

## REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Our beliefs in upholding the human rights of all and in sexuality as a gift to be celebrated call us into the reproductive justice movement. Families, relationships, and our sense of beloved community enrich our shared lives and remind us of the importance of healthy sexuality within supportive social and political environments. Our commitments to love, acceptance, freedom of conscience, and multiculturalism inspire us in working toward a more just world.

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 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.

As Unitarian Universalists, we embrace the reproductive justice framework, which espouses the right to have children, not have children, and parent children in safe and healthy environments (SisterSong). To this we add that all people have the right to bodily autonomy and self-expression with regards to their gender and sexuality

### 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. One of the first Statements of Conscience addressed "Economic Injustice, Poverty and Racism" (2000). With programs such as Welcoming Congregations, Journey Toward Wholeness, Jubilee, and Beyond Categorical Thinking, our congregations, members, and the Association worked on implementing those beliefs. We have long been leaders in the comprehensive sexuality education movement as well, offering education across the lifespan within our congregations (About Your Sexuality, then Our Whole Lives). We also advocated for the same in the public sphere.

Rooted in our work on women's rights, reproductive rights, and a commitment to multiculturalism and anti-oppression, Unitarian Universalists came to the reproductive justice movement at a critical moment in history. The reproductive justice movement, with leadership from a women-of-color reproductive justice collective known as SisterSong, 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 unequal implementation of laws, unequal

45 incarceration rates, prohibitions imposed on ex-felons, and economic insecurity.

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47 The reproductive justice movement envisions the liberation of people of all genders, sexual  
48 orientations, gender identities, classes, and cultural and racial identities. Such liberation  
49 requires living wages, safe and supported housing, high quality medical and reproductive  
50 health care, affordable legal representation, paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and  
51 control of reproductive choices.

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53 Because of its historically Anglo/White dominant culture, Unitarian Universalism tends to be  
54 culturally white and has not always responded in ways most helpful to disenfranchised,  
55 minority communities out of ignorance rather than malice. Thus, as participants in the  
56 Reproductive Justice movement, Unitarian Universalists must often take their lead from, act in  
57 solidarity with, and be accountable to partnership with communities of color, using their  
58 positions of power in support of those communities' priorities. The reproductive justice  
59 framework "represents a shift for women advocating for control of their bodies -- from a  
60 narrower focus on legal access and individual choice... to a broader analysis of racial, economic,  
61 cultural, and structural constraints on [their] power. Reproductive justice addresses the social  
62 reality of inequality, specifically, the inequality of opportunities that [women of color] have to  
63 control [their] reproductive destiny." (From "Why is Reproductive Justice Important for Women  
64 of Color?" [on the SisterSong website](#)). Both those affected and their allies have important roles  
65 to play. Unitarian Universalists are laying the groundwork for the transformative power of  
66 multicultural organizing in partnership with reproductive justice organizations and leaders,  
67 looking to those most affected for leadership.

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### 69 THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

70 As Unitarian Universalists we covenant to uphold our sixth principle, which affirms the goal of  
71 peace, liberty, and justice for all. Liberty and justice includes our bodies. We are all embodied,  
72 sexual beings with varying abilities, preferences, and identities. Unitarian Universalism calls us  
73 to advocate for the positive expression of sexuality, including choices about reproduction and  
74 nurturing, and for a culture of respect and empowerment. Our commitment to liberty and  
75 justice calls us to support and partner with historically oppressed communities as we work  
76 together to build the world we dream about. In order to achieve peace, liberty, and justice,  
77 Unitarian Universalists must listen to and follow the lead of the marginalized and  
78 disadvantaged, reach outside our cultural assumptions, and honestly and humbly acknowledge  
79 our own shortcomings.

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81 Unitarian Universalists support gender equity, positive sexuality, diverse sexual expression, and  
82 the full flowering of nurturing relationships and families. We affirm the individual's right to  
83 choose and recognize that such choices are influenced by social and political systems as well as  
84 by factors such as racial/cultural identity, economic status, immigration/citizenship status,  
85 relationship with the criminal justice system, health status, and ability. Our religious tradition  
86 directs us to respect the diversity of faith traditions that surround us and insists that no singular  
87 religious viewpoint or creed guide the policies of our governments. We also recognize,

88 however, that the use of patriarchal, sex-negative and oppressive ideologies in the name of  
89 religion can limit liberty and justice.

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

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96 **ACTIONS**

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

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101 As individuals we can

- 102 ➤ Study reproductive justice issues, including sexuality, gender identity, classism, and racism.
- 103 ➤ Acknowledge personal biases and stories.
- 104 ➤ Work to accept one's own body, sexuality, and abilities.
- 105 ➤ Adopt spiritual practices that contribute to self-care.
- 106 ➤ Advocate for reproductive justice and related issues through op-ed pieces, letters to the  
107 editor, letters and visits to legislators, and direct action.
- 108 ➤ Volunteer with organizations such as Planned Parenthood, abortion clinics, women's  
109 shelters, and child and family community support centers.
- 110 ➤ Protest violations of basic human rights.
- 111 ➤ Support reproductive health/abortion clinics that are experiencing demonstrations.
- 112 ➤ Effect positive change within our own social circles and professions.
- 113 ➤ Join SisterSong or other reproductive justice groups as a member or an ally member.
- 114 ➤ Consider candidates' positions on these issues when voting.
- 115 ➤ Work to eliminate barriers to services (economic, educational, language, accessibility, etc.).
- 116 ➤ Provide leadership in our congregation and community on these issues.
- 117 ➤ Financially contribute to organizations that help women fund abortions and that advocate  
118 for reproductive justice issues, including the social determinants underlying racism,  
119 classism, sexism, homophobia, and other oppressions.

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121 In our relationships we can

- 122 ➤ Respect all people and their decisions, even those we disagree with.
- 123 ➤ Minister to one another around reproductive health issues.
- 124 ➤ Be open and listen to others' stories, practicing acceptance for other life experiences and  
125 lived realities.
- 126 ➤ Accept people of all abilities, identities, and generations as sexual beings.
- 127 ➤ Accompany others wanting support (i.e. during abortion, while seeking government  
128 assistance, making decisions for their families, during childbirth).
- 129 ➤ Teach children and youth about and model healthy sexuality and relationships.
- 130 ➤ Seek and accept leadership from people most affected by reproductive injustice.

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132 In our congregations we can

- 133 ➤ Form a Reproductive Justice group, task force, or committee.
- 134 ➤ Invite SisterSong or other reproductive justice groups such as The National Latina Institute
- 135 for Reproductive Health to conduct reproductive justice trainings.
- 136 ➤ Connect religious professionals and lay leaders with organizations and networks that
- 137 promote reproductive and economic justice and human rights.
- 138 ➤ Connect members and friends of our congregations to affinity groups, resources, and
- 139 education in our Association and communities.
- 140 ➤ Expect religious professionals and lay leaders to participate in reproductive justice-related
- 141 education and training.
- 142 ➤ Provide ministry and pastoral care that is inclusive of all people and reproductive justice
- 143 issues.
- 144 ➤ Offer worship, discussion, and small group ministry on reproductive justice issues.
- 145 ➤ Develop and promote congregational statements on reproductive justice.
- 146 ➤ Provide spaces, programs, and teaching for community groups working on reproductive
- 147 justice issues.
- 148 ➤ Provide education to children, youth and adults that is age, ability, and identity appropriate.
- 149 ➤ Join with state legislative ministry organizations and interfaith networks in their advocacy
- 150 for reproductive rights or organize such advocacy.
- 151 ➤ Communicate reproductive justice information using the congregation's virtual community
- 152 networks, newsletters, and orders of service.
- 153 ➤ Implement Safe Congregations guidelines and practices.
- 154 ➤ Continue Welcoming Congregation advocacy and education efforts related to gender and
- 155 sexuality.
- 156 ➤ Reach out and participate in interfaith and secular work on racism, classism, gender and/or
- 157 sexual health issues.
- 158 ➤ Accept breastfeeding in our shared spaces.

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160 As an Association we can

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

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