

## REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Discussion on the proposed Statement of Conscience takes place at the Mini-Assembly on Thursday from 1:15 – 4:15PM in B110-112 of the Oregon Convention Center. Amendments may be introduced only as proposed at the Mini-Assembly.

1 As Unitarian Universalists, we embrace the reproductive justice framework, which espouses the human  
 2 right to have children, not to have children, to parent the children one has in healthy environments and  
 3 the human rights to bodily autonomy and to express one’s sexuality freely. Reproductive Justice is the  
 4 term created by black women in 1994 to bridge the gap between reproductive rights and other social  
 5 justice movements. Those women became SisterSong and have explained that the reproductive justice  
 6 framework “represents a shift for women advocating for control of their bodies -- from a narrower focus  
 7 on legal access and individual choice... to a broader analysis of racial, economic, cultural, and structural  
 8 constraints on [their] power. Reproductive justice addresses the social reality of inequality, specifically,  
 9 the inequality of opportunities that [women of color] have to control [their] reproductive destiny.”<sup>1</sup> To the  
 10 Reproductive Justice framework, we as Unitarian Universalists add that all people have the right to self-  
 11 expression with regards to gender and sexuality and the right to live free from sexual violence, intimate  
 12 partner violence, and exploitation including sexual and reproductive exploitation.

13 The world we envision includes social, political, legal, and economic systems that support everyone’s  
 14 freedom of reproductive choice and expression of gender identity and sexuality. In such a world all  
 15 communities are places of equality, abundance and safety, free from violence, oppression, and hazardous  
 16 environments. This world includes access to affordable, culturally and developmentally appropriate, and  
 17 safe child care and health care. In our vision everyone has access to accurate, safe, healthy, and culturally-  
 18 appropriate reproductive health services and information about sexuality and family planning.

#### 19 History

20 Our faith tradition has a long history of progressive witness for freedom and justice. Soon after the  
 21 merger of Universalism and Unitarianism, the new Association (1961) adopted statements in support  
 22 of civil rights and the rights of women. In time, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
 23 added advocacy for those facing oppression based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and  
 24 expression. We have offered sexuality education across the lifespan within our congregations, and have  
 25 advocated for these beliefs in the public sphere.

26 The reproductive justice movement emerged because neither the predominantly white middle class  
 27 women’s rights and reproductive rights movements nor the predominately male civil rights movement  
 28 addressed the unique range of issues that women of color faced. Those issues have included forced  
 29 sterilization, forced contraception, and higher rates of removal of children due to accusations of abuse  
 30 or neglect. These issues, coupled with systemic racism, have frequently made parenting or co-parenting  
 31 more difficult due to many factors including but not limited to unequal implementation of laws, unequal  
 32 incarceration rates, prohibitions imposed on ex-felons, and economic insecurity.

33 The reproductive justice movement envisions the liberation of people of all genders, sexual orientations,  
 34 ability levels, gender identities, classes, and cultural and racial identities. Such liberation requires living  
 35 wages, safe and supported housing, high quality and comprehensive medical and reproductive health  
 36 care, affordable legal representation, paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and control of personal  
 37 reproductive decisions as well as accurate information about sexuality and reproduction, and absence of  
 38 individual and institutional violence.

1 From “Why is Reproductive Justice Important for Women of Color?” on the SisterSong website.

39 As participants in the Reproductive Justice movement, Unitarian Universalists commit to take the  
 40 lead from, act in solidarity with, and be accountable to communities of color and other marginalized  
 41 groups, using our positions of power in support of those communities' priorities. Both those affected  
 42 and their allies have important roles to play. Unitarian Universalists are laying the groundwork for the  
 43 transformative power of multicultural organizing in partnership with reproductive justice organizations  
 44 and leaders, looking to those most affected for leadership. We will use our position to speak loudly in the  
 45 religious arena, as the religious voice has often been used to limit access to reproductive justice.

#### 46 THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

47 As Unitarian Universalists we covenant to uphold our seven principles. The first, second and sixth  
 48 principles are the most applicable to Reproductive Justice. We are all sexual beings with varying abilities,  
 49 preferences, and identities. Unitarian Universalism calls us to advocate for the positive expression  
 50 of sexuality, including choices about reproduction and nurturing, and for a culture of respect and  
 51 empowerment. Our commitment to our principles calls us to support and partner with historically  
 52 oppressed communities as we work together to build the world we dream about. In order to embody our  
 53 principles, we as Unitarian Universalists must listen to and follow the lead of women from the affected  
 54 communities and reach outside our cultural assumptions.

55 Unitarian Universalists support gender equity, positive sexuality, diverse sexual expression and the  
 56 individual's right to make reproductive choices. Such choices are influenced by social and political  
 57 systems as well as by factors such as racial/cultural identity, economic status, immigration/citizenship  
 58 status, relationship with the criminal justice system, health status, and ability. Our religious tradition  
 59 directs us to respect the diversity of faith traditions that surround us and insists that no singular religious  
 60 viewpoint or creed guide the policies of our government.

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

#### 65 ACTIONS

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

69 As individuals we can

- 70 • Study reproductive justice issues, including sexuality, gender identity, classism, ability level, and  
 71 racism.
- 72 • Acknowledge personal biases and stories.
- 73 • Work to accept one's own body, sexuality, and abilities.
- 74 • Adopt spiritual practices that contribute to self-care.
- 75 • Advocate for reproductive justice and related issues through op-ed pieces, letters to the editor,  
 76 letters and visits to legislators, and direct action.
- 77 • Volunteer with and/or provide financial support to organizations that provide reproductive health  
 78 services at little or no cost, abortion clinics, women's shelters, and child and family community  
 79 support centers.
- 80 • Protest violations of basic human rights.
- 81 • Support reproductive health/abortion clinics that are experiencing demonstrations.
- 82 • Effect positive change within our own social circles and professions.
- 83 • Join reproductive justice groups as a member or an ally member.
- 84 • Consider candidates' positions on these issues when voting.
- 85 • Work to eliminate barriers to services (economic, educational, language, accessibility, etc.).
- 86 • Provide leadership in our congregation and community on these issues.

- 87 • Financially contribute to organizations that advocate for reproductive justice issues, including the  
88 social determinants underlying racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and other oppressions.  
89 • Work to eliminate legal restrictions on adoption and foster care for LGBTIQ families.
- 90 In our relationships we can  
91 • Respect all people and their decisions regarding reproduction even those with whom we disagree.  
92 • Minister to one another around reproductive health and reproductive justice issues.  
93 • Be sensitive to others' stories, respecting their life experiences and lived realities.  
94 • Accept people of all abilities, identities, orientations, and generations as sexual beings.  
95 • Accompany anyone wanting support (i.e. while seeking government assistance, in making decisions  
96 for their families about pregnancy, during abortions, and during childbirth).  
97 • Teach children and youth about and model healthy sexuality and relationships.  
98 • Seek and accept leadership from people most affected by reproductive injustice.
- 99 In our congregations we can  
100 • Form a reproductive justice group, task force, or committee.  
101 • Invite reproductive justice groups to share their understanding and expertise, and/or conduct  
102 reproductive justice trainings.  
103 • Connect religious professionals and lay leaders with organizations and networks that promote  
104 reproductive and economic justice and human rights.  
105 • Expect religious professionals and lay leaders to participate in reproductive justice-related  
106 education and training.  
107 • Provide ministry and pastoral care that is inclusive of all people and reproductive justice issues.  
108 • Offer worship, discussion, and small group ministry on reproductive justice issues.  
109 • Develop and promote congregational statements on reproductive justice.  
110 • Provide spaces, programs, and teaching for community groups working on reproductive justice  
111 issues.  
112 • Provide education to children, youth and adults that is age, ability, and identity appropriate.  
113 • Join with state legislative ministry organizations and interfaith networks in their advocacy for  
114 reproductive rights or organize such advocacy.  
115 • Communicate reproductive justice information using the congregation's virtual community  
116 networks, newsletters, and orders of service.  
117 • Implement Safe Congregations guidelines and practices.  
118 • Continue Welcoming Congregation advocacy and education efforts related to gender and sexuality.  
119 • Reach out and participate in interfaith and secular work on racism, classism, gender and/or sexual  
120 health issues.  
121 • Welcome breastfeeding in our shared spaces.
- 122 As an Association we can  
123 • Publicly witness for reproductive justice.  
124 • Advocate for just legislation and policies and the rights of families and individuals at the state and  
125 federal levels.  
126 • Advocate for the right to access comprehensive reproductive health information and services.  
127 • Support state legislative ministry organizations in their work that supports reproductive justice.  
128 • Provide curricula, resources, current information, and networking opportunities that congregations  
129 can use in their reproductive justice education and advocacy efforts.  
130 • Collaborate with other faith-based and secular organizations working for reproductive justice and  
131 related issues.  
132 • Present reproductive justice workshops at district/regional meetings.
- 133 With open minds, helping hands, and loving hearts, we work toward reproductive justice, and commit to  
134 replacing insecurity with safety, fear with acceptance, judgment with love, and shame with compassion.