

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

RADICAL REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: FOUNDATIONS, THEORY, PRACTICE, CRITIQUE

Edited by Loretta J. Ross, Lynn Roberts, Erika Derkas, Whitney Peoples, and Pamela Bridgewater Toure

Foreword by Dorothy Roberts

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FOUNDATIONS • THEORY • PRACTICE • CRITIQUE



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FOREWORD BY DOROTHY ROBERTS

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“A game changer for sure.”

—DR. WILLIE J. PARKER,

Life's Work: A Moral Argument for Choices

“Immensely useful to scholars, activists, and policymakers seeking to make reproductive justice a reality.”

—JAEEL SILLIMAN,

Recalling Jewish Calcutta

“This timely anthology tells the powerful story of how women of color transformed the reproductive health and rights movements and brought intersectionality from theory to practice.”

—RYE YOUNG,

Executive Director, Third Wave Fund

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Reproductive Justice (RJ) (pg 14): a theoretical paradigm and model for activist organizing centering on three interconnected human rights: the right *not to have children* using safe birth control, abortion, or abstinence; the right *to have children* under the conditions we choose; and the right *to parent the children we have* in safe and healthy environments. The term was invented in 1994 by a group of black women activists in response to the lack of a reproductive movement that defended the needs of women of color and other marginalized people.

Reproductive health (pg 15): a framework for fighting reproductive injustice that deals with delivering healthcare services to individuals, including access to birth control, prenatal care, and postnatal care.

Reproductive rights (pg 15): a framework for fighting reproductive injustice that addresses the legal application of rights through the US Constitution, such as ending abortion restrictions and maintaining access to contraceptives.

Pro-choice: favoring the legalization and access to abortion and contraception.

Pro-life: opposing the legalization and access to abortion and contraception.

Reproductive oppression (pg 24): strategies of population control through policies that limit the reproductive ability of indigenous women and women of color, based on ideals of white bodies and children as “correct” and nonwhite bodies and fertility as “deviant.”

HISTORICAL EVENTS

1973

Supreme Court decides *Roe v. Wade*, which legalizes a woman's right to an abortion.

1979

Hyde Amendment is passed, which makes it illegal for federal Medicaid to pay for abortions except in cases where it is necessary to save the life of the mother or if the pregnancy arises from incest or rape.

1984

Byllye Avery cofounds the Black Women's Health Imperative, which recognizes that multiple forms of oppression (including race, class, gender, and poverty) affect the ability of black women to lead healthy lives.

1989

Webster v. Reproductive Health Services opens the door for state legislation of abortion and abortion providers.

1994 (June)

First meeting of what later became the Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice, where the term "reproductive justice" is created and defined.

1994 (August)

A full-page statement with over 800 signatures is published in the *Washington Post* and *Roll Call* demanding reproductive justice be included in health care reform.

1994 (September)

International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, coordinated by the United Nations, at which the global women's health movement emphasizes the relationship between poverty, underdevelopment, and women's reproduction.

1997

Sixteen women of color organizations come together to form SisterSong.

2003

SisterSong National Women of Color Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights Conference popularizes the term "reproductive justice" and identifies the concept as a unifying and popular framework among various organizations dedicated to reproductive health and rights.

2010

SisterSong is renamed as the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In “Laying the Foundations,” (pg 39) Toni M. Bond Leonard focuses on a few specific events in 1993 and 1994 that created the political and social atmosphere that led to the RJ movement. How did these events (like the Clinton administration’s plan for healthcare reform and the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo) prompt the birth of RJ? In what ways has the movement continued to be informed by political moments?
2. In “Trust Black Women,” (pg 58) Loretta J. Ross explores the racially motivated history that inspired black women to fight for reproductive justice. What similarities do the sterilization programs of the twentieth century have with the “abortion is racist” movements of the twenty-first century? Why is it important to acknowledge these similarities?
3. In “On Becoming and Being a Mother in Four Movements,” (pg 111) Lynn Roberts looks at the pressure to have (and not have) children across generations, reflecting on influences of race, class, and gender across her family’s history. How does the fight for reproductive justice impact you? How does this differ from the ways it impacted previous generations in your family?
4. In “Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life,” (pg 151) Andrea Smith considers how both pro-choice and pro-life movements are tied to ideas that either criminalize marginalized bodies or deny them the inherent right to their bodies based on access. Andrea argues that the pro-life/pro-choice dichotomy marginalizes women of color, poor women, and women with disabilities. What role does the media played in this debate, historically? What opportunities do you see to introduce complexities into the public discourse?
5. In “Beyond the Trees: Stories and Strategies of Environmental and Reproductive Justice,” (pg 361) activist Bianca Encinias speaks of the similarities between native peoples fighting environmental contamination and women fighting for reproductive justice. What are the intersections between these movements? What are the benefits of looking at these movements together?
6. In “Tubes Tied, Truly Child-Free at Last!,” (pg 404) Aaronette White explains why the choice not to have children is right for her and points out the ways voluntarily childless women are criticized for their choices. Have you experienced criticism or pressure around your choices or beliefs about having children? Have you found yourself criticizing the choices of voluntarily childless women? What do you believe are the roots of these criticisms?

7. In “Transforming Silence,” (pg 233) Pamela Bridgewater Toure discusses how telling her own story has helped her impart the importance of RJ to her students and enriched their discussions of the law. Consider your experiences with reproductive justice. How can the act of sharing these stories change the conversation?
8. In “Conceptualizing Reproductive Justice Theory,” (pg 170) Loretta J. Ross refers to reproductive justice theory as “a synthesis of theory, strategy, and practice.” Black feminism and reproductive justice are both theories founded on activism and practice. Do you consider theories that inform and are informed by activism more or less valid than theories based solely in academia?
9. In “Retrofitting Choice,” (pg 272) Erika Derkas says that white feminists must “stand with” POC reproductive justice activists while resisting the temptation to occupy their space. What does it mean to *stand with*, and how does this look different from models of allyship in white feminist activism?

THE FEMINIST PRESS

The Feminist Press is an educational nonprofit organization founded to advance women's rights and amplify feminist perspectives. We publish classic and new writing from around the world, create cutting-edge programs, and elevate silenced and marginalized voices in order to support personal transformation and social justice for all people.

As an independent publisher, the Feminist Press is able to provide a personalized experience for the universities and professors that adopt our books through close attention to dealing with all aspects of utilizing books in classrooms, from providing desk and exam copies, bulk sales, programming, and more.

Feminist Press authors are available for lectures, Q&A sessions, or workshops, either in person, via video conference, or through use of social media and message boards. Our authors are committed to working with your students to enrich and broaden their understanding of the commonly read text, and of the issues and themes highlighted by the book.

SISTER SONG

SisterSong is the largest national multi-ethnic reproductive justice collective. Our membership includes and represents Indigenous, African American, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latina women, and LGBTQ people. Membership also includes white, male, and pro-life allies who support women's human right to lead fully self-determined lives. We are dedicated to growing and supporting the RJ movement, and to uplifting the voices and building the capacity of our movement sisters to win access to abortion and all other reproductive rights.

This sample educator's guide was created in collaboration with a graduate student currently attending the University of Missouri School of Journalism. The student volunteer wrote discussion questions and researched terms, concepts, and related resources, imagining that this text was on their syllabus.

