

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE TIMELINE
Groundwork Trainer's Notes



Summary

This exercise helps to build a shared understanding of reproductive oppression and reproductive justice.

Goals

- To begin to build a shared language and analysis of reproductive justice
- To build skills to identify reproductive justice issues
- To build understanding of core aspects of reproductive justice

Agenda Outline

Content	Format	Time
1. Introductions and Overview	Presentation	10 minutes
2. Gallery Walk	Pairs, large group discussion	15 minutes
3. Debrief Timeline	Large group discussion	15 minutes
4. Strategies of Reproductive Oppression	Large group discussion	15 minutes
5. Definition and Core Elements of Reproductive Justice	Large group discussion	20 minutes
6. Stories of Resistance	Individual, pairs and large group discussion	20 minutes
7. Tips and Tricks for Trainers	Large group brainstorm and presentation	30 minutes
	Total Time	1 hour minutes

Materials needed

- Reproductive Justice timeline slides and tape
- Blank timeline slides
- Reproductive Justice debrief slides
- Flip chart and markers
- Power Point projector and computer (optional)
- Copies of Reproductive Justice Timeline Hand Out
- Copies of Reproductive Justice Definition Hand Out

Introduce Timeline (5 minutes)

Trainer makes the following points to start:

- This timeline provides a look at issues of reproductive justice and oppression experienced by various communities, particularly by poor women, women of color and queer folks.
 - **REMIND** participants this is not an exhaustive review of every single reproductive justice but is only a sampling of select events.

- Exercises like this are helpful because they show the historic and current ways that communities are impacted by government, political events, and cultural events.
- Timelines are also a way to share our history of resistance, and tell the story of the ways people affected by these issues have resisted in small and big ways and have succeeded in creating social change.

Gallery Walk (20 minutes)

Trainer instructs:

- Find a partner, ideally someone that you don't know, and tour the timeline. Feel free to chat as you tour, once you're done take a seat.

Large group debrief or dyads (15 minutes)

Flip chart the following questions, one per page. Write up people's answers as the discussion moves forward:

- What did you learn or what was surprising about the timeline?
- What are some of the messages you see in the timeline? (ex message: women of color's bodies are test sites)
- What commonalities do you see across communities? What experiences are shared by multiple communities? Which communities in particular are being targeted by reproductive oppression?

Strategies of Reproductive Oppression (15 minutes)

This section may be done using a computer and projector or may be done by hand writing each method of reproductive oppression on flip chart paper.

Provide the method of oppression and give its definition, then ask for examples from the timeline. Wrap up each method of oppression with the examples provided below.

Trainer says: Through the timeline, we can see that communities have been controlled in a variety of ways from expressing their full reproductive freedom.

1) Nickel and Dimed (Economic marginalization) – Groups of people are restricted from participating in and benefitting from mainstream economic activities such as bank loans, family tax credits, welfare benefits. In addition, economic benefits and support are withheld.

- When welfare reform was passed, limiting funding and restricting eligibility, many single mothers of color went unsupported. Programs with proven effective strategies of pulling people out of poverty were shut down, such as supporting poor people through schooling.
- Low income black women are stereotyped as "welfare queens", lazy, irresponsibly fertile and abusing the welfare system

2) Separate and Unequal (Political subordination) – Groups of people do not have power to decide for themselves and are not allowed to be part of the decision-making process of policies that impact their reproductive lives.

- Women and LGBT people of color have been historically excluded from policy-making groups which have passed laws and policies that directly impact them, such as anti-miscegenation and sodomy laws
- The Center for Disease & Control's official definition and description of HIV & AIDS excluded women's symptoms, thus early HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs denied access to women.

3) Melting Pot (Assimilation) – The reproductive knowledge, attitudes and behavior of groups of people are demonized and are portrayed through cultural references as unnatural, inhumane or immoral.

- Native American communities were discouraged from practicing traditional child rearing practices, like the use of cradle boards (a form of swaddling).

4. Leave it to Beaver (Regulation of families) – The ability of certain groups of people to form, make decisions about and support their families are restricted and/ or controlled by other agencies

- LGBTQ people are prevented from marrying or forming families
- Low income single mothers are coerced to marry a man in order to access welfare benefits.

5. Carry a Big Stick (Perpetration and/or threat of violence) – Harm or threat of harm is inflicted upon certain groups of people just because of who they are. The harm can be physical, sexual, psychological or spiritual violence

- Lesbians and trans youth of color are sexually harassed and told they may be raped to "turn them straight"
- American Indian and Alaska Native women suffer a higher rate of rape and sexual assault than any other group of people in the United States.

6. I'm the Boss of You (Control of bodies, gender and sexuality) – Certain groups of people are stopped from determining and expressing their own bodies, gender identities, sexual preferences and orientations

- Incarcerated trans persons are assigned to prisons based on their genitalia instead of their expressed gender identity
- Pregnant women, often poor and women of color, who've used drugs are criminalized and imprisoned rather than given treatment.

Defining Reproductive Justice (10 minutes)

This section may be done using a computer and projector or may be done by hand writing each definition on flip chart paper.

Trainer says: The methods of control we just talked about lead to reproductive oppression.

(FLIPCHART) Reproductive oppression refers to the unequal outcomes related to reproductive health and wellness that marginalized communities experience.

(FLIPCHART) Consider these facts:

- Youth age 15-24 represent only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the sexually active population but make up almost $\frac{1}{2}$ of the new STI's reported annually
- Although African-Americans make up only approximately 13% of the U.S. population, they accounted for one-half of the estimated new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in 2004 (Alan Guttmacher Institute)
- American Indian and Alaska Native women suffer a higher rate of rape and sexual assault than any other group of people in the United States. (Dept. of Justice, BJS 2004)
- In 46 states, in DC, and in federal prisons, women may be confined at any time during their pregnancy up to and including active labor. Pregnant women may be subjected to leg irons, shackles, belly chains, or handcuffs even during labor and delivery.
- Women make up 96% of the workforce in nail salons. In CA, 80% of the workforce is Vietnamese. These workers are often exposed to a range of toxins during their 10-14 hour days; most of the 10,000 chemicals used in the cosmetology industry have not been tested by any independent agency.

Trainer asks: What are some of the ways in which your community experiences reproductive oppression?

(FLIPCHART) Trainer says: Reproductive Justice will be achieved when all people have the economic, social, and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our bodies, gender, and sexuality, and families for ourselves and our communities in all areas of our lives.

Trainers discuss: The critical elements here are that as reproductive oppression is perpetuated and held up by multiple strategies, so will the solutions to build reproductive justice. They cannot be political or legislative solutions alone pushed by paid lobbyists, they will need to address the economic, cultural, social and safety needs of the communities targeted and the different ways that multiple systems of oppression are reinforced.

Core Elements of Reproductive Justice

Trainer says: What aspects of the work is then lifted up and emphasized in a reproductive justice framework? A Reproductive Justice framework incorporates the following Core Aspects

- Intersectional analysis, examining how multiple systems of oppression come to bear on an issue and its impact on multiple targeted communities
- Focus on the control and regulation of Gender, body, sexuality and families
- Working towards Social change at individual, community, institutional, and societal levels
- Strengthening and being accountable to the Leadership of communities most affected
- Linking individuals to community
- Systemic Change

The Power of RJ

Trainer says: When diverse social justice groups are able to build a shared language and analysis around reproductive justice, it can open up a range of opportunities for movement-building. Developing and using a RJ lens in your work can:

- **Create awareness:** For folks living and working in a similar community to yours, who may not have previously seen or thought about issues of RJ in their communities, will become more aware of RJ issues that might be impacting their own communities.

Example: When a Native American reservation-based environmental justice group examines the effects of uranium tailings site, an RJ lens will allow them to investigate the impact on the maternal and infant outcomes of nearby residents.

- **Make connections across communities & fostering alliance:** Seeing that the RJ issues your community is experiencing are similar to the ones impacting other communities will help foster alliances between communities that may have not previously existed. This allows us to reach out and make connections across different communities, support each other and figure out ways to work together.

Example: When a LGBT youth of color group pushes back on the gentrification they've experienced - being displaced from increasingly upscale neighborhoods their members often hung out at, they find immigrant communities of color being similarly pushed out of their residences and businesses. It provides a starting place for conversation for these new allies.

- **Support organizing:** By learning about how other groups are organizing to fight reproductive oppression in their communities, we hope that activists and organizations will be inspired to take action to addresses similar issues in their own communities.

Example: A large migrant workers rights group forges a relationship with a gay rights organization, to learn from their successful campaign and lobbying experience in pushing a nondiscrimination bill through state legislature.

- **Change policy:** From analyzing existing policies to creating and implementing new ones, understanding the nuances of reproductive justice within specific communities allows us to make real changes in the lived experiences of the communities most impacted by reproductive oppression, rather than assuming that all communities are or will be affected equally.

Example:

A criminal justice organization can work to have an institutional policy that prohibits "cruel and unjust treatment to prisoners" be applied consistently to trans prisoners. Unjust treatment can be interpreted to include the withholding of medication, which should allow trans prisoners to receive their hormonal treatments.

- **Share resources and organizing models:** Groups that are, or are thinking about, organizing for reproductive justice in their own communities can learn from the experience of

others, build coalitions and alliances from a broad array of social justice community partners, and seek support and resources from non-traditional allies.

Example:

A reproductive health/rights organization chooses to support a campaign on immigrant rights that is fighting back an anti-ESL ballot measure. They understand it disproportionately impacts immigrant/ refugee women of color and their access to healthcare and safety for themselves and their families. They will educate their base on this issue with a mailing and an email blast.

Stories of Resistance (15 min)

Trainer instructs: Draw a time or moment in their life when they realized, learned about, heard of, witnessed or experienced a form of reproductive oppression and realized this is something they wanted to fight against. Draw the form of resistance they did or know of. Give them 5 minutes to do so.

Ask everyone to pair up with someone they don't know and share the illustration made. Give them 5 minutes to do so.

When all pairs are done with their sharings, ask for 3-5 folks to share their responses. Ask them to post these drawings onto the timeline at the appropriate date/ year.

Tips and Tricks for Trainers

30 minutes

SAY: So let's give a big round of applause to Taryn and Jennifer for jumping in and agreeing to be trainers today!

ASK: Has anyone trained the RJ timeline yet? What are your tricks for the group?

Tips on using the RJ 101 curriculum (flip chart)

- Make the timeline local by adding your own history
- Don't be defensive
- No more than 50 slides
- Be prepared for questions
- Say I don't know
- Give yourself enough time (at least 90 minutes)

Creating a local timeline

ASK: What do you want to think about when creating your own slides? What do you want to keep in mind?

- Identify a range of dates, not just events in the past ten years
- Find both victories and oppressive moments
- Make sure to put your own organizations founding in the timeline
- Identify events broadly (not just in your organizations issue area)
- Try to find images that correspond to the events