

Reproductive Justice is Disability Justice

As we've been working on this primer throughout 2019, we watched state after state pass more and more restrictive legislation on reproductive healthcare options (aka the "abortion bans"). Much has been written about this ongoing struggle, which is still unfolding. We feel it is important to insert our voice, to address the particular impacts on disabled people of color and queer, trans and nonbinary people with disabilities.

We are enraged by the recent "abortion bans" that are targeting people's ability to make safe and autonomous reproductive choices throughout the US. This legislation impacts us all and especially harms women, non-binary, trans, and intersex people, and lands heavily on disabled people's body autonomy.

The violent control and oppression of people's bodies in the US did not begin with this legislation. We know this violent control began with exploration, conquest and colonization of Indigenous lands and practices, and through chattel slavery and dehumanization through torture of Black people. Violence and oppression is found in all the systems of the US. We have seen this through the infliction of boarding/retraining schools on Indigenous people. We have witnessed state-sponsored eugenic programs in 32 states and Puerto Rico. The forced sterilization of US citizens, prison inmates, disabled people, and immigrant parents are direct violations of human rights and choice. Violence and oppression looks like COINTELPRO and the "war on drugs" as well as the violent and unjust response to the AIDS crisis. We have seen state violence and oppression in the constant undermining of Black enterprises and the rampant violence against Black trans women. Historical attempts to control "deviant" bodies show that reproductive choices must be understood as a human rights issue. Access to information, quality healthcare, and autonomy in decision-making are essential for the well-being of all.

Recent attempts to ban abortions have led to many non-consensual conversations about women, trans, and non-binary people's bodies. In these discussions, we must remember how disability justice values an intersectional analysis which requires us to consider the complexities of reproductive justice in the context of ableism. Choosing when to become a parent is a basic principle of reproductive justice. On one hand, the fear of disability has been used as a tool to manipulate individuals' reproductive choices, sometimes causing people to opt for selective abortions to avoid disability, which is in line with eugenics. Simultaneously, disabled people have often been

forced to terminate pregnancies under the pretense that we cannot be good parents because we are disabled. Additionally, because of the isolation of ableism, people with disabilities will be less likely to find safe options to terminate pregnancies when they choose. This context, along with the struggle of disabled people to obtain comprehensive sex education and healthcare, means these abortion bans will be catastrophic for disabled folks.

Abortions will occur regardless if they are legal or not, but these laws are an act of violence particularly against poor and working-class individuals who will be unable to negotiate around the legislation and instead will be forced into unsafe practices to terminate their pregnancies. In some situations, pregnant people have already been criminalized and imprisoned for miscarriage or having been perceived to terminate their pregnancies, and these laws only continue to incarcerate more vulnerable populations. These laws specifically harm communities of color, as Black and brown people are always disproportionately impacted by criminalization.

These abortion bans may try to control our bodies, but women, non-binary, trans, and disabled people are not objects to be contained or manipulated. We are human beings that deserve care and choices, and we will not allow our autonomy to be denied. As such, we fully support reproductive choices that best suit each individual's context and needs. This is reproductive justice. We all deserve body autonomy, and to make the best choice for ourselves and our future.

[Image description: A Black man sits with his head turned to the left. He is looking into a video recorder, which is held by a man who is standing and dressed in all black, including a black ski mask. To the right of the Black man is a person wearing a white labcoat, who is holding a pair of calipers around the man's left ear and holding a stethoscope to his heart. Pictured: Ralph Dickinson, Leroy Moore and seeley quest, photo ©Richard Downing, 2009.]

[Image description: A hand-drawn set of teeth with a front tooth missing, on the edge of a box that contains the words: "There is a lot of sexual violence that happens in the medical industrial complex. We are taught as disabled people from a very early age that we need to be compliant with those we are receiving care from. So fighting back against abuse goes against that lesson that we learned as children." – Sofia Webster]