

# Reproductive Justice in Communities of Color

Facilitated by Jenny Torres

# Who I am

Child of immigrants

Social Work Graduate Student

Experience in medical settings translating for Hispanic patients

NARAL Pro-Choice MD Research & Policy Intern

# Why Are We Here?

Consider the context of historic, cultural, political and economic roots of American feminism and its impact on advocacy, specifically in communities of color.

Understand that American conceptualizations of reproductive justice and our social policy responses to women's issues is a complex matter with competing values and interests.

Reproductive rights are centered around the legal right to access reproductive health care services.

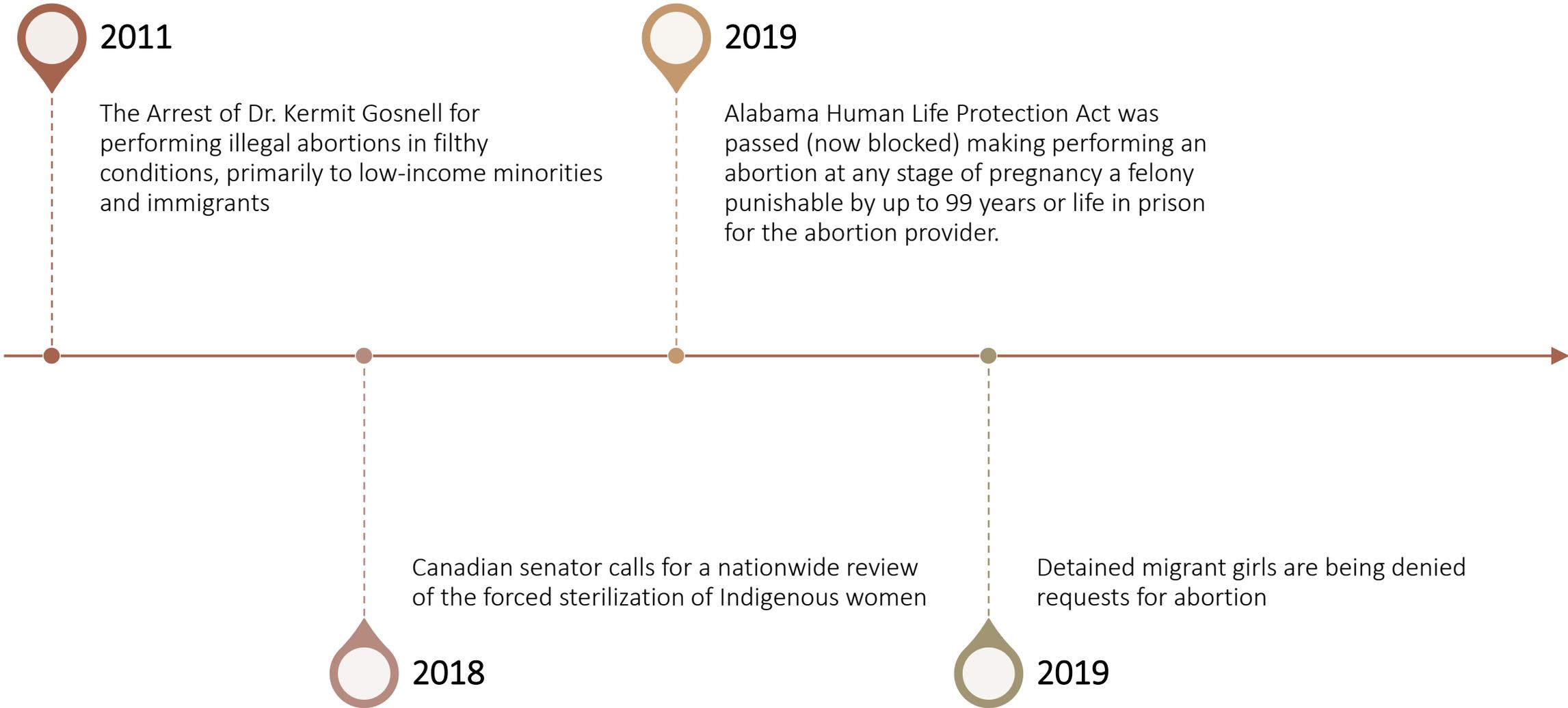


Don't forget:  
White Women Voted  
for  
**TRUMP**

KILLING  
PEOPLE

WOMEN'S  
RIGHTS

RO





# Who are Women of Color [WOC]?

An umbrella term derived from the 70's women's liberation movement

Meant to be a unifying term amongst all female minorities that has political and social roots.

Demonstrates how the struggles of other women who fall outside the black-white binary in the American setting are inextricably linked with the oppression of others.

Not all non-white female minorities identify with this term.

# What is Feminism?

The advancement of women's rights, status, or condition as a group in both the public and private sphere.

&

The reduction or elimination of gender-based hierarchy or patriarchy that underpins basic inequalities between men and women in the public and private spheres.

# The Women's Liberation Movement

Largely based in the United States during the 1960s and '70s that sought equal rights and greater personal freedom for women.

Part of the "second wave" of feminism

The predominant antiviolence political strategies demanded state support services and juridical responses to violence against women.

Violence in the home understood through violent structural inequalities based on race and class.



# The Women's Liberation Movement

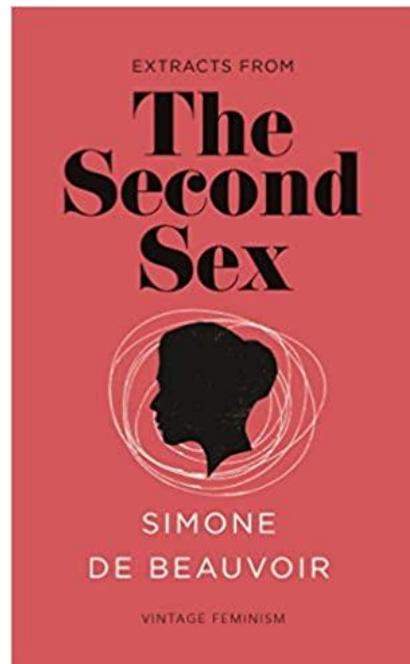
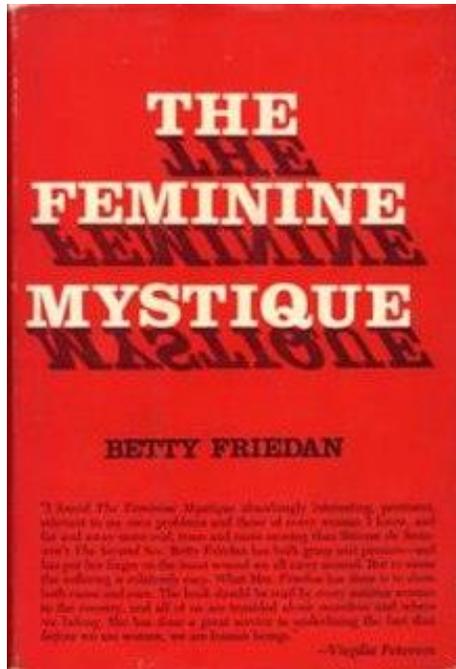
Socioeconomic shift in the aftermath of WW2 – more job opportunities available but continued reinforcement of gender roles.

*Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949; *The Second Sex*), by Simone de Beauvoir.

Raised feminist consciousness by stressing that liberation for women was liberation for men too.

*The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan.

Spoke of the problem that “lay buried, unspoken” in the mind of the suburban housewife: utter boredom and lack of fulfillment.



## *The Personal As Political* by Hanisch, C. (Feb 1969)

“therapy” vs. “therapy and politics.”

“One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems.”

“Can you imagine what would happen if women, blacks, and workers would-stop blaming ourselves for our sad situations? It seems to me the whole country needs that kind of political therapy. That is what the black movement is doing in its own way. We shall do it in ours.”



# The Disconnection of Women's Liberation with Women of Color

## Fighting on Many Fronts of Oppression

Racism

Post-Jim Crow era

Classism

Discrimination through formal and informal mechanisms (redlining)

Sexism

Told to sideline women's issues for the sake of racial solidarity

Heterosexism

Religious and cultural persecution

# The Disconnection of Women's Liberation with Women of Color

## Denial of Lesbian/Biological Separatism

“As Black women we find any type of biological determinism a particularly dangerous and reactionary basis upon which to build a politic..”

“..must also question whether Lesbian separatism is an adequate and progressive political analysis and strategy, even for those who practice it, since it so completely denies any but the sexual sources of women's oppression, negating the facts of class and race.”

[[Combahee River Collective Statement, 1977](#)]

# The Disconnection of Women's Liberation with Women of Color

## Risks of Engaging in Activism

Psychological toll of retaliating against discrimination.

Disrupting conservative gender roles.

Negative cultural association with white feminists.

FREEDOM ORGANIZING SERIES #1

# The Combahee River Collective Statement:

Black Feminist Organizing In The Seventies and Eighties



IRIS, DENISE, LULU, NYDIA

wife" and "mother" was, in princi- | show that our existence has socia

**NATIONAL BLACK FEMINIST ORGANIZATION**  
*announces its*  
**EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE on**  
**BLACK FEMINISM**

NOV. 1973

in NYC

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**NBFO** 212-685-2344

370 LEXINGTON AVENUE  
NYC 10017  
room 601

"Reproductive justice—women having power over our own bodies—  
is the crucial first step toward any democracy, any human rights, and any justice."

Gloria Steinem

# REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

An Introduction

# WOC Organizations

# What Does Reproductive Justice Mean?

WE BELIEVE THAT REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE IS...

A human right.

About access, not choice.

Not just about abortion.

TO ACHIEVE REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE, WE MUST...

Analyze power systems.

Address intersecting oppressions.

Center the most marginalized.

Join together across issues and identities.

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Cultural

---

Sociopolitical

---

Economic

The  
Challenges of  
Communities  
of Color

# Cultural Barriers

Collectivist Cultures – difficulty establishing relationships and trust with “outsiders”.

Linguistic Diversity– variances in accent and dialect weaken communication

Patriarchal systems – male dominance creates a gender power imbalance

Stereotypes – emphasize negative qualities or data as the general reflection of a race.

# Cultural Barriers

## A History of Coercion and Mistrust

Severe  
punishment  
for sexual  
assault  
accusations  
against Black  
Men

Forced  
sterilization

Unethical  
Medical  
Trials

Enslavement  
of African-  
Americans,  
Removal of  
Indigenous  
Americans,  
and Political  
Exclusion of  
Asian and  
Hispanic  
immigrants

The  
Eugenics  
Movement

# Sociopolitical Barriers

## American Elitism

- Certain members of society exercise disproportionate influence over American public policy.

## Institutional Racism

- Discrimination in the form of denial of access to basic societal necessities such as education, housing and employment.

## Manipulation of Social Service Benefits

- Threatened loss of benefits if refused sterilization procedures, work requirements, & invasive relationship standards.

## The Hyde Amendment

- More than half (58%) of the women affected by the Hyde Amendment are WOC.

# Economic Barriers

High rates of poverty in communities of color.

Restricted use of federal dollars to cover abortion services for poor women since 1976.

WOC in the 70's had little control of finances and marginal employment opportunities.

African-American, Native American and Alaska Native women die of pregnancy-related causes at a rate about three times higher than those of white women.

In 2017, 17.8 percent of the Hispanic population was not covered by health insurance, as compared to 5.9 percent of the non-Hispanic white population.

In 2014, White women accounted for 39% of the abortion rate in the U.S., whereas African-Americans accounted for 28%, Hispanics for 25%, and Asian/Pacific Islanders for 6%.

Unintended pregnancy rates are highest among low-income women, women aged 18–24, and WOC.

## Recent Data in Reproductive Health Disparities

# The Intersectional Feminist

Kimberlé Crenshaw:



“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.”

# The Challenges of Today

General lack of coherence, both domestically and internationally, on addressing the reproductive rights of women.

Republican-majority administration decreasing reproductive health access.

Coronavirus pandemic underscores reproductive justice issues.

# Legislative and Political Barriers .

As of 2014, 89% of U.S counties lack an abortion clinic.

People in 27 US cities must travel over 100 miles to reach an abortion facility; the state with the largest number of such cities is Texas (n=10)

Texas has the second highest population of Latinos in the country, comprising nearly 40% of the state's population.

Between 2011 and 2017, states enacted 401 new abortion restrictions, accounting for more than one-third (34%) of restrictions since Roe v. Wade.

23 states have anti-choice governments vs. 13 states that are pro-choice

# Legislative and Political Barriers

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and induced fear

Trump administrations selective immigration policies

Introduced separation of detained families, shackling of pregnant women, the public charge rule

Title X Domestic Gag Rule

Title X provides federally funded family planning programs.

New rules designed to gut the program's ability to provide a full range of information and services.

# Social Barriers

## Disinformation & Fake News

### Living in a Post-Truth World

a form of **ideological supremacy**, whereby its practitioners are trying to compel someone to believe in something whether there is good evidence for it or not. (McIntyre, 2018)

## Politically motivated Think Tanks/Organizations

The Center for Medical Progress fabricated recordings to falsely accuse Planned Parenthood of profiting from fetal tissue.

## Religiously affiliated health care facilities

In 2016, one in six U.S. acute-care hospital beds was controlled by a Catholic hospital.

Catholic hospitals must follow the Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

# Cultural Barriers

Lack of information in non-English languages

Stigma against conversations on reproductive health and seeking help

Association of Feminism/Abortion Advocacy/Pro-Choice with Western Culture

Continued coercion and mistrust

Between 2006 and 2010, the California Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation illegally sterilized nearly 150 female inmates.

In 2017, a Tennessee judge was reprimanded for offering to reduce convicted women's jail sentences if they got sterilized, claiming the offer was made to repeat offenders so they could "make something of themselves."

South Dakota's Medicaid program refuses to cover removal of contraceptive implants, stating in the billing manual that the state "will not reimburse for the removal of the implant if the intent is for the recipient to become pregnant."

# Economic Barriers

## Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPC)

Fake health clinics that strategically use deceptive and aggressive tactics to take advantage of individuals seeking reproductive health care.

2018 decision [NIFLA v. Becerra](#) ruled that California could not force CPCs to disclose availability of state-funded abortion care services or post signs that the CPC was unlicensed

## Targeted Anti-Abortion Billboards

[https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cchr/supp\\_info/take\\_action\\_againstanti-abortionracism.html](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cchr/supp_info/take_action_againstanti-abortionracism.html)

BLACK CHILDREN ARE AN  
**ENDANGERED  
SPECIES**

**BLACK & BEAUTIFUL**

**BLACK & UNWANTED**

**THE 13<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT FREED US.  
ABORTION ENSLAVES US.**

**ABORTED.COM/CA**

TOO MANY ABORTED.COM

**TOOMANYABORTED.COM**  
SPONSORED BY THE BALANCE PRODUCTIONS



**THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE FOR AN AFRICAN AMERICAN IS IN THE WOMB.**  
Over 37% of Missouri's abortions are performed on African Americans, who comprise 12% of our population.  
MissouriLife.org

El lugar más peligroso para un **LATINO** es el vientre de su madre  
.....  
dangerous

Every 21 minutes, our next possible

**LEADER**  
**is ABORTED**  
THEIRABORTION.COM



**THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE FOR SOME CHILDREN IS IN THE WOMB.**  
www.abortioninthehood.com

**ABORTION MAKES THREE-FIFTHS HUMAN SEEM OVERLY GENEROUS.**  
**TOOMANYABORTED.COM**  
SPONSORED BY THE BALANCE PRODUCTIONS

**BLACK CHILDREN ARE IN DANGER**

TOO MANY ABORTED.COM/WI

**"CHOICE"**  
**KILLS THOSE WITHOUT ONE.**



[www.AbortionInTheHood.com](http://www.AbortionInTheHood.com)



**Fatherhood**  
**begins in the womb.**

**TOOMANYABORTED.COM**

# What does this mean for the Future?

An intersectional feminist perspective on reproductive health should have importance to social policy development, practice, and research .

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030.
- Need for interrelation of social movements in addressing root causes.

“Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.”

[[Lorde. A, 1984](#)]

# Building Awareness and Leadership

## **Sexual Health Education**

medically accurate; evidence based; trauma-informed; and culturally competent with respect to race, ethnicity, ability, socio-economic status, gender, and sexuality.

## **Consciousness-Raising Sessions**

Can be in-house meetings, focus groups, interviews or done through community outreach and events.

## **Community Base Building**

Social institutions should be viewed as a 'bearers of justice.'

## **Supporting Indigenous Leaders**

Acknowledging the already existing leadership in communities and/or fostering leadership of WOC.

# Who This Presentation Is Really For

Cultural deprivation becomes an omnibus explanation for the disparities of communities of color (Victim Blaming).

Racism, discrimination, segregation, and the powerlessness of WOC are subtly, but thoroughly, downgraded in importance.

Info provided is known by WOC and least likely to be known by White people.

Result of education on the history of Women of Color, government suppression, and a general evasion of discussion surrounding these topics.

Part of being an ally to other movements and social causes is recognizing that you, as a White person, benefit from a myriad of forms of structural oppression and are capable of perpetuating that harm on WOC.

If this statement causes any discomfort, it is intentional.

# Hanisch, C. (Feb 1969). The Personal Is Political.

“I think we who work full-time in the movement tend to become very narrow. What is happening now is that when non-movement women disagree with us, we assume it’s because they are ‘apolitical’, not because there might be something wrong with our thinking. “

“What I am trying to say is that there are things in the consciousness of ‘apolitical’ women (I find them very political) that are as valid as any political consciousness we think we have. We should figure out why many women don’t want to do action.”

# Navigating Reproductive Justice Discussions

The politics of WOC come directly from their own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression.

Generations of WOC have been told that the burden lays with them to explain to the rest of the world how to address systemic issues.

There is no panacea for approaching WOC, nor will it be produced.

1. It takes more than just asking questions to get answers – trust is not automatically given to share personal stories.

## Navigating Reproductive Justice Discussions

2. Be prepared to discuss issues of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression.

Navigating Reproductive Justice  
Discussions

3. Acknowledge any privileges you may hold – allows for a more honest and open dialogue.

Navigating Reproductive Justice  
Discussions

4. Speak from personal experience and learning – avoid storytelling and citing media examples that may generalize WOC

Navigating Reproductive Justice  
Discussions

5. Challenge ideas rather than people — goal is to question and negotiate practices of reproductive health, including underlying assumptions and ideologies involved.

Navigating Reproductive Justice  
Discussions

6. Frame questions respectfully - ask for additional information or for clarification, but refrain from judgmental or explanatory questioning (ex. Why would you....)

Navigating Reproductive Justice  
Discussions

7. Rushing to conclusions – Don't try to rush to end on a happy-note or positive statement. WOC should be allowed to dictate how conversations of their lives go.

Navigating Reproductive Justice  
Discussions

8. Monitor your reactions – WOC tend to be labeled as “aggressive” or “threatening” when discussing serious topics, often due to the listeners bias or prejudice.

Navigating Reproductive Justice  
Discussions

9. Avoid Centering – Keep the focus on the speaker, avoiding to add in your difficulties in discussing reproductive justice topics

Navigating Reproductive Justice  
Discussions

Thank you!