

WHAT IS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE?

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Reproductive Justice is the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, social, and economic well-being of women and girls, based on the full achievement and protection of women's human rights. This definition as outlined by Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (ACRJ) offers a new perspective on reproductive issues advocacy, pointing out that for Indigenous women and women of color it is important to fight equally for (1) the right to have a child; (2) the right not to have a child; and (3) the right to parent the children we have, as well as to control our birthing options, such as midwifery. We also fight for the necessary enabling conditions to realize these rights. This is in contrast to the singular focus on abortion by the pro-choice movement that excludes other social justice movements.

The Reproductive Justice framework analyzes how the ability of any woman to determine her own reproductive destiny is linked directly to the conditions in her community—and these conditions are not just a matter of individual choice and access. Reproductive Justice addresses the social reality of inequality, specifically, the inequality of opportunities that we have to control our reproductive destiny. Moving beyond a demand for privacy and respect for individual decision making to include the social supports necessary for our individual decisions to be optimally realized, this framework also includes obligations from our government for protecting women's human rights. Our options for making choices have to be safe, affordable and accessible, three minimal cornerstones of government support for all individual life decisions.

One of the key problems addressed by Reproductive Justice is the isolation of abortion from other social justice issues that concern communities of color: issues of economic justice, the environment, immigrants' rights, disability rights, discrimination based on race and sexual orientation, and a host of other community-centered concerns. These issues directly affect an individual woman's decision-making process. By shifting the focus to reproductive oppression—the control and exploitation of women, girls, and individuals through our bodies, sexuality, labor, and reproduction—rather than a narrow focus on protecting the legal right to abortion, SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective is developing a more inclusive vision of how to build a new

movement.

Because reproductive oppression affects women's lives in multiple ways, a multi-pronged approach is needed to fight this exploitation and advance the well-being of women and girls. There are three main frameworks for fighting reproductive oppression defined by ACRJ:

1. Reproductive Health, which deals with service delivery
2. Reproductive Rights, which addresses legal issues, and
3. Reproductive Justice, which focuses on movement building.

Although these frameworks are distinct in their approaches, they work together to provide a comprehensive solution. Ultimately, as in any movement, all three components—service, advocacy and organizing—are crucial.

The Reproductive Justice analysis offers a framework for empowering women and girls relevant to every family. Instead of focusing on the means—a divisive debate on abortion and birth control that neglects the real-life experiences of women and girls—the Reproductive Justice analysis focuses on the ends: better lives for women, healthier families, and sustainable communities. This is a clear and consistent message for all social justice movements. Using this analysis, we can integrate multiple issues and bring together constituencies that are multi-racial, multi-generational, and multi-class in order to build a more powerful and relevant grassroots movement.

Reproductive Justice focuses on organizing women, girls and their communities to challenge structural power inequalities in a comprehensive and transformative process of empowerment that is based on SisterSong's self-help practices that link the personal to the political. Reproductive Justice can be used as a theory for thinking about how to connect the dots in our lives. It is also a strategy for bringing together social justice movements. But also, it is a practice – a way of analyzing our lives through the art of telling our stories to realize our visions and bring fresh passion to our work.

The key strategies for achieving this vision include supporting the leadership and power of the most

excluded groups of women, girls and individuals within a culturally relevant context. This will require holding ourselves and our allies accountable to the integrity of this vision. We have to address directly the inequitable distribution of power and resources within the movement, holding our allies and ourselves responsible for constructing principled, collaborative relationships that end the exploitation and competition within our movement. We also have to build the social, political and economic power of low-income women, Indigenous women, women of color, and their communities so that they are full participating partners in building this new movement. This requires integrating grassroots issues and constituencies that are multi-racial, multi-generational and multi-class into the national policy arena, as well as into the organizations that represent the movement.

SisterSong is building a network of allied social justice and human rights organizations that integrate the reproductive justice analysis into their work. We are using strategies of self-help and empowerment so that women who receive our services understand they are vital emerging leaders in determining the scope and direction of the Reproductive Justice and social justice movements.

RESOURCES

In order to find out more about Reproductive Justice, please visit the following websites:

- www.sistersong.net
- www.reproductivejustice.org

From: *Reproductive Justice Briefing Book*, University of California, Berkeley, School of Law

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwj3j5yUgtDyAhXkDzQIHxWkAGwQFnoECBgQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.law.berkeley.edu%2Fphp-programs%2Fcourses%2FfileDL.php%3Ffid%3D4051&usg=AOvVaw1YtEbfvrJWKO0yGQO_SRbM