

Reproductive Justice: Congregational and Legislative Best Practices

Hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Association
in partnership with the UU Women's Federation

Guest Speakers:

Carol Loscalzo and Mandy Restivo

First Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, NJ

Maggie Clayton

UU Church of Arlington, VA

Rev. Aaron Payson

UU Church of Worcester, MA

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

May 24, 2012

Agenda

- What is Reproductive Justice (RJ)?
- RJ at the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, NJ
- RJ at the UU Church of Arlington, VA
- RJ Beyond Congregations
- Q&A
- Resources



Definitions of RJ

SisterSong

The right to have children, not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments is based on the human right to make personal decisions about one's life, and the obligation of government and society to ensure that the conditions are suitable for implementing one's decisions

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

For RCRC, reproductive justice means that all people and communities should have the social, spiritual, economic, and political means to experience the sacred gift of sexuality with health and wholeness.

Unitarian Universalist Association

Attendant to the social, political, and economic inequalities that shape the lives of marginalized women, Unitarian Universalists are called to work for reproductive justice so that all people and communities can experience fullness in their reproductive and sexual lives.

Repro Justice – Comparing Frameworks

- **Reproductive Health**

The provision of services to individuals, works to answer the lack of accessibility to health care research, services, and facilities.

- **Reproductive Choice/Rights**

The protection of a woman's legal rights to reproductive health care services, particularly abortion.

Reproductive Justice at the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, NJ



What We Do, and Why

- Reproductive Justice Work started by reading and looking at issues of **access**. The congregation in 2004 began the New Jersey Abortion Access Fund, a separate 501c3 that provides grants to women for safe, legal abortions.
- Looking at access opened up the conversation from only looking at **choice** to broadening the issue to think about access.
- Simultaneously, the chair of the anti-racism committee connected us to **SisterSong** and Lynn Roberts, a Board Member who lives in NJ.
- The committee was interested in switching from Reproductive Choice Committee to the **Reproductive Justice Committee**, and Lynn Roberts of SisterSong explained to us that in order to adopt the name, we must understand the framework so as not to co-opt it. The committee grappled with the issues of race and class and how they intersect with reproductive rights, through readings and discussions.

Best Practices from USR

Two Suggestions for working within congregations

- Meet People where they are at– do you have people interested in birth? Choice? Health insurance? There are ways to move all of these issues from a traditional reproductive rights framework to a reproductive justice framework by asking the questions: Whose voice is missing? How does race and class intersect?
- Find ways to partner with existing organizations in your community, especially immigration rights organizations, women of color organizations, LGBT groups and other faith-based organizations.

Best Practices from USR

Two Suggestions for Advocacy

- Try to keep in mind the role of an ally in reproductive justice work.
- Join SisterSong, and utilize their materials
- Keep an eye out for national campaigns and join the work already occurring.

Reproductive Justice at the UU Church of Arlington, VA

With Governor Tim Kaine at Unite Against the War on Women Rally – 4/28/12 – Richmond, VA



Youth Group “40 Days of Life” Counter Protest – Falls church, VA – Nov. 2011



Peaceful Pro-Choice presence – Falls Church Health Center – October 2011



What We Do, and Why

- UURJ at UUCA was organized about 3 years ago in response to request from Rose Coddling, local clinic owner, for a pro-choice presence outside her health center.
- We wanted to expand our presence in the congregation and community.
- Grew member list to over 80 congregants.
- Our mission: *Promote reproductive justice issues throughout the church and community. ACTION is the vehicle to engage and educate people. As a faith-based community it is critical our voices be heard in the arena of reproductive justice.*



We try to be visible UU's at every event we host or attend.

- Personhood – A sermon for Reproductive Justice.

Roe V Wade anniversary service – *Dr. Rev. Linda Olson-Peebles*

- Rally to Protect Women's Health – Richmond, VA – Oct. 2011- Featured speaker from faith community.
- “OWL Out” – Taking OWL program to the community. Modified curriculum, training facilitators, providing mentors for program

Best Practices from UUCA

- Involving the congregation
 - Partner with other groups (Youth Group, Equality UUCA, Young Adults)
 - Have a variety of ways to participate (Book clubs, Write Here-Right Now campaigns, Information table at fellowship hour, sponsor events at the church)
- Recommendation for Advocacy
 - Create relationships with local and state level advocacy organizations (NARAL, Planned Parenthood, ACLU)
 - Volunteer, be active, be seen, be heard, be a part of the conversation
 - Restore/increase funding for comprehensive sexuality education



Unitarian Universalists and Reproductive Justice: Within and Beyond Congregations



Legislative Advocacy

- Know your focus (purpose)
- Research position / opposition
- Make your “ask” specific
- Follow up / report

Examples

- Worship that heals (the death of Dr. Tiller)
- Letters that matter (same-sex rights in OH)
- Social media & congregational activism

Best Practices

- Two Suggestions for working within Congregations
 - (1) Find issues that unite the congregation
 - (2) Find easy ways to involve all
- Recommendation for *Advocacy*
 - (1) Know your issue/opposition
 - (2) Make your points simple

Your Questions?



Please introduce yourself and direct your question to one speaker.

Resources

- “10 Things Your Congregation Can Do for Reproductive Justice”
- UUA Webpages
- UUA Action Alerts
- Facebook and Yahoo groups
- Meet&Greet at GA
2:30-3:30pm on Friday, June 22.
Hyatt Meeting Room Russell ABC (2nd floor)
- Contact us!
Jessica Halperin, Women’s Issues Program Associate, UUA
womensissues@uua.org