

ARE WOMEN FREE YET?

Margaret Sanger grew up in a large family; she was one of 11 children. Her mother died young after a life in the home of bearing and raising children. When Margaret studied to become a nurse she was constantly seeing women suffering from miscarriages and quack abortions. Women were constantly asking her, "Now isn't there some way to control birth so I could cast aside this suffering and fear and win my way back to myself." Margaret Sanger gave up nursing because she wanted to do more than care for the ill. She was convinced that women should not be slaves to their home and children. She was convinced that women needed to be able to decide when and if they wanted children. She saw birth control as a basis for women's freedom and spent her life fighting laws which made birth control illegal. She set up clinics for the people and fought to give out birth control information. She defied the law and served several jail sentences. Through fighting for birth control she hoped to free women by giving them the key to control their own bodies.



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'S WOMAN'S PLACE IN THE HOME?

In 1906, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn left home to help build the I.W.W. (International Workers of the World). She was 16. Men and women who tried to organize unions to protect themselves against employers' low wages, long hours, and unsafe working conditions were arrested, beaten, and sometimes killed. Elizabeth talked from streetcorner soap-boxes to workers about their getting together into

"one big union" and their running the country for the benefit of all instead of for the few. For example, in 1913 silk workers in Paterson, N. J. struck for better working conditions. Italians, Jews, Germans, Poles all got together despite their usual hostility towards each other. Called the "red flame", Elizabeth along with workers was clubbed by detectives and policemen, sent to jail, and lied about in the newspapers. She continued to fight throughout her life for workers to control their lives and their work by a revolution of all working people. From the time she left home at 16, she defied the way things were "supposed" to be as a woman and as a revolutionary.



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I'm going to move out when I'm 18 and get a job!"



Families and children have tied women down throughout history. Although many of us may still want to have our own families, that's not all we can do. We may want to take off for a trip West, we may want to move to another city or we may want to have jobs that we think are interesting and worthwhile instead of just holding on until we can get married. The women on these pages say many things in our society that prevented women (and all people) from being free. They refused to be tied down. They fought the customs which said that women had to be in the home, they fought the capitalist system which used slaves and made it impossible for anyone to be free because a few people had money to do what they wanted while most didn't have enough to live on. They fought back despite threats on their lives and despite people constantly heckling them, and attacking their right to take part in the world outside their homes. Many other women have become revolutionaries to create a human world in the midst of injustice, fear, and inequality. Today we still see women tied to homes and dying from quack abortions. We still see rich companies making money off the deaths of thousands of Vietnamese and North American GI's and we still see blacks being murdered by police.
What can we - as women - do about it?



"I want to be on my own for a couple of years before I get tied down with a husband and kids"



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ARE WOMEN THE WEAKER SEX?

SOJURNER TRUTH was born a slave. She escaped from slavery in 1826 to travel all over the country speaking to people, working for the end of slavery and for freedom for all women. Wherever she spoke she aroused strong emotions - love, awe, hatred, fear. There were always men who heckled her and all women who spoke out. This was her answer to one man who thought women were too weak to be equal with men:



That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place... And ain't I a woman? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me... And ain't I a woman? I could as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well... And ain't I a woman? I have borned thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard... And ain't I a woman?