for revolution that exists among the masses of women, and in particular young women, as well as other sections of the people.

*Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles,
But Humanity Can Soar Beyond the Horizon (2010)*

Recently I heard a startling statistic: one out of every four women in the U.S. will be the victim of a sexual assault during her lifetime. One out of four!, and the number is expected to rise to one out of three. Right there, even if this "way of life" did not produce any of the other seemingly endless outrages and genuinely monstrous crimes—all the way to world war—that it does produce, even if what stands behind that statistic were the only thing seriously wrong with this system, that alone would be enough to rise up against it and not stop until it had been overthrown and something better put in its place.

"Provocations," *Revolutionary Worker* # 228, October 28, 1983

You mean to tell me that there is no distinction between the violence of a rapist and a woman's violence in fighting back against that? Wake up and realize what is going on in the world!

"Grasp Revolutionary Theory—Rely On the Masses,"
Revolutionary Worker # 58, June 6, 1980

The word "bitch" as applied to women plays the same social role as the word "nigger" applied to Black people.

"Down on the Word Lady (to Say Nothing of Bitch),"
Revolutionary Worker # 198, March 25, 1983

The woman question—that is, the position and role of women in society, and more specifically the abolition of the oppression of women—is much more than a mere question of democracy and equality. It does involve the question of equality—eliminating unequal relations between women and men is a decisive question and a decisive part of the proletarian revolution—but at the same time it is much more fundamental than that. It is much more central and fundamental to the whole question of the split-up of society into antagonistic classes, to the basic division of labor in human society—that is, the development and perpetuation in various forms of an *oppressive* division of labor and antagonistic social relations—and to the elimination of all this and the attainment of communism.

*Bullets, From the Writings, Speeches, & Interviews of Bob Avakian,
Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (1985)*

I am going to say this straight up, some of these guys out here will say, yeah, they dig revolution but they cannot go along with this part about equality between men and women. Bullshit! If you are serious about making revolution, if you are serious about abolishing every form of exploitation and oppression, if you are serious about sweeping away this system and all its monstrous crimes, how are you going to tell me that you want to eliminate every form of oppression except one, every form of inequality among the people except one, every form of degradation in society except one? You can't do it! How are we going to achieve equality and unity between different races among the masses of people and overcome all the other divisions they put in our ranks and yet still maintain ourselves a position of slavemaster and slave, of commodity-owner and owned, of possessor and possessed between men and women? No, we cannot do that! And why should we want to? We want a world free of any form of exploitation, oppression, discrimination, and degradation among the masses of people. We do not want, it is not the outlook of our class, and it is no consolation—let's say for men—to have somebody to kick around and somebody to lord it over. Our class, the working class, is going to rise up and remake this whole world in our image and advance humanity to a whole new stage where nobody owns anybody or oppresses anybody in any form whatsoever! And if we are going to do this, we cannot break all of our chains but one; we cannot break all of our mental shackles but one. We have to break and smash and bury them all forever!

"You Can't Break All the Chains But One,"
Revolutionary Worker # 95, March 6, 1981

The whole question of the position and role of women in society is more and more acutely posing itself in today's extreme circumstances...It is not conceivable that all this will find any resolution other than in the most radical terms....The question yet to be determined is: will it be a radical reactionary or a radical revolutionary resolution, will it mean the reinforcing of the chains of enslavement or the shattering of the most decisive links in those chains and the opening up of the possibility of realizing the complete elimination of all forms of such enslavement?

Originally published 1985,
Cited in *A Declaration: For Women's Liberation And The Emancipation Of All Humanity*,
a special issue of *Revolution*, #158, March 8, 2009

Selections from *BA Speaks: REVOLUTION–Nothing Less!* *Bob Avakian Live* (film of a talk given in 2012)

[Editor's Note: The following selections are transcribed from BA Speaks: REVOLUTION–NOTHING LESS! Bob Avakian Live (film of a talk given in 2012). In preparing this for publication, some minor editing has been done, while the essential content and character of the original talk by BA has been retained.]

"More Postcards of the Hanging–The Horrors Perpetrated Against Women Under This System" [from Disk 1 of DVD]

At the same time, millions of women and girls are enslaved in prostitution and in the degradation of the ever more vicious and violent pornography—many forced into this as well, not only out of economic hardship, but literal brutality.

A number of years ago I gave a talk called *Unresolved Contradictions, Driving Forces for Revolution*, and in that I spoke to the fact that a comrade in our party had pointed out to me in relation to an earlier talk I gave, *Revolution: Why It's Necessary, Why It's Possible, What It's All About*, that there was a very real and vivid parallel between the situation of women, particularly in pornography and prostitution, and the phenomenon that I described in beginning that talk, "Revolution."

I began that talk with descriptions of the postcards of the hanging. Now, think about this: Literally, in this country, up until the 1950s and into the early 1960s, in many of our lifetimes, Black people were being repeatedly lynched. But that's not all. Usually this took place in the South, and many times when these Black men, in particular, would be lynched, it would be done in a carnival atmosphere. People would be notified in advance that this was going to happen. People—whole families, including little children— would come to picnic at the site of the lynching. And when the Black man's body was lynched, mutilated and burned, pieces of the mutilated body would be handed out to some in the crowd as trophies. This is the fucking history of this country, and I know it's hard to hear, but we need to face the reality of what the history of this country, and how it's been built, actually is. And then, photographs would be taken of the burned, mutilated and lynched bodies of these Black men, and postcards would be made and they would be sold around the country.

And this comrade pointed out—and I spoke to this in *Unresolved Contradictions, Driving Forces for Revolution*—that what goes on, particularly in the increasingly violent and vicious pornography, is very much along the same lines as the postcards of the hanging: the titillation of men through the physical torture and degradation of women, which is becoming more and more the norm and more and more mainstream in pornography. We should all think about the fact that one of the most popular forms of pornography, as it's being more and more mainstreamed, is rape pornography, depicting literally the woman being raped.

And this comrade also pointed out—and I think it's very important to think about—that you can do in this society today to women what you could not do to any other group without a huge outcry. I mean, think about what's depicted in pornography, even so-called soft-core, let alone hard-core, vicious and violent pornography. Imagine, if someone made a film depicting Black people in grotesque caricature with gigantic teeth and a big smile eating watermelons and dancing around saying, "Yessuh Massa, Yessuh Massa." Can you imagine that you could have that done without a huge outcry? No! And that's very right. It should not be able to be done without a huge outcry. Or imagine if you literally showed lynchings and depicted them as a source of titillation. But yet you can do what I've been describing in pornography, and not only is there not a huge outcry, but it's being more and more mainstreamed. And, by the way, it's multi-billion dollar business, it's not just some sleazy old men in San Fernando Valley who are turning this out. This involves big banks and financial institutions. It involves big hotel chains, involved in multi-billion dollar business.

And it's becoming more—as I said, more and more mainstream. Even in the television programs, which are not pornographic themselves literally, how often do you hear, when talking about guys, "Oh, let's watch some porn." It's part of—it's just integrated into the stories—it's just perfectly natural. And then think about the content that I've been just touching on and can't really give full life to. I mean, it's just so disgusting, so outrageous. Think about this content that's being mainstreamed.

And along with this, women are subjected to continual assaults on their right to abortion and even birth control. Don't let these people tell you, these so-called right-to-lifers, that the issue is the killing of innocent babies. The issue is the control over women, exercised by forcing them to be mothers, whether or not they want to be at that time. Now, to have children, to raise children, can be a really beautiful experience if that's what you want to do and if you feel in a position to do it in the way that you feel it should be done. But to have it **forced** on you is virtual enslavement. Not to even have the choice as to whether you will do that. And here's the key to how you know—or one key to how you know—this is not about killing of innocent babies: Try to find one of these rabid anti-abortion groups that is also not opposed to birth control. You'll have a very hard time. They're all opposed to birth control, because the issue is not the killing of innocent babies, it's the control and subordination of women who are regarded as getting all out of hand these days in this society, which is another reason why we have, or a contributing factor to why we have, this vicious pornography. So the goal of these attacks on abortion and, yes, on birth control, the right to them, is to deny women the ability to determine something as basic as when or if they will have children and raise children, or be part of raising them—forcing motherhood on them, once again, and enslaving them in that way.

Along with all this, millions of women and girls, millions every year in this country alone, are raped, assaulted, battered and abused, often by those who claim to be their intimate lovers, while the half of humanity that is female is everywhere treated as less than fully human. Once again, I think about the experience of Black people and slavery. You know what was one of the main terms that slave owners used to describe the slaves?

"Talking tools." Because this is how they regarded them, and this is how they were treated. They were put on the auction block to be sold, and their physical attributes were examined: their teeth; if they were women, their reproductive potential; their body shapes; their ability to work hard; their musculature. All this was examined in the most degrading way.

And you think of the same thing with women today, reduced to objects to be used by men, treated as brood animals to turn out babies and as unthinking flesh to be consumed and plundered, with their bodies and body parts used to sell products, pimped out and beaten into submission, plundered to portray and promote sex as conquest and domination by men instead of shared pleasure based on mutual affection and equality. All of this degrades and demeans not only the women who are directly subjected to the most extreme forms of this, but all women everywhere. **What kind of system is this**, and why should anyone accept that **this** is the best possible way the world could be?!

And those whose sexual orientation is different from, and seen as posing a threat to the dominant gender and sex relations—lesbians and gays, bisexual and transgendered people, or those who are simply unsure about their sexuality and questioning it at a given time—are harassed, bullied, often bullied to the point of committing suicide, brutalized and even murdered. And despite certain changes in law and government policy, the reality of LGBT people being discriminated against, insulted and even assaulted continues as a marked feature of the culture and society, bound up with deep-seated structural relations of this whole system, closely connected to the patriarchy and male supremacy that oppress women.

"The Subjugation of Women and the Division of Society Into Masters and Slaves, Exploiters and Exploited" [from Disk 1 of DVD]

Early human societies were not societies of gigantic empires and civilizations with masters and slaves, and so on and so forth. They were small groupings of people, starting out in Africa and then eventually spreading to other parts of the world, who lived largely by gathering and hunting—mainly by gathering. Despite all the alpha male mythology about the great hunter and so on, especially in the early days hunting was a very uncertain enterprise. Often you didn't get anything—or, if you were lucky, you found the remains of an animal that another animal had killed and you took that back and distributed it among the people in your community. And every once in a while you really got on top of things and maybe you got a few animals and you brought those back. But, mainly, the livelihood of the people was done by the gathering of what was at hand in the area over which people ranged, the fruits and nuts and other things people could eat. It was more of a very simple hand-to-mouth existence, more or less.

And there was a certain division of labor within this. The men, yes, were the ones who mainly went out and did the hunting, and the women did more of the gathering, because they had to stay more in the area where the people were living at the time. Why? Well, if you think about it for a second, the answer will suggest itself. Obviously, the women are the ones who bore and who mainly had responsibility for raising the children, especially in their early years. Think about it. There was no birth control—certainly no consistent birth control, no family planning in that sense—no formula, all these kind of things, so babies came when they came and they had to be nursed for a couple of years. So naturally it fell to the women to do that; and, as a result, this division of labor developed where they stayed more around the home and did the gathering.

But it's important to emphasize: this was not an oppressive division. The communities were more or less marked by equality—I say more or less, it wasn't a perfect equality, but women as well as men took part in the decision-making. Marriages and sexual relations were very relaxed, formed by mutual consent more or less, and either partner could break up (if there were a pair, could break it up) or people didn't pair in the way we're familiar with. They might have had several partners, each of them, that they were paired with. So all the things that we're familiar with and are told are just the natural order of things—"god decreed that the family is one man and one woman; Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve"—all that stuff is just a function of how society has developed since these early communities.

So this early division was not oppressive, but it was a division. And through, once again, a lot of accident and necessity, trial and error, in some parts of the world, particularly in Eurasia—the part that's Europe and the Middle East, more or less—for a variety of reasons, out of need and out of innovation, people instead of just gathering started settling down and farming. And sometimes they failed at it. But where they succeeded, they were able to produce a lot more food than they needed at a given time, after a certain period of experimenting with this. They could put aside a surplus for the

future. They didn't just live literally hand to mouth. And they also domesticated animals. You can read about this in Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

They domesticated animals. They began to develop another division of labor, where on the basis of there being a surplus of farming—because when you're farming, you just don't take what's there, you transform the soil and you can make it richer, and it can produce more than what you would need at a given time—so on that basis, you could have some people who didn't have to farm and they would work on developing implements and tools to increase the farming and the other activity of the people and get an even bigger yield and more surplus. And the domestication of animals went along with this where the animals were available and could be domesticated, particularly in this Eurasian area. They were also harnessed to till the soil, which made it even more rich, fertile and productive.

But along with this, as this took hold in various places, it broke down the old communal society and ways of doing things and the old relations more or less of communal equality. Now let me make clear here: I do not believe, and I don't think there's a scientific basis to say, that even if you could show that in the earliest communal societies there were all kinds of relations of exploitation and oppression, that would somehow prove that it wouldn't be possible to move beyond this in the period in which we exist now, because this is a very different world; and it doesn't prove there's some inherent unchangeable and unchanging human nature that makes people selfish and want to oppress and exploit other people. But by and large these early communities were not marked by the oppression and exploitation and divisions that we're all familiar with, except when they encountered other community groups that were alien to them and often they didn't know how to resolve things or fit each other in, and so there were conflicts, including violent conflicts between these groups sometimes.

It's interesting, if you look at the early societies that are still more or less here, that have been perpetuated down to the present, you will find that if you inquire how do the people in those societies or communities or tribes or peoples refer to themselves, very often they don't use this or that name that you might think they'd use. They just refer to themselves in what translates into English as—"the people." And this is very common in all parts of the world. So what happens when you, the people, meet the other, the people, and you can't figure out who's the real people and how to relate. Well, you might get violent—you have different mythology, different history, so you might have violent conflicts. Not always, but there were at times.

But as this farming and the division of labor and the domestication of animals and the development of surplus took hold, it began to break down these communal societies. You got the emergence of private property, private ownership of parcels of land, private ownership of the domesticated animals, private ownership of the tools that were being developed. And along with this, you got an oppressive division emerging between the sexes, or the genders, because with this division of labor that it carried over from very early days, the women were still the ones mainly responsible for the bearing and rearing of children, so it more and more fell to the men to be the ones organizing the farming

and related activity, and they, on this basis, appropriated the means of production—the land, the raw materials that might be under the land, the farm animals that had been domesticated, the tools—as their private property. And as they did that over time, they wanted to be able to pass this private property to their heirs, in particular their male heirs. So then they became concerned to control the activity of women and, in particular, the sexual activity of women, because you wanted to be sure that the male heirs that you were passing it on to were your own, and not somebody else's.

Now, I have to say, they had a problem—they did have a problem here because, while the women were tightly controlled and not allowed to sleep with anybody else, the men went around and did it anyway, so then you got a problem. Well, if the men are sleeping with people other than their wives, how do you know whose children are really whose? So they just instituted—again trial and error, not somebody sat down and wrote out a piece of paper, but trial and error—they simply instituted that whoever the woman's children were, those were the children of her husband. But still the husband wanted to have a better chance of knowing they were really his own children he's passing these things on to, so he was concerned and men got together to enforce the control over the sexuality and other activity of women—and this has been carried forward from that time through different forms of society which have been divided into oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited, masters and slaves.

And that brings up the next point: that once you started having this way of life, as opposed to the old communal way, then instead of when you had encounters with other people from other tribes or groups or whatever—instead of just killing them if there were a violent conflict—it made a certain amount of sense economically to take them as slaves, because now you could put them to work in agriculture and other forms of activity that would help create even more surplus, more surplus than you would have to spend maintaining this. So women were one of the first groups enslaved in this way, but also people involved in conflicts among the different groups.

And so down through a whole period of thousands of years since this time, we've had the evolution of the kind of societies we've had, marked by the division into exploiters and exploited, oppressors and oppressed, masters and slaves.

"The Oppression of Women: Bound Up With This System...A Driving Force for Revolution" [from Disk 1 of DVD]

Earlier I spoke to the fact that the division of society into masters and slaves, into different classes, developed together with the oppression of women. These were very tightly bound together in their historical development and have remained so throughout the course of history since that time, through different kinds of societies. And today we can see the ways in which the oppression of women—not just in a particular country, but on a world scale—continues to feed the functioning of this capitalist-imperialist system. Not only, as I pointed out, is it highly profitable, in the billions and billions of dollars, to oppress women in sex trafficking, prostitution and pornography, but also the backward conditions that are maintained and enforced by the functioning and the military power of the imperialist countries throughout the Third World lead to a situation where many women are outcast and desperate and highly vulnerable to being exploited in this vast network of sweatshops that is at the foundation of imperialist capital in the world today.

I think of the phenomenon of people standing in line for the latest gadget from Apple, and I have to say it makes me mad. I say to myself: **What the fuck** is the matter with you people?! You can stand in line overnight for the latest gadget from Apple, but you can't stand up to oppose wars and torture and mass incarceration and the degradation of women. What the hell is the matter with you people?

Now, to be clear, those people standing in line are not the enemy. But what is represented by Apple—and not just Apple unto itself but the whole system and the network of exploitation that Apple is a part of, and enmeshed in—is what needs to be swept aside. I mean, when you're at the end of the food chain in a country like this, living parasitically—even if you're not in the ruling class—living parasitically off of people all over the world, once again sometimes all this can be hidden from you. You do not see the blood and the bones, the worn down fingers and other body parts of particularly women who are working in the plants in places like China, making the components that go into the Apple products and all these other things, under horrific conditions. You do not see the people in Bangladesh making many of the clothes that you are wearing. And when you leave here and go home tonight, look in your closet and see how many of your clothes you can find are not made in the Third World—and you can be sure if they are made in places like Bangladesh, Haiti, Pakistan or whatever, that they're made through a lot of child labor and, in any case, extreme conditions of sweatshop exploitation.

But the products don't come with this stamped on them. You don't pick up an iPhone, press a button, and the blood of the women who made it comes gushing out. But it's there, even though you can't see it. And imperialism feasts on this. Don't let them fool you with their talk about micro-loans: Let's have some micro-loans for poor women in the Third World so they can set up a business and exploit other women and then, in their large numbers, fail anyway. This is not what the imperialist system is doing. This is a tiny countercurrent to the massive exploitation of these very kinds of women, on which this system rests.

And look at this country. Not only is there the great value to imperialist capital of super-exploitation of women in the Third World, but in this country it's a fact that the social relations that oppress women are critical for holding together this whole oppressive system which has historically evolved with male domination a key foundation of the whole system, a foundation stone built into its whole structure. Think about the family and how people live and reproduce in this society. Everything in this society is based on commodity production and exchange. You don't have little groups of people all making overwhelmingly the things they need and then using them themselves. There are vast networks of exploitation in this country, but increasingly in other parts of the world, producing all these things; and then you have to get some means, by working in some way or other, to have the basis, to have the commodity money, to go buy these things. That's the way the economy works, and all of it gets funneled through what these reactionaries are always reminding us is the basic unit and cell of this society, the family. And the whole family has evolved historically with women being subordinate to men, and having as one part of that the prime responsibility for the domestic aspect of things, including the rearing of children and things like just doing the every day work of the house.

There have been some changes in this society—more women in the professions, more women going to college, more women working in a lot of ways—and all this has put tremendous strains on these oppressive relations, but it hasn't broken them because this system cannot do without these relations. And so you have this tremendous potential eruption where the changes in the economy are straining against the limitations of the oppression of women and other exploitative and oppressive relations, but the system cannot do without them.

You know, as one illustration of this, I was reading an article in the *New York Times* about a phenomenon in the South where some of these men who once had fairly good paying industrial jobs—once again the phenomenon, the companies closed down, moved the factories away, the men are out of work, the women are going out and getting the jobs in service and whatever that are available to them that they can get, but the men are largely sitting on their couches, drinking their beer and moping. And one of the authors of the article asked one of these men: Well, why don't you go out and get one of these jobs that these women are doing? He said: No, I can't do that; it's not man's work, I just wouldn't feel like a man if I had a job like that.

This captures a lot about the contradictions of this system and how this has intensified. And, in reading this, I was thinking about what Engels wrote in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in talking about the Roman Empire—Engels, who along with Marx, founded the communist movement. He's talking about agriculture in the declining period of the Roman Empire that had been based on slave plantations called *latifundia*. But, as the Roman Empire went into decline, the plantations, the slave plantations, the *latifundia*, became less and less profitable. And so they broke down, and people had to go back into small-scale farming. But all of the former slave owners, or almost all of them, wouldn't go back and do actual farm work, even though the plantations were no longer profitable, because they considered it

beneath their dignity to do that kind of work. And, Engels pointed out, this contributed to the decline and weakening of Rome and made it more and more vulnerable to the barbarians that were increasingly at the gate and battering at the gate.

And I was thinking about these men saying, I can't do that, it's not man's work, it doesn't make me feel like a man—how this represents the changes this system has brought about straining against the oppressive relations. And I was thinking about how, in parallel to Rome, this could also contribute to the further declining and weakening of this oppressive system, and make it more vulnerable to the barbarians, namely us.
[laughter and applause]

The oppression of women, and all the horrors bound up with it, **can** be ended, and something radically different and emancipating brought into being. Now, let's be honest. To many, especially many women, this may not seem possible and, frankly, may seem hard to believe. But that is not only because of the way things are now and the way so many men act so much of the time, but, more fundamentally, because the way things are now sets a certain framework and tone for people's thinking, because the possibility of radical change cannot be seen to the degree that our vision and our sense of reality, and of possibility, is still confined within, conditioned by and filtered through the dominating relations that are at the foundation of this whole system, and the traditions, values, ways of being and of thinking that constantly pour forth from and serve to perpetuate this system that we are forced to live under. In this way **they get us twice**: their system embodies and enforces all this horrific oppression **and** it has people believing that this cannot be done away with.

But the truth, which they try every way to keep people from seeing, is that we **can** be rid of this horrific oppression. But we can't do this by accepting the terms of this system or any part of its oppression. We can't do it half-stepping and halfway. That is why *Basics* 3:22 makes it very clear:

"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."

And, as this statement is also emphasizing, the fight against the oppression of women and for all-the-way revolution is not just **their** fight. It is a fight that must be fully and vigorously taken up by men as well, by everyone who really wants to see an end to this system and all the horrors it means for the masses of humanity, everyone who wants to see an end to the long night in which humanity has been divided into masters

and slaves, exploiters and exploited, who wants to see a dawning of a new day for humanity. The only people who should fear and not join in with this unleashed fury of women are those who have a real stake in this system and want to keep it going, with everything it does to people.

"Rebelling Against 'Guy Culture,' Fighting to End All Oppression" [from Disk 3 of DVD]

[An excerpt from "**Resisting the Brainwash—A Radical Revolt Against a Revolting Culture**"]

Look at what gets promoted in the music industry—what gets supported and promoted, in hip-hop, for example: misogyny—crude, demeaning and degrading of women; openly promoting the idea of getting yours on the back, or through the blood, of other people, get rich or die trying, I gotta get mine no matter what I gotta do; and often all wrapped up with religious obscurantism and crosses and references to nonsense in a poisonous package. And what do we hear, what's the excuse, when people are confronted with this: Oh, I'm, I'm just...I'm just keeping it real; I'm just telling it the way it really is down here.

Keeping it real, my ass. You are helping to keep it going the way it is.

And then there's Beyonce Knowles—or, as I think she should be called, Beyonce Don't Knowles Shit. [laughter] You know, after Osama Bin Laden was killed, she picked up this song from this old country clown, Lee Greenwood—"God Bless the USA": [sarcastically singing in country style] "I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free" [laughter]—and she put out her version of this song on the heels of the assassination of Osama Bin Laden. Come on!

What we see here is these bourgeois strata seeking their interests in a way tied in with the horrors of this system, and fuck the masses of people suffering terrible oppression under this system.

Instead of this, all this garbage, we need more **Fight the Power**. Instead of the promotion of getting in on the oppression, we need the promotion of fighting to put an end to it. Think about what's going on in the popular culture, particularly in hip-hop: the promotion of pimping; the brutal treatment of women, tricked and forced into this, and maintaining it through the most disgusting violence, even turning it into adjectives—"pimp-a-licious," and all the rest.

Think about it, the effect this has on the youth coming up and on the culture and the people broadly. Because a big part of all this is what we could call "guy culture." It's a culture of the degrading domination of women and of wanton violence, a kind of pornography of violence with an American chauvinist and male chauvinist thrust to it.

Think about some of these video games where the point is you go out and you kill America's enemies—that's the point of the video game, as identified by the army and the ruling class as a whole. Or the video games where a lot of youth are trained and conditioned to think while they're playing the game—they think they're just going along, using their thumbs and their fingers—they're using their brains, though, their brains are being influenced. You have video games not only to go out and kill America's enemies,

you have video games where the high point is, you get to hunt down and kill a woman who's portrayed as a whore. How does this condition young people, boys in particular, to think about women and the relations between genders?

Think about one of the main institutions and sites of male bonding in this society, along with pornography—the strip club. That's where you go to hang out with and bond with other young guys, or other older guys, participating in and being titillated by the degradation of women forced to do this. What kind of thinking and conditioning is going on here in terms of how people who are being socialized in this way are being influenced to think about women and whether they're human beings, and about relations and what sex should be about? Look, let's face it: sex, if it's done right among people who really care about each other, and on the basis of equality and what they each want, let's face it—it's one of the greatest pleasures human beings can have. Okay? [laughter and applause] But not when it's done by one part degrading the other part. And this is what people are being socialized to think of as the norm and as the object, the goal.

And then we have the phrase, "man up." Think about this. What is the logic of this phrase—what is the meaning of "man up?" It means you stand up and be strong and don't be a coward and don't back down from your responsibilities or from danger—and these are presented as attributes, qualities of **men**. Now, by logic, who does **not** have these qualities? [laughter] Who are these qualities not of? Obviously, women. Think, if you went out there and said: "Look, quit being so weak: 'Woman up!'" [laughter] It wouldn't make any sense in the dominant culture. It could make a lot of sense in reality, [laughter through these comments] but it wouldn't make any sense in the dominant culture.

Once again, people are being conditioned, that to stand up for principle, to stand up for right, to not be afraid or shrink in the face of danger or sacrifice, or taking responsibility, are qualities of men, that men should exercise. And it becomes so perverse that, not only do you hear women being influenced to use this phrase, but you see it being promoted in the culture that, if a woman wants to have these qualities, then somehow she has to try to "man up."

I think of the movie "GI Jane" with Demi Moore. This is a movie portraying the great advance for the cause of the liberation of women being a woman who can make it in the tough confines and environs of the U.S. military, become part of the machinery of oppressing and slaughtering human beings all over the world. And the story line of this movie is Demi Moore plays this woman who has to fight through every attempt of her drill instructor in basic training and the rest to drive her out of the military. And, one after another, she passes these tests. She finds it hard and she needs to get support and advice, but she perseveres, and finally it comes down to the crowning scene, so to speak, where once again the drill instructor is being extra hard on her, partly it seems to drive her out but maybe to make her actually rise up to the challenge. And in this scene he's just driving her and driving her and driving her, test after test, and he keeps saying to her: You wanna quit? You wanna quit? You wanna quit? And finally she turns and says: No, fuck you, SUCK MY DICK! Which, of course, she does not have. [laughter] But what

is the point? The point is that, in order to be really tough and worthy, you have to "man up," even if you're a woman.

Or what about the phrase that's out there so much, too: being made into somebody's bitch. That's the lowliest thing you could be, a woman, and in particular a woman who's portrayed as being somewhat hysterical and frenzied, like a dog in heat. Being made into somebody's bitch, that's the lowest thing. And you see it even translated into all kinds of ways. For example, you go out on a basketball court, somebody takes a shot, it doesn't go right in, it bounces on the rim, it's rolling around, and they'll say: "Get in there, bitch!" Now, think about it. Why are they saying, "Get in there, bitch?" Because the basketball is acting like a recalcitrant woman—is not doing what it's supposed to do according to the dictates of this man—it's supposed to get in the basket, and it's rolling around instead and it might fall out. "Get in there, bitch!" How is that conditioning people to think, even without their being fully conscious of it? Imagine if some white guy went out on the court, started playing basketball, took a shot and it's rolling around the rim, and he said: "Get in there, nigger!" Well, this is the same thing. And once again you can get away with this in this culture now. It's acceptable, it's conditioning people.

And along with this, women under this system are conditioned, even girls from an early age, to internalize and to go along with so much of this—or to accept that this is the way things are and that nothing better can be expected from men, so try to "own" it, market yourself and get the most you can out of this, while remaining in what is, in fact, an oppressed and degraded position.

Now, all this is not hard-wired in people—it's not hard-wired in guys any more than in the young women. It's ways that guys are conditioned by the dominant institutions and media and culture to think and act, reflecting the basic oppressive relations of this system and serving the interests of its ruling class.

So developing a radical revolt against this revolting culture in many different forms and on many different levels is a very important part of, and can make a very important contribution to, fighting the power, and transforming the people, for revolution. Even if much of this culture that becomes part of this radical revolt is not all-the-way revolutionary and doesn't completely express the communist point of view, it can still make a big contribution by raising disgust at the putrid culture that dominates, by inspiring and provoking people to think differently and think critically, to question what they would otherwise accept, to ponder why the world is the way it is, to dream about and argue about the possibility of a radically different world, to come alive with righteous outrage and the joy of calling out and rebelling against what should **not** be tolerated. And this contribution will be all the greater if people who **do** have a communist understanding bring forward a vibrant culture that expresses that, and inspires people toward that, while relating in a good way to the many and diverse expressions of a culture of radical revolt against this truly revolting culture.

"Can This System Do Away With, or Do Without, The Oppression of Women?—A Fundamental Question, a Scientific Approach to the Answer"

(from previously unpublished correspondence, 2014)

Through which mode of production will any social problem be addressed?

That is the most fundamental question that must be asked, in regard to changes in society. And the answer to that question will be decisive in determining what must be done to bring about the changes that are understood to be necessary and desirable. Why? Because the mode of production—the basic economic relations and the basic dynamics of the economic system—is the decisive factor in determining what the character of a society, and its dominant social relations, politics, and ideology, will be.

To apply this to the particular question of whether this capitalist-imperialist system can do away with, or do without, the oppression of women, it is necessary to pose, and answer, some essential questions that need to be addressed in determining this, including:

How, under this system and given its fundamental relations and dynamics, would the role of women in childbirth and the rearing of children, the character and role of the family, and the system of commodity production and exchange that characterizes capitalism—how would all this, and the many direct and indirect expressions and manifestations of this in the superstructure of politics and ideology, be radically transformed in a way that would lead to abolishing the oppression of women?

How would the putrid social relations and culture that dominate in this society—which oppress and degrade women in a thousand ways, including the most vicious and violent—be actually transformed, within the confines of this system, in a way that would contribute to doing away with all the oppression and degradation of women?

How would all this be achieved, not only within a particular country, such as the U.S.—and not just for a section of people, particularly the more well-off and privileged—but for human society as a whole, on a global scale, especially given the highly globalized nature of this system, and its fundamental relations and dynamics?

There is much that has already been brought to light which demonstrates how the oppression of women has been historically, and today remains, completely and integrally bound up with the division of society into masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited. At the same time, there is further analysis and synthesis that needs to be done—in regard to the situation of women in the world and how this relates today to the fundamental relations and dynamics of the dominant system in the world, capitalism-imperialism. But this needs to be taken up with a thoroughly and consistently scientific method and approach. And I am firmly convinced that such a scientific analysis and synthesis—including with regard to the basic questions that have

been posed here—will reinforce, and further deepen, the fundamental understanding that it is impossible to achieve the emancipation of women under this system, and that this emancipation can only be fully and finally achieved through, and as a key part of, the revolutionary advance to communism throughout the world.

If someone wishes to argue that it could be possible to do away with the oppression of women under this capitalist-imperialist system, then let them make that argument, but that argument must include an answer to the kinds of essential questions I have posed here.

Basics 3:22

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.

Revolution #84, April 8, 2007



About the Author

Bob Avakian is the Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. To learn more about Bob Avakian and his works, go to www.revcom.us.

You have just read the Sampler Edition of

Break ALL the Chains!

Bob Avakian on the Emancipation of Women and the Communist Revolution

NOW READ THE FULL WORK!
Available at www.revcom.us

Table of Contents

Selections from *BASics from the talks and writings of Bob Avakian* (2011)

Selections from *BA Speaks: REVOLUTION—Nothing Less! Bob Avakian Live*
(film of a talk given in 2012)

"More Postcards of the Hanging—The Horrors Perpetrated Against Women Under This System"

"The Subjugation of Women and the Division of Society Into Masters and Slaves, Exploiters and Exploited"

"The Oppression of Women: Bound Up With This System...A Driving Force for Revolution"

"Rebelling Against 'Guy Culture,' Fighting to End All Oppression"

"Can This System Do Away With, or Do Without, The Oppression of Women?—A Fundamental Question, a Scientific Approach to the Answer"
(from previously unpublished correspondence, 2014)

"The New Synthesis and the Woman Question: The Emancipation of Women and the Communist Revolution—Further Leaps and Radical Ruptures"
Part III of *Unresolved Contradictions, Driving Forces for Revolution* (2009)

"The Reality Beneath William Bennett's 'Virtues,' Or We Need Morality but not *Traditional* Morality"
(from *Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones, We Need Morality, but not *Traditional* Morality*, 1999)

"Religion, Patriarchy, Male Supremacy and Sexual Repression"
(from *Away With All Gods! Unchaining the Mind and Radically Changing the World*, 2008)

"Seeing Jesus in a True Light"
(from *Away With All Gods! Unchaining the Mind and Radically Changing the World*, 2008)

"Putting an End to 'Sin,' Or We Need Morality but not *Traditional* Morality"
(from *Preaching From a Pulpit of Bones, We Need Morality, but not *Traditional* Morality*, 1999)

"The Bible and Baby-Killing: The Right to Abortion and the Whole Direction of Society"
(*Revolution* #13, August 28, 2005)

"Women's Liberation and Proletarian Revolution"
(from *From Ike to Mao and Beyond: My Journey from Mainstream America to Revolutionary Communist, A Memoir* by Bob Avakian, 2005)

"Imperialist Hypocrisy and the Taliban Oppression of Women"
(*Revolutionary Worker* #1124, October 28, 2001)

"The Confusion about Abortion"
(from *Reaching for the Heights and Flying Without a Safety Net*, 2002)

**"The Qur'an, Islam, and the Oppression of Women –
Bob Avakian Responds to a Letter on the Qur'an"**
(*Revolutionary Worker* #969, August 16, 1998)

Excerpt from *What Humanity Needs: Revolution, and the New Synthesis of Communism, An Interview with Bob Avakian* by A. Brooks (2012)

"Overcoming the Wounds and Scars that are Left Over from Capitalism"
(from the film of a talk given by Bob Avakian, *Revolution: Why It's Necessary, Why It's Possible, What It's All About*, 2003)

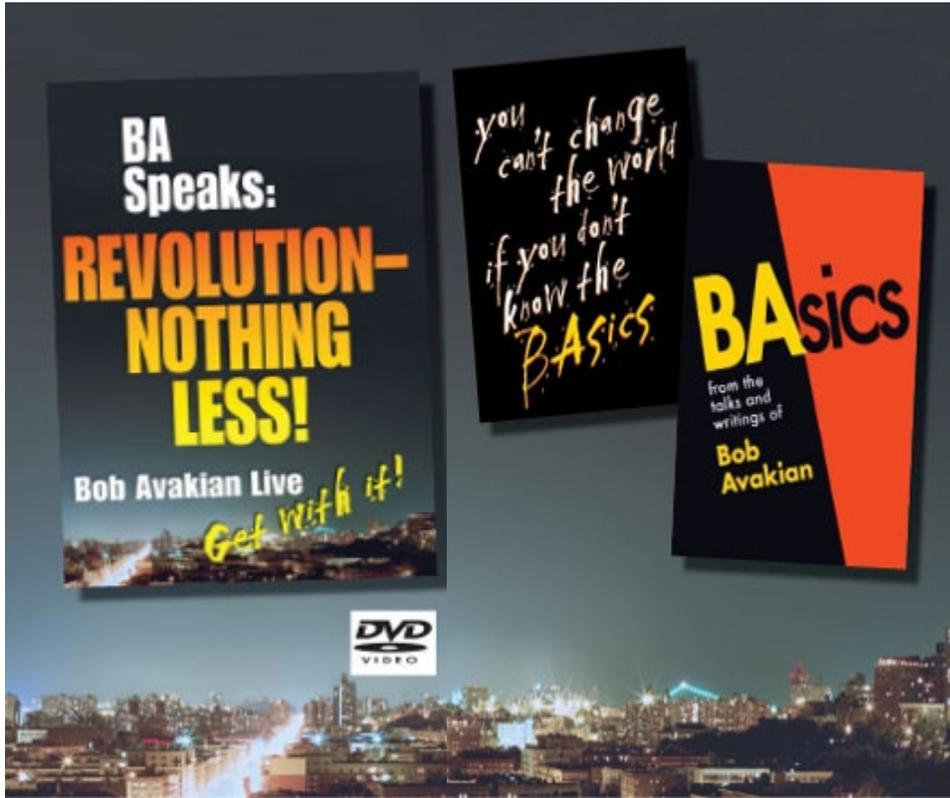
Excerpt from *Birds Cannot Give Birth to Crocodiles, But Humanity Can Soar Beyond the Horizon* (2010)

Selections from *Bullets, From the Writings, Speeches, & Interviews of Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA* (1985)

"Ask the Chairman: Why Only Proletarian Revolution Can Liberate Women"
(*Revolutionary Worker* #846, March 10, 1996)

***Basics* 3:22**

About the Author



For more information and to order: www.revcom.us