

Instructions for Fishbowl

The politicization of reproduction has been increasing in intensity over the past two years. Though problematic, many of its effects are often experienced differently by people of different gender identities. Witnessing to these diverse experiences is a vital aspect of education and activism on reproductive justice.

The creators of this curriculum acknowledge the vital experience of listening to women's voices as we explore the impacts of the "war on women." While doing so, it is essential to recognize the diversity of experience that exists among women, as well as among men. It's particularly important to be attendant to the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming people—those who identify as women, as men, as both, or as neither (for definitions and more information, see the UUA's Transgender 101 <http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/identity/25348.shtml>).

For this exercise, participants divide into groups based on gender self-identification. If participants so choose, they can create additional groups based on how they identify. All participants must be given space to join or create the group that they feel most comfortable in, even if it makes other participants uncomfortable – the point is to witness to each other's experiences as a spiritual practice. It is possible and welcomed for "groups" to have only one person in them.

Arrange chairs so that there is space in the inside of the room for one group to sit in a circle, with the rest of the participants sitting in an outer circle surrounding them. Starting with the group with the most participants, each group takes turns sitting in the smaller circle, answering the following questions. The people in the outside circle listen, refraining from verbal or non-verbal commentary or questions while the exercise is happening.

Questions:

- Rep. Todd Akin, conservative Senate candidate in Missouri, told an interviewer that "legitimate rape" rarely causes pregnancy, adding that "the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down," while campaigning for a party whose platform included a constitutional amendment to ban abortion. How does that make you feel?
- What is the "War on Women" about? Is it legitimate? Why is it happening now?
- What advice would you give to a younger person of your gender who is coming into their own political consciousness?

When the last group is finished, the chairs in the middle of the room are removed and all participants gather in the larger circle. Participants share one thought that struck them from the conversation of another group.