

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

As Unitarian Universalists, we embrace the reproductive justice framework, which espouses the human right to have children, not to have children, to parent the children one has in healthy environments and the human rights to bodily autonomy and to express one's sexuality freely. Reproductive Justice is the term created by black women in 1994 to bridge the gap between reproductive rights and other social justice movements. Those women became SisterSong and have explained that the reproductive justice framework “represents a shift for women advocating for control of their bodies -- from a narrower focus on legal access and individual choice... to a broader analysis of racial, economic, cultural, and structural constraints on [their] power. Reproductive justice addresses the social reality of inequality, specifically, the inequality of opportunities that [women of color] have to control [their] reproductive destiny.”¹ To the Reproductive Justice framework, we as Unitarian Universalists add that all people have the right to self-expression with regards to gender and sexuality and the right to live free from sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and exploitation including sexual and reproductive exploitation.

The world we envision includes social, political, legal, and economic systems that support everyone’s freedom of reproductive choice and expression of gender identity and sexuality. In such a world all communities are places of equality, abundance and safety, free from violence, oppression, and hazardous environments. This world includes access to affordable, culturally and developmentally appropriate, and safe child care and health care. In our vision everyone has access to accurate, safe, healthy, and culturally-appropriate reproductive health services and information about sexuality and family planning.

History

Our faith tradition has a long history of progressive witness for freedom and justice. Soon after the merger of Universalism and Unitarianism, the new Association (1961) adopted statements in support of civil rights and the rights of women. In time, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations added advocacy for those facing oppression based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. We have offered sexuality education across the lifespan within our congregations, and have advocated for these beliefs in the public sphere.

The reproductive justice movement emerged because neither the predominantly white middle class women’s rights and reproductive rights movements nor the predominately male civil rights movement addressed the unique range of issues that women of color faced. Those issues have included forced sterilization, forced contraception, and higher rates of removal of children due to accusations of abuse or neglect. These issues, coupled with systemic racism, have frequently made parenting or co-parenting more difficult due to many factors including but not limited to unequal implementation of laws, unequal incarceration rates, prohibitions imposed on ex-felons, and economic insecurity.

¹ From “Why is Reproductive Justice Important for Women of Color?” [on the SisterSong website](#).

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The reproductive justice movement envisions the liberation of people of all genders, sexual orientations, ability levels, gender identities, classes, and cultural and racial identities. Such liberation requires living wages, safe and supported housing, high quality and comprehensive medical and reproductive health care, affordable legal representation, paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and control of personal reproductive decisions as well as accurate information about sexuality and reproduction, and absence of individual and institutional violence.

As participants in the Reproductive Justice movement, Unitarian Universalists commit to take the lead from, act in solidarity with, and be accountable to communities of color and other marginalized groups, using our positions of power in support of those communities' priorities. Both those affected and their allies have important roles to play. Unitarian Universalists are laying the groundwork for the transformative power of multicultural organizing in partnership with reproductive justice organizations and leaders, looking to those most affected for leadership. We will use our position to speak loudly in the religious arena, as the religious voice has often been used to limit access to reproductive justice.

THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

As Unitarian Universalists we covenant to uphold our seven principles. The first, second and sixth principles are the most applicable to Reproductive Justice. We are all sexual beings with varying abilities, preferences, and identities. Unitarian Universalism calls us to advocate for the positive expression of sexuality, including choices about reproduction and nurturing, and for a culture of respect and empowerment. Our commitment to our principles calls us to support and partner with historically oppressed communities as we work together to build the world we dream about. In order to embody our principles, we as Unitarian Universalists must listen to and follow the lead of women from the affected communities and reach outside our cultural assumptions.

Unitarian Universalists support gender equity, positive sexuality, diverse sexual expression and the individual's right to make reproductive choices. Such choices are influenced by social and political systems as well as by factors such as racial/cultural identity, economic status, immigration/citizenship status, relationship with the criminal justice system, health status, and ability. Our religious tradition directs us to respect the diversity of faith traditions that surround us and insists that no singular religious viewpoint or creed guide the policies of our government.

Our pluralistic congregations include diverse beliefs, backgrounds, and personal stories. We do not agree on many issues, including when life begins and the rights of the unborn. Yet we unite in striving to live out the values and principles that call us to work for reproductive justice in spite of the complexities of the issues.

87 ACTIONS

88 We commit to putting our values into action, striving for equality and justice and honoring the
89 rights, needs and choices of others. Affirming the interconnected web of life with justice for all
90 people, we commit to undertake actions that could include the following.

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92 As individuals we can

- 93 ➤ Study reproductive justice issues, including sexuality, gender identity, classism, ability level,
94 and racism.
- 95 ➤ Acknowledge personal biases and stories.
- 96 ➤ Work to accept one's own body, sexuality, and abilities.
- 97 ➤ Adopt spiritual practices that contribute to self-care.
- 98 ➤ Advocate for reproductive justice and related issues through op-ed pieces, letters to the
99 editor, letters and visits to legislators, and direct action.
- 100 ➤ Volunteer with and/or provide financial support to organizations that provide reproductive
101 health services at little or no cost, abortion clinics, women's shelters, and child and family
102 community support centers.
- 103 ➤ Protest violations of basic human rights.
- 104 ➤ Support reproductive health/abortion clinics that are experiencing demonstrations.
- 105 ➤ Effect positive change within our own social circles and professions.
- 106 ➤ Join reproductive justice groups as a member or an ally member.
- 107 ➤ Consider candidates' positions on these issues when voting.
- 108 ➤ Work to eliminate barriers to services (economic, educational, language, accessibility, etc.).
- 109 ➤ Provide leadership in our congregation and community on these issues.
- 110 ➤ Financially contribute to organizations that advocate for reproductive justice issues,
111 including the social determinants underlying racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and
112 other oppressions.
- 113 ➤ Work to eliminate legal restrictions on adoption and foster care for LGBTIQ families.

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115 In our relationships we can

- 116 ➤ Respect all people and their decisions regarding reproduction even those with whom we
117 disagree.
- 118 ➤ Minister to one another around reproductive health and reproductive justice issues.
- 119 ➤ Be sensitive to others' stories, respecting their life experiences and lived realities.
- 120 ➤ Accept people of all abilities, identities, orientations, and generations as sexual beings.
- 121 ➤ Accompany anyone wanting support (i.e. while seeking government assistance, in making
122 decisions for their families about pregnancy, during abortions, and during childbirth).
- 123 ➤ Teach children and youth about and model healthy sexuality and relationships.
- 124 ➤ Seek and accept leadership from people most affected by reproductive injustice.

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126 In our congregations we can

- 127 ➤ Form a reproductive justice group, task force, or committee.
- 128 ➤ Invite reproductive justice groups to share their understanding and expertise, and/or
129 conduct reproductive justice trainings.

- 130 ➤ Connect religious professionals and lay leaders with organizations and networks that
131 promote reproductive and economic justice and human rights.
132 ➤ Expect religious professionals and lay leaders to participate in reproductive justice-related
133 education and training.
134 ➤ Provide ministry and pastoral care that is inclusive of all people and reproductive justice
135 issues.
136 ➤ Offer worship, discussion, and small group ministry on reproductive justice issues.
137 ➤ Develop and promote congregational statements on reproductive justice.
138 ➤ Provide spaces, programs, and teaching for community groups working on reproductive
139 justice issues.
140 ➤ Provide education to children, youth and adults that is age, ability, and identity appropriate.
141 ➤ Join with state legislative ministry organizations and interfaith networks in their advocacy
142 for reproductive rights or organize such advocacy.
143 ➤ Communicate reproductive justice information using the congregation’s virtual community
144 networks, newsletters, and orders of service.
145 ➤ Implement Safe Congregations guidelines and practices.
146 ➤ Continue Welcoming Congregation advocacy and education efforts related to gender and
147 sexuality.
148 ➤ Reach out and participate in interfaith and secular work on racism, classism, gender and/or
149 sexual health issues.
150 ➤ Welcome breastfeeding in our shared spaces.

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152 As an Association we can

- 153 ➤ Publicly witness for reproductive justice.
154 ➤ Advocate for just legislation and policies and the rights of families and individuals at the
155 state and federal levels.
156 ➤ Advocate for the right to access comprehensive reproductive health information and
157 services.
158 ➤ Support state legislative ministry organizations in their work that supports reproductive
159 justice.
160 ➤ Provide curricula, resources, current information, and networking opportunities that
161 congregations can use in their reproductive justice education and advocacy efforts.
162 ➤ Collaborate with other faith-based and secular organizations working for reproductive
163 justice and related issues.
164 ➤ Present reproductive justice workshops at district/regional meetings.

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166 With open minds, helping hands, and loving hearts, we work toward reproductive justice, and
167 commit to replacing insecurity with safety, fear with acceptance, judgment with love, and
168 shame with compassion.