



GROWING THE
REPRODUCTIVE
JUSTICE
MOVEMENT

A TOOLKIT FOR FUNDERS

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A project of the Women of Color
Working Group of the Funders Network
on Population, Reproductive Health
and Rights

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PREFACE

The Funders Network is a network of grantmakers who address issues of population, reproductive health, rights and justice, both domestically and internationally. Its members share a common goal: to ensure that all people have access to the information and services they need to manage their own fertility and protect and promote their sexual and reproductive health. To that end, the Funders Network seeks to improve communication, foster collaboration, increase resources and enhance the overall effectiveness of grantmakers in this field.

The Funders Network nurtures collaboration by convening “working groups” of funders with shared interests. The Women of Color Working Group, a multi-racial group of our members, is an example of such collaboration. Ten years ago, these members created the Working Group to increase resources for Women of Color-led work focused on reproductive rights. During this decade of work, the Working Group has been responsible for greater inclusion of the perspectives of Women of Color in our work. This has included applying the reproductive justice framework in the creation of a collaborative fund that has increased funding for reproductive justice and Women of Color-led organizations, and discussions of reproductive justice among members of other funder networks. Its most recent effort has been the development of the first online Reproductive Justice (RJ) Toolkit designed specifically for funders.

This document, *Growing the Reproductive Justice Movement*, is one of many tools available in the online RJ Toolkit. To access the RJ Toolkit, we invite you to visit the Funder’s Network website, www.fundersnet.org, and browse the RJ Toolkit section. There you will find an annotated listing of in-depth publications and resources that provide more information. The RJ Toolkit also contains a four-part video series that highlights excerpts from interviews with some of our members who share their experiences and insights from funding this work. As funders, they have sought to answer the questions: What is Reproductive Justice? Why is Reproductive Justice a Winning Strategy? How Can Funders Support Reproductive Justice Organizations?

We hope that navigating through the online RJ Toolkit will inspire you to consider funding reproductive justice and Women of Color-led organizations. We designed a RJ Toolkit section on our website with a special place for you to communicate with us, ask questions, get connected to other funders, and learn more about the Funders Network. We hope to hear from you soon!

Denise Shannon, Executive Director
Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights



INTRODUCTION

Growing the Reproductive Justice Movement: The Role of Philanthropy

Adisa Douglas, Senior Advisor and RJ Toolkit Project Director
Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights

In the spring of 2005, members of the Women of Color Working Group of the Funders Network met to continue an ongoing discussion about the creation of a collaborative fund that would help address the critical shortage of funding for Women of Color-led organizations working to achieve reproductive rights. In the course of the conversation, it became clear that we were talking about supporting organizations that defined their work from the standpoint of reproductive justice. We also discussed the fact that these organizations were at the early stages of creating a new and powerful reproductive justice movement. Some members of the Working Group, including a new generation of leaders in reproductive rights philanthropy, were very clear that reproductive justice should be the fund's focus. However, others, including myself, were a bit reluctant. Were we really ready to go to our boards and our funding colleagues and ask them to fund reproductive justice work?

As our conversation continued, we began to understand that reproductive justice is about expanding the base of the reproductive rights movement to include more Women of Color and low-income women. We were reminded that indeed there were voices in communities across the country and in national Women of Color-led organizations telling us that their efforts to achieve reproductive rights was justice work and could not be done while isolated from other related justice issues, such as environmental and economic issues. These were the voices of Latina, African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Native American women who were already demonstrating that reproductive justice was a winning strategy.

At this same meeting, the Working Group made a bold decision to create a reproductive justice fund that was eventually named the Catalyst Fund. As chair of the Working Group, I was asked to lead a small committee to begin the process of implementing this decision. We all left the meeting excited about the consensus we had achieved and the fact that we had created the beginnings of the first national fund dedicated to supporting Women of Color-led efforts to advance reproductive justice.

Over the next two years, the Working Group debated many ideas and eventually designed a framework, criteria, and structure for the fund, including establishing a strategy that would provide matching grants to women's funds and community foundations throughout the country that, in turn, would support local and statewide Women of Color-led organizations. During this period, the Fund was housed at the Tides Foundation, and under the leadership of Vanessa Daniel, it has developed into a model of funding reproductive justice and a successful funders collaborative as well.¹

It was also during this two-year period that the Catalyst Fund received its founding grants totaling \$1.25 million from the Ford Foundation and the Public Welfare Foundation. The Catalyst Fund received its first Ford Foundation grant as a result of the work of Jael Silliman, who initiated the idea of establishing the

¹ In addition to learning about the Catalyst Fund in this document of the RJ Toolkit, visit our website for "Ways to Fund Reproductive Justice" a PowerPoint/Slide Show that describes in detail how the Catalyst Fund works and how foundations can support it. In that section, we have also included the Catalyst Fund brochure and a listing of other funding intermediaries that support reproductive justice organizations.

fund, and thereafter through the work of Loren Harris and Lourdes Rivera. The Catalyst Fund also received initial support from the Public Welfare Foundation during my tenure there as Director of Programs.

In the process of doing the work that eventually led to the Catalyst Fund receiving Public Welfare grants totaling \$750,000 over three years, I received a lot of support from members of the Working Group. My funding colleagues were invaluable in helping me to articulate the concept of reproductive justice to my board. They sent me publications to read and spent time with me on the telephone, answering my questions as I prepared my written materials for my board meetings. I learned that I was not the only funder who benefited from this extraordinary sharing of resources and information. As funders, we were not only committed to funding reproductive justice and Women of Color-led work, but also to finding ways to leverage the support we were providing.

We began to ask ourselves how we could share what we had learned in funding this work and how we could leverage our funding to secure new support. In other words, we asked ourselves how we could grow the reproductive justice movement, nurturing the seeds that had been planted by Women of Color in communities across the country. Several Working Group members, including Lani Shaw of General Service Foundation, came up with the idea of developing a reproductive justice toolkit specifically designed for funders to enable them to benefit from the same kind of sharing of resources and information that had been so invaluable to us. The Working Group members enthusiastically agreed with the idea and formed a Reproductive Justice (RJ) Toolkit Committee that included Lani Shaw, Vanessa Daniel from the Tides Foundation, Wilma Montañez from the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation and Aparna Sharma, who was at that time at the Chicago Foundation for Women. Elsa A. Ríos, a long-time activist and advocate of reproductive justice and founder of Strategies for Social Change® LLC, was selected as the RJ Toolkit consultant. Her tireless efforts and guidance enabled the Working Group's idea and vision for the RJ Toolkit to become a reality, complete with educational videos, online resources, and this document, which we entitled *Growing the Reproductive Justice Movement: A Toolkit for Funders*.

The document, written by Vanessa Daniel of the Tides Foundation, serves as a companion piece to the other tools in our online RJ Toolkit, particularly the RJ Toolkit Video Series. The document answers some of the questions funders often ask about reproductive justice and Women of Color-led organizations and provides case studies that demonstrate the successes of this work. The case studies in particular show that Women of Color-led reproductive justice organizations are winning important victories and transforming the reproductive rights landscape at the local, state and national levels. With additional resources, reproductive justice organizations could do even more and the movement they are building could have even greater impact. We invite you to consider supporting this new and powerful work.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Vanessa Daniel, Program Advisor
Tides Foundation

Q: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FUND WOMEN OF COLOR-LED WORK?

Building the capacity of Women of Color-led groups working on reproductive justice represents one of the most exciting grantmaking strategies available to funders interested in reproductive health and rights. There are three very important reasons to give this strategy careful consideration.

FIRST, the United States will become a majority people of color nation by the year 2050.¹ Many states have already tipped in this direction. As the demographics shift, we must recognize the importance of building leadership for a more pluralist society and of reaching those who are most affected in diverse communities.

It is now becoming tactically impossible to move the needle on any reproductive health issue without the participation and leadership of Women of Color. We are now at a point in history where we absolutely need a strong, multi-racial movement in order to win on reproductive health, rights and justice in the United States.

SECOND, if one of our objectives as funders is to move resources to those with the greatest need, then it becomes important to address racial disparities in funding. Isn't something amiss when the segment of the population that is experiencing the greatest reproductive health disparities is receiving the least amount of resources to lead on reproductive issues? It is important to know that in the U.S., Women of Color are often more comparable to women in developing countries than they are to their white counterparts here at home. The fact that gaps such as the ones described below have persisted over the years calls the question: Should we be doing more to invest in and empower communities of color?

Compared to white women, in the United States:

- Black women are four times more likely to die from complications of pregnancy² and 23 times more likely to be diagnosed with AIDS.³
- Vietnamese women have five times the rate of cervical cancer.⁴
- Latinas rates of unintended pregnancy and chlamydia are two times higher and three times greater for cervical cancer.⁵

1 U.S. Census Bureau News. Press Release. "An Older and More Diverse Nation by Midcentury." August 14, 2008. <http://www.census.gov/PressRelease/www/releases/archives/population/012496.html>

2 American Medical Association. "State-specific maternal mortality among black and white women: United States, 1987-1996." *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. 1999;282(13):1220-1222.

3 Center for Disease Control, "CDC HIV/AIDS Fact Sheet - HIV/AIDS Among Women." August, 2008; Pg. 2. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/women/resources/factsheets/pdf/women.pdf>

4 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Minority Women's Health - Cervical Cancer." November, 2009. <http://www.womenshealth.gov/minority/asianamerican/cc.cfm>

5 National Cancer Institute, Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Cancer Statistics Reviews, 1975-2003, available at seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2003

- Native women are nearly three times more likely to be sexually assaulted or raped, and lack even the most basic reproductive health care through Indian Health Services (IHS). For example, in the past 30 years, only 25 abortions have been provided to women through IHS nationwide.^{6 7}

THIRD, Women of Color-led groups are leading the way in using a reproductive justice strategy that is proving effective at winning significant policy change. From creating the tipping point to defeating parental notification in California, to securing comprehensive sex education in New Mexico, Chicago and D.C., to banning the practice of shackling of pregnant women in all federal prisons, to winning millions in federal funding to expand reproductive health care access through Indian Health Services. Without question, Women of Color have been essential to some of the most defining victories in the past decade – and they have ensured that those victories effectively address the needs of those who experience the greatest reproductive health disparities.

Q: HOW DO YOU DEFINE WOMEN OF COLOR-LED WORK?

When creating the Catalyst Fund, the Women of Color Working Group used the following definition of “Women of Color-led” as a criterion for organizations and projects that would be eligible for funding:

WOMEN OF COLOR-LED ORGANIZATIONS: (1) organizations with a majority Women of Color board, staff, and volunteers in leadership positions; (2) a Women of Color-led effort that is a core strategic priority within a majority white organization. This organization must have Women of Color in decision making positions at the staff and board levels; (3) a Women of Color-led coalition; or (4) a Women of Color-led effort within a majority male, people of color-led organization. This organization must have Women of Color in decision making positions at the staff and board levels.

In addition, the Working Group noted that when evaluating whether a project or organization is Women of Color-led, it is important to ensure that the Women of Color in leadership are not isolated or tokenized, but rather adequately supported and that the work they are advancing is given central importance within the larger strategic priorities of the organization.

Q: WHAT IS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE (RJ) is a dynamic new strategy that is proving effective in winning policy and systems change to advance reproductive freedom in the United States. One of the most widely cited definitions of reproductive justice is as follows:

⁶ Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, US Department of Justice, Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women, 2000.

⁷ For more statistics on racial disparities in reproductive health please see the UN CERD Shadow Report, “Unequal Health Outcomes in the United States - racial and ethnic disparities in health care treatment and access, the role of social and environmental determinants of health, and the responsibility of the state.” CERD Working Group on Health and Environmental Health. January, 2008. <http://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/Unequal%20Health%20Outcomes%20in%20the%20U.S..pdf>

Reproductive Justice exists when all people have the social, political and economic power and resources to make healthy decisions about our gender, bodies and sexuality for ourselves, our families and our communities. Reproductive Justice aims to transform power inequities and create long-term systemic change, and therefore relies on the leadership of communities most impacted by reproductive oppression. The reproductive justice framework recognizes that all individuals are part of communities and that our strategies must lift up entire communities to support individuals.⁸

Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice

RJ is a strategy that expands the movement for reproductive health and rights from:

- A single issue focus on choice to a broad focus on the full range of reproductive issues that impact and resonate with women's lived experiences.
- From a homogenous leadership to a leadership that is diverse and more reflective of our nation: economically, racially, and generationally.
- From a top-down approach — that counts on change trickling down from professional advocates in the beltway — to a grassroots approach that expects change to surge up from an organized base; a base that can provide direction and backing to professional advocates.
- From an insular to an interconnected movement — bringing other movements like labor to stand up on key reproductive justice issues.

RJ is critical to revitalizing and re-energizing the movement for reproductive freedom by building a broad and organized base of support.

RJ is a framework and strategy that was developed by Women of Color but is not exclusive to Women of Color. In fact, it is now being used by a growing number of white-led organizations, particularly those led by and for low-income women. RJ is not typically a message point for the media or key stakeholders; it is a term to describe a strategic approach to advancing reproductive freedom. RJ organizations share a common strategy but may describe and message their work differently depending on their constituency, geographic location, and the stakeholders they are addressing.

WHAT RJ IS NOT: RJ is not an isolated strategy or in opposition to the work of more mainline reproductive health and rights organizations. It complements strategies to advance reproductive health and reproductive rights.

For more on the distinctions between reproductive justice, reproductive health and reproductive rights approaches, see *A New Vision for Reproductive Justice*, the seminal paper on the RJ framework authored by Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice which is available in the “More Resources” section of our online RJ Toolkit.

⁸ Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice. “A New Vision for Advancing Our Movement.” 2005. http://www.reproductivejustice.org/download/ACRJ_A_New_Vision.pdf

Q: RJ ENCOMPASSES SO MANY REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ISSUES. ISN'T FUNDING THIS WORK DILUTING EFFORTS TO ADVANCE ABORTION RIGHTS?

In campaign after campaign, RJ is proving to be one of the most effective strategies for protecting abortion access and other reproductive rights. In California, Women of Color-led RJ organizations have been essential to the margin of victory to defeat multiple parental notification initiatives that would have blocked young women from accessing abortion without parental consent. It is important to note that the majority of these organizations do not lead with abortion rights in their daily work. This reflects the reality that abortion access, while certainly important to communities of color, it is not typically at the top of the list of reproductive health priorities. California Women of Color-led RJ organizations lead with reproductive health issues that are priorities to their communities, such as the reproductive health impact of environmental toxins, or comprehensive sexuality education in schools. Because they were able to organize a base of support around the reproductive health priorities that most resonate with their communities, they had a base to mobilize when it came time to defeat a statewide parental notification ballot initiative requiring young women to notify parents before obtaining an abortion. The leaders of these RJ organizations have articulated that if they had tried to organize their base by leading with the single issue of abortion, they would not have had as large a base to counter initiatives impeding access to abortion.

A multi-issue approach has also been key in bringing other social justice sectors to take a stand in key reproductive rights campaigns. In California, for example, Women of Color-led RJ organizations campaigned not just to defeat parental notification, but also to defeat a threat to gay marriage and an initiative that would have instituted new draconian requirements for youth and low income people in the criminal justice system. This kind of partnership with other social justice sectors, on a consistent basis over the years, has allowed RJ organizations to develop relationships that they can leverage on key RJ policy campaigns. It was Women of Color-led efforts, for example, that finally moved the California Federation of Labor to endorse a “no” vote on parental notification in California — something no other organization has been able to accomplish. Similarly, in Colorado, where the Latina-led organization COLOR ran a joint campaign to defeat fetal personhood and an anti-affirmative action measure, they were successful in moving many labor unions and immigrant rights groups to take a public stand to defeat fetal personhood. RJ groups across the country have been able to move social justice sectors to stand up on reproductive rights in unprecedented ways.

As we reflect on the effectiveness of RJ in winning on abortion rights, it is also important to examine its success in winning on other reproductive health issues that emerge as priorities for communities of color. It is important to acknowledge that abortion is only one of many reproductive health issues and that to truly build a multi-racial movement we must not only ask what Women of Color are doing to advance abortion rights, but must also ask what all reproductive health and rights organizations are doing to advance the reproductive health priorities of Women of Color.

Q: ISN'T FUNDING "WOMEN OF COLOR-LED WORK" SIMPLY REINFORCING RACIAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

In order to win reproductive freedom, we need to build a strong, organized, multi-racial movement; one that represents the changing demographics of this nation and where a diversity of women have an opportunity to participate and to lead. True unity and progress towards a multi-racial movement will only come when the Women of Color who are already leading this work in their communities have the resources to have an equal seat at the table, to participate, shape the agenda and build multi-racial alliances. Indeed, the strongest examples to date of multi-racial alliances in organizing and policy change have emerged in places where Women of Color-led organizations have had the resources to sit at the policy table with larger reproductive health organizations. Lack of equity in funding hinders their efforts and slows the progress of the entire movement towards a stronger, more unified and effective strategy for achieving reproductive freedom.

Q: HOW CAN I TELL IF A SMALL, GRASSROOTS RJ GROUP IS MAKING AN IMPACT DURING THE GRANT PERIOD? DON'T THEY HAVE TO SECURE A CONCRETE POLICY VICTORY OR ARE THERE OTHER EVALUATION INDICATORS?

The lack of long-term investment in grassroots base-building work for RJ is in large measure responsible for the erosion of reproductive rights at the state level in particular. Conservative forces have understood the importance of such base-building work and invested heavily in support of grassroots organizing at the local level. And over time, such investments paid off in the power and reach of the conservative right. As funders of social justice, including reproductive justice and rights, we need to think in terms of long-term investments.

Grassroots organizing takes time. Some of the most notable policy victories of the past decade have been secured by organizations that have waged multi-year campaigns, and painstakingly built a base of leaders and support. For example, in New Mexico, Young Women United, a small organization founded in 2000 organized for five years without a policy win and then, in 2005 moved the entire state to adopt comprehensive sex education in the public schools. The effectiveness of an organization and the importance of continued investment cannot always be gauged by a very recent policy win. Factors such as geography and political climate must be taken into consideration as each group is evaluated. For example, while a group working in California's more progressive Bay Area may be able to run a short campaign and secure a policy win within a few months, a group working in rural West Virginia or in a conservative Southern state like Georgia may be running a very smart campaign and not achieve a victory for many years.

Although a policy victory may not occur every year, there are benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of organizations. A few indicators against which progress can be measured are as follows:

SUCCESS INDICATORS

- **EXPANSION OF PRIMARY CONSTITUENCY/MEMBERSHIP.** It is important to make the distinction here between primary and secondary constituencies. A primary constituency includes the people actively and consistently involved in the organization, for example members that can be counted on to participate in campaign activities. A secondary constituency may include non-active members on a large listserv or people who are not involved in the organization but who will be positively impacted by a campaign win. The progress of the organization can be mainly measured by the growth and engagement of their primary constituency.
- **INCREASED CAPACITY OF A GROUP TO MOBILIZE ITS CONSTITUENCY TO ACTION.** For example, the ability of an organization to deliver a large number of calls, letters or petitions to pressure a key elected official or other target; to marshal large numbers of people to a rally or demonstration; to deliver spokespeople to key hearings; to orchestrate letter-to-the-editor campaigns from its members, etc.
- **A GROWING NUMBER OF LEADERS.** Grassroots organizations typically have a broader membership base that can be mobilized and engaged and a smaller cadre of leaders who are respected by and accountable to that base. These leaders are the chief spokespersons during campaigns. They make decisions on campaign strategy and direction, forge alliances with key community leaders, and invest large amounts of time in the organization and in deepening its relationship with its members/constituency. They are especially effective if they continually work to cultivate new leaders and expand the leadership cadre. The growth of this cadre demonstrates the strength of an organization and its ability to advance change. Organizational strength can be measured by the degree to which a group is investing in these leaders, through training, development, and providing them opportunities to lead. The number of leaders – on a site visit for example – who can clearly articulate the goals and strategy of key campaigns and that demonstrate a strong sense of ownership for the organization and its direction, are all important indicators of the effectiveness of a grassroots organizing group.
- **INCREASED ALLIANCES AND/OR COALITION WORK WITH OTHER SOCIAL JUSTICE SECTORS.** Moving labor unions, environmental justice groups, or criminal justice reform groups to take an active stand on key reproductive justice issues and policy fights are also significant indicators. Examples of an “active stand” include official endorsements of a reproductive justice policy campaign made by allied organizations; turning out their members to actions/demonstrations to pressure crucial targets; including RJ issues in their organizational platform and/or member education; leveraging their relationships with critical decision makers to advocate for good decisions on RJ and; campaigning alongside RJ groups in key policy campaigns.
- **INCREASED LINKAGES TO NATIONAL RJ ORGANIZATIONS.** Organizations and the movement as a whole are strengthened when local and state-based groups connect their work to that of national “grasstops” reproductive justice organizations. It is important to note that this does not mean that the strategic direction of state-level groups is driven by national organizations working in the Beltway. To the contrary it means that the priorities of local communities are reflected in the platform of national organizations and that state-level organizations receive the information they need to create a tipping point on federal policy campaigns by pressuring members of Congress in their home districts.

- **INCREASED RECIPROCAL PARTNERSHIPS.** Partnerships with traditional reproductive health and rights organizations are especially important. Reaching this benchmark takes cooperation from both RJ organizations and reproductive rights and reproductive health organizations. However RJ groups that are effective at building power are often better positioned to demand and secure a seat at the table with larger organizations and more importantly, to shape the priorities that come out of those tables.
- **EVIDENCE OF GREATER LEADERSHIP AND VISIBILITY IN THE FIELD.** For example, assuming leadership positions within key coalitions and leadership bodies are important indicators.
- **THE ABILITY TO INCREASE AND SUSTAIN HIGHER LEVELS OF GRASSROOTS FUNDING AND REVENUES.** While an organization may be effective at winning campaigns without grassroots funding, developing a diverse funding base that includes grassroots donors is an important measure of organizational strength and sustainability.
- **GROWTH IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS.** Although an organization may be able to win campaigns without strong infrastructure and systems, it is unlikely to sustain its winning streak without them. To stay strong for the long haul they need comprehensive databases for tracking members and donors, compelling websites, effective public education and policy materials, strategic communications, strong financial systems including annual audits for larger organizations, and systems for staff training and development, etc.

Under the “More Resources” Section of our online RJ Toolkit you will find a report by EMERJ (Expanding the Movement for Empowerment and Reproductive Justice) entitled *Movement Building Indicators*.⁹ The report includes a detailed list of indicators, which some funders have found useful as they review progress and evaluate RJ and Women of Color-led work.

⁹ EMERJ. “Movement Building Indicators.” 2010. <http://www.reproductivejustice.org/>

CASE STUDIES

Why Reproductive Justice is a Winning Strategy

Vanessa Daniel, Program Advisor
Tides Foundation

\$300 MILLION SECURED TO EXPAND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR THOUSANDS OF NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

Native women rely on Indian Health Services (IHS) for health care but face tremendous barriers to accessing the services to which they are legally entitled. For the past ten years, the Native American Community Board (NACB) has waged a campaign to address the alarmingly high rates of sexual assault suffered by Native women and girls. A Native woman who seeks care from IHS after a rape typically finds no Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) on duty, no access to Emergency Contraception to prevent pregnancy, no rape kits to collect evidence, no counseling, and no requirement that the practitioner who examines her respond to a subpoena to testify in court. While legally entitled to abortion care under the


Hyde Amendment, she is unlikely to be granted access; in fact, a 2006 NACB study of services provided between 1973 and 2001 revealed that during that nearly 30-year period, IHS performed only 25 abortions nationwide. Moreover, 85 percent of the 350+ IHS sites did not comply with the agency's own official abortion directive; and IHS staff were largely unaware of Native women's rights regarding abortions. As a result, Native women are left without the most basic reproductive health care and unable to secure a conviction against assailants, the vast majority of whom are white men who come onto reservations from surrounding towns.

The Native American Community Board's research prompted Amnesty International to publish a follow-up report and teamed with them to build a 20-member coalition to press for legislative change. Together they secured \$300 million in

funding through the 2009 federal Omnibus Appropriations Act to support tribal law enforcement and for IHS to reduce the rate of sexual assault in Native communities as well as improve services for women who are assaulted. IHS has now invited NACB to sit on its advisory board overseeing implementation of this expansion. NACB has also been invited to the White House on several occasions, and continues to meet with Tina Tchen and other leaders in the Administration about additional measures that can be taken to improve the conditions faced by Native women.

NACB's catalytic work on sexual assault is a striking example of an issue that would not have been visible, and a victory that would not have been possible, without the leadership of Native women.





Despite gains like these, Native women have far to go to reach a level of reproductive health access that most women in the US would consider basic. NACB's major challenge is stretching its limited budget (\$692,000) and staff capacity to take advantage of a host of opportunities that have opened up under the Obama Administration. It is often a challenge to afford the airfare to and from Washington when they are invited to attend critical meetings. It underscores the need for additional funding for groups like NACB that address the needs of the most vulnerable women.

NACB was created in 1985 by Native Americans living on or near the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota to protect and sustain the rights, sovereignty, Life Ways and natural resources of indigenous peoples. NACB's Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center houses a shelter for battered women, a clearinghouse of culturally-specific women's health education materials disseminated to tribes across North America, and several initiatives, including the Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice Program, the Violence Against Women program, and the Dakota language preservation program. NACB uses internet streaming, a weekly show on Lakota talk radio, and print materials to communicate locally and internationally.

These programs improve the health of low income, reservation-based Native women across the country by using community education, activist training and federal advocacy to facilitate legal access to abortion, pregnancy prevention and other reproductive health services.

NACB has also:

- Contributed to the defeat of two attempts at a statewide abortion ban in South Dakota in 2008 and 2009.
- Played a leading role in IHS's decision to discontinue the use of Norplant.
- Convinced the National Council of American Indians (NCAI) in 2003 to pass a resolution supporting expansion of the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to include federal support for sexual assault forensic exams and Sexual Response Team units to serve tribes and villages. The expanded VAWA became law in 2005.
- Secured NCAI passage of a 2005 resolution supporting the development and implementation of sexual assault protocols for IHS emergency rooms and contract healthcare providers, marking tribal leaders' public support of NACB's RJ platform.

YUPIK COMMUNITY WINS BAN ON TOXIC WASTE CAUSING REPRODUCTIVE HARM

Annie Alowa (pictured below) was a respected elder who served her Yupik community on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, as a community health aide for many years. She's standing at the Northeast Cape, where the U.S. military operated a base during the Cold War until 1972. All around her is the "gift" they left behind for her community. Thousands of barrels of toxic waste: PCBs, pesticides, mercury, lead, and asbestos, all left to leak into the Suqi River and coastal waters.

The women took photos of the fish and game that their communities depend on to survive and showed that the animals are full of tumors. Annie watched the reproductive health of the women in her community decline rapidly, with growing incidents of reproductive cancers, involuntary infertility, spontaneous abortions, endometriosis, miscarriages, stillbirths, fetal abnormalities, and other endocrine disorders. She sought out Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT), a Native-led environmental organization and inspired them to start a reproductive justice program.

Founded in 1997, ACAT is a statewide environmental health and environmental justice organization working primarily with Native communities to limit exposure to toxics, protect ecosystems, and hold corporations and the military accountable.

Through five interrelated programs, ACAT organizes scientists, health care providers, youth, native communities, reproductive health and environmental organizations to change local, national and international policies that impact Alaska. ACAT works to secure the right to clean air, clean water, toxic-free food and to assure healing and wellness for communities impacted by environmental toxins. Its core strategies include grassroots organizing, policy advocacy, alliance-building, and litigation supported by scientific research. Alaska is home to 2,000 military and industrial hazardous waste sites, many close to Native Alaskan communities. High pollution levels are compounded by geography, cold climate and a fat-based food web, factors which favor the accumulation of toxins in fish and wildlife and affect the health and fertility of the Native Alaskans who rely on wild foods for subsistence.

In 2005, at the urging of Annie and other leaders, ACAT launched the Alaska Environmental Reproductive Justice Project (AERJP) to change local, national, and international policies regarding environmental contaminants linked to the major RJ concerns of Native villages. AERJP has built a growing network of individuals and ally organizations now engaged in campaigns to change public policy.

ACAT brought the Native community together with medical practitioners, researchers, environmental and reproductive health advocates and began pressing for change. ACAT has blocked pesticide use by Alaskan railroads and stopped the timber industry from spraying herbicides on many areas farmed by Native



communities. On the international level they are an active participant in the Stockholm Convention, a global treaty which has succeeded in banning 12 persistent organic pollutants. ACAT's Executive Director, Pam Miller, was part of a 20-member Coming Clean delegation that briefed the Obama transition team on environmental health issues, particularly persistent organic pollutants.

Annie died of cancer that she attributed to the toxic exposures caused by the military, but the RJ project she began has carried on through the leadership of other women from her community.

There are a million Annies in communities of color across the United States. Because communities of color are disproportionately targeted for dumping and other environmental pollution, and because Women of Color are disproportionately represented in toxic industries such as low-wage factory and farm-work, the reproductive health impact of environmental toxins is a leading reproductive justice issue for Women of Color.

ACTIVISTS WIN A BAN ON THE PRACTICE OF SHACKLING PREGNANT WOMEN IN ALL FEDERAL PRISONS AND OPEN PATHWAYS TO DRUG TREATMENT



Lorna Hogan (pictured at left) is a proud mother of four. When Lorna was a child, she was raped. To numb the pain, she began to self-medicate during her girlhood, first with alcohol, and eventually with crack cocaine. Lorna was ultimately arrested on a drug-related charge and sent to prison, where she served out her sentence without any drug treatment or counseling. At her release, Lorna was dropped off in the street, in her prison jumper, with two bus tokens. She had no idea where her children were.

Unfortunately, Lorna's story is not unusual. Since 1986, the number of women in prison in the United States has risen an alarming 400 percent; for Black women, the figure is 800 percent. Most women in prison are Women of Color and mothers, and most of them have been incarcerated for non-violent offenses and suffer from substance abuse. The vast majority are survivors of sexual abuse. Under current sentencing norms, mothers struggling with substance abuse are more likely to be incarcerated than offered access to rehabilitation or treatment programs.

Only 37 percent of mothers in need of drug treatment with children under the age of 18 receive any kind of treatment services. Additionally, incarcerated mothers often lose their parental rights due to child welfare laws that fast track their children into foster care or adoption. Months after her release, by luck, Lorna met a child welfare worker who placed her into a comprehensive family treatment program where, for the first time, she was able to access therapy to deal with the trauma underlying her substance abuse. While in treatment, she reunited with all of her children and as a family they received comprehensive care. Today, all of Lorna's children are thriving and the eldest are college bound. Lorna is a PTA mom and

the Assistant Director of the Rebecca Project for Human Rights, a reproductive justice organization that, with the leadership of women like Lorna across the country, has won significant gains.

Recent wins include securing a ban on the practice of shackling pregnant women during childbirth in all federal prisons – a victory they are presently working to extend to state and county jails and immigration detention facilities. Most recently, New York, Texas, and New Mexico have adopted bans, joining three other states, California, Illinois, and Vermont, that have statutes regulating the use of restraints on pregnant women. The Rebecca Project has also secured \$145 million in increased federal funds for family treatment and to make this option available to more women. They have also helped to amend draconian state laws, such as Arkansas’ Garret’s law, which track pregnant women or new mothers into prison rather than treatment.

Founded in 2001, the Rebecca Project for Human Rights (RPHR) is a national legal and policy organization that advocates for the human and reproductive rights of women and families in recovery. RPHR challenges the aggressive sentencing of mothers who commit non-violent crimes while suffering from addiction, and advocates for long-term family-based treatment instead of prison time, so that mothers may remain with their children and heal together as a family. RPHR asserts that the practice of imprisoning women for the disease of addiction reinforces an ugly pattern of denying Women of Color the right to care for their children and keep their families intact.

Led by mothers in recovery, RPHR works to change child welfare, criminal justice, reproductive health, and substance abuse policies at the local state and national levels. By amplifying the experience of families to illustrate the larger national need for sensible substance abuse treatment policy and criminal justice reform, the Rebecca Project bridges the gap between policymakers at all levels and the real experiences of women and children.

In 2009, RPHR increased its federal advocacy under the Obama Administration, accepting four invitations to the White House. RPHR Parent Advocates met with First Lady Michelle Obama to discuss sexual violence against girls, White House Director of Public Liaison Tina Tchen, Jennifer Yeager (Special Assistant to Melody Barnes, Director of the President’s Domestic Policy Council), and Kavita Patel (Senior Policy Aide to Valerie Jarrett), to discuss the sexual violence-to-prison pipeline. They discussed alternative sentencing with the White House Council on Women and Girls; expansion of family treatment programs with Roberto Rodriguez, Special Assistant to the President for Education; and new language in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reauthorization that supports mothers with Martha Coven, Office of Mobility and Opportunity. RPHR was also featured on National Public Radio.

These topics are important reproductive justice issues for communities of color. Addressing them brings a large constituency to the movement for reproductive justice and rights.

RJ GROUPS ACT AS THE TIPPING POINT IN THE FIGHT TO DEFEAT ANTI-ABORTION MEASURES IN CALIFORNIA AND COLORADO

Parental notification initiatives, that would require teens to inform their parents before obtaining an abortion, have been put to California voters three times in the past four years. And if conservative forces have their way, 2010 will make it four. Each time the initiatives have been defeated by a narrow margin. In this majority people of color state, many Women of Color-led RJ organizations¹ working together have created the tipping point for victory.

Women of Color-led RJ groups have the expertise and relationships to mobilize communities of color. Their approach was distinct from the mainstream campaign to defeat parental notification in several ways:



- **DIFFERENT MESSAGING:** Women of Color-led organizations crafted a distinct set of messages to resonate with Latinos, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and African Americans respectively. These messages were markedly different from those used by the mainstream campaign. Women of Color-led groups were also critical in ensuring that materials were available in multiple languages. Without the work of Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, for example, there would have been no campaign materials available in Asian languages.
- **TRUSTED MESSENGERS:** Women of Color-led groups leveraged long-standing relationships with messengers that their communities trust — from the ethnic media, to popular radio disc jockeys, to venerated civil rights and labor leaders, to respected faith leaders — to deliver their messages.
- **EXPANDED VOTER OUTREACH:** Instead of following the typical campaign formula of limiting outreach to “likely voters,” Women of Color-led groups reached out to potential voters that mainstream campaigns often write-off, dramatically increasing voter turn-out in precincts with, for example, a high number of immigrants. Upon receiving a call from Women of Color-led RJ groups, many registered voters remarked that although they had been citizens for many years, this was the first time anyone had contacted them regarding an election. In this way, Women of Color-led groups did not just mobilize the existing voter base, they expanded it.
- **CROSS MOVEMENT ALLIANCE BUILDING:** A longstanding thorn in the side of reproductive rights efforts in California has been the unwillingness of organized labor to take a stand with reproductive rights organizations on key policy campaigns. Labor has consistently maintained that reproductive health issues are “personal” concerns and so politically charged that they are “divisive” among the union members they are trying to unite. All of this changed when a Latina-led RJ group, the Dolores Huerta Foundation, spearheaded an effort to force labor to finally take a position on parental notification. Utilizing the huge stature of Dolores Huerta herself in the labor movement as the former right-hand person of the late Cesar Chavez, and tapping into many other long-standing relationships with labor leaders across the state, the organization achieved an unprecedented shift, moving the California Federation of Labor to endorse a no-vote

¹ ACCESS Women’s Health Rights Initiative, ACT for Women and Girls, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, Black Women for Wellness, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, Dolores Huerta Foundation, Khmer Girls in Action, and National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum.

on parental notification. Much more than symbolic, this meant that hundreds of thousands of union members up and down the state received materials urging them to vote down parental notification and educating them on this issue.

- **MULTIPLE-ISSUE WORK:** Women of Color-led RJ groups work across multiple issues. They make the connections between reproductive rights and how a ban on gay marriage impacts the right of LGBT people to form legally recognized families and to parent. They make the link between the criminalization of communities and the gross violation of women's reproductive rights within the criminal justice system—a system in which pregnant women are shackled while in labor and denied basic nutrition and reproductive health care and where parents, particularly teen moms, are separated from their children. Their willingness to broaden their focus and to stand with communities of color and low-income people on a broad range of issues has enabled them to forge powerful alliances with other social justice movements, which are then willing to stand with them on key organizing campaigns. Women of Color-led groups are proving that a broader-issue focus and connectivity revitalizes a movement and expands all women's rights.

The majority of Women of Color-led organizations do not place abortion among the top issues in their organizational platforms. There are other reproductive health issues – such as access to comprehensive sex education, or addressing the reproductive health impacts of environmental toxins – that are more pressing for their communities and that comprise the core policy platforms of their organizations. Because these organizations have accessed some resources, however meager, to organize a strong base of support around the reproductive health issues that most resonate with the communities they serve – they had a base to mobilize on abortion rights – which may not be a top priority but is still important to communities of color. It is also important to note that the RJ framework resonates with a wider number of women across the country in general – including white women. As abortion rights have been chipped away state by state and as anti-abortion forces use a broader framework, RJ is crucial to reversing the trend of erosion on reproductive rights.



REMOVING THE HPV VACCINE MANDATE FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN

A leading member of the National Coalition for Immigrant Women's Rights (NCIWR), the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) recently helped to launch the *Liberation Campaign*, centered on the impact of immigration raids on women and families, with a focus on pre-natal services and the separation of women from their infants at detention centers. Members have had numerous meetings with Homeland Security personnel, co-sponsored a Capitol Hill briefing on the lack of reproductive health services for women detainees, and participated in the Presidential

Transition Team meeting on Immigration. NCIWR also signed on 50 organizations to a letter demanding that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reverse a US Citizenship and Immigration Services' decision to include the HPV (human papilloma virus) vaccine as a mandate for immigrants seeking visas or permanent residence.

In partnership with National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (which served as the lead organizer on the campaign), NLIRH participated in a working group of 35 civil rights, reproductive health, public health, racial justice and youth organizations demanding the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (CIS) remove the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine from its list of mandatory vaccinations for immigrants seeking visas or permanent residence. Many RJ groups opposed the vaccine, which is prohibitively expensive for many immigrant women, because it is a barrier to changing immigration status and continues an ugly legacy of forcing immigrant woman to serve as test subjects for new reproductive drugs and vaccines. The working group targeted the policy of the CDC — which oversees vaccinations and whose direction the CIS follows — directly through a sign on letter, media interviews, a petition and direct advocacy with agency staff. The CDC agreed to lift the mandate on Dec. 14, 2009.

Founded in 1994, NLIRH is the only national Latina-led RJ organization representing a diverse and growing Latina population. NLIRH'S goal is to ensure the fundamental human right to reproductive health for Latinas, their families and communities through public education, policy advocacy, and community mobilization. NLIRH focuses on three key programmatic areas: protecting and expanding access to abortion and other reproductive health services, eliminating reproductive health disparities, and advancing immigrant/Latina women's rights. Its three major policy goals are:

- To restore public funding for abortion by overturning the Hyde Amendment.
- To lift the five-year bar, which blocks people from receiving federal, public benefits such as Supplemental Security Income, Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, State Children's Health Insurance Program, and non-emergency Medicaid during the first five years after they secure qualified immigrant status.
- To prevent the marginalization of abortion and other reproductive health care services in health care reform.

NLIRH is the single largest provider of bilingual resources and technical support to dozens of Latina-led RJ organizations across the US and a leading RJ advocate for immigrant women. NLIRH is also one of four Women of Color-led RJ organizations working in Washington, DC. In addition to the victory on the HPV vaccine, NLIRH was instrumental in passing a NY State anti-shackling law on behalf pregnant women who are incarcerated.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE RJ TOOLKIT CONTACT:

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