



FACT SHEET

If You Really Care About Reproductive Justice, You Should Care About Transgender Rights!

September 2015

The Reproductive Justice (RJ) movement places reproductive health and rights within a social justice and human rights framework.¹ The movement supports the right of individuals to have the children they want, raise the children they have, and plan their families through safe, legal access to abortion and contraception. In order to make these rights a reality, the movement recognizes that RJ will only be achieved when all people have the economic, social, and political power to make healthy decisions about their bodies, sexuality, and reproduction.²

Reproductive justice demands that *all* people, not just cisgender people, have these rights. But systematic oppression and countless socioeconomic barriers bar many transgender people from obtaining the economic, social, and political power fundamental to reproductive justice. Transgender individuals can face stigma and discrimination in all aspects of life. In a recent report, 63% of transgender and gender non-conforming respondents reported experiencing an act of discrimination that had a major impact on their quality of life and financial or emotional stability.³ Nearly a quarter of respondents experienced three or more major life-disrupting acts of discrimination, such as loss of a job due to bias, eviction due to bias, or incarceration due to gender identity.⁴ Basic human needs, such as access to quality health care, economic security, and the ability to live free from violence, are essential to reproductive justice but are not a reality for many transgender individuals.

Reproductive Justice Requires Transgender People Have Access to Comprehensive Health Care

Transgender people encounter high rates of discrimination in health care. Often, transgender individuals face stigma when seeking medical care, and many are refused care or denied insurance coverage simply because of their gender identity. Twenty-eight percent of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals report facing harassment in medical settings, and 19% report being refused medical care altogether due to their transgender status, with even higher numbers among communities of color.⁵ As a result, 48% of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals report postponing seeking care when sick or injured and 50% report postponing or avoiding preventive care. This reluctance often extends to seeking reproductive health care.⁶

Barriers to health care coverage often mean transgender people must either pay out of pocket for or go without medically necessary care. For example, health insurance companies often automatically deny transgender individuals coverage for services because the person's sex does not match the sex for which the service is recommended. Health insurance companies may deny coverage to a transgender woman who needs a prostate exam or a transgender man who needs a mammogram. However, new guidance makes clear that the law requires insurers to cover preventive services if a provider finds it is necessary.⁷ In addition, many health plans exclude coverage for medically necessary transition related care.⁸ The Department of Health and Human Services issued new proposed anti-discrimination regulations that would make it illegal for plans to categorically exclude gender transition-related coverage.⁹

Accessing reproductive health care can be particularly difficult for transgender people. Discrimination and coverage restrictions prevent many transgender individuals from getting appropriate care. In addition, many transgender individuals are reluctant to seek reproductive care because of stigma. One study showed that half of transgender men did not receive annual pelvic exams, in part because of discomfort with the physical exam and finding a medical provider with whom they were comfortable.¹⁰

Reproductive Justice Means Economic Justice for Trans Women

Economic justice is essential to achieving reproductive justice, yet transgender people are often unable to obtain economic security. Transgender and gender non-conforming people almost universally report harassment and mistreatment on the job.¹¹ Nearly half report having been fired, denied a promotion, or not having been hired because of their gender identity.¹² As a result, unemployment for transgender and gender non-conforming workers is twice the rate for the population as a whole.¹³

In addition, transgender individuals face pay discrimination in the workplace. Studies suggest the earnings of transgender women workers fall by nearly a third following transition.¹⁴ Even though transgender individuals are more likely than the general population to have a college education, they are four times more likely to have a household income under \$10,000 per year (15% vs. 4%).¹⁵ The numbers are worse for transgender individuals of color. According to one study, 34% of black and 28% of Latino/a transgender individuals had a household income of less than \$10,000 a year.¹⁶

Gender identity discrimination in the workplace threatens economic security and puts transgender people at high risk of poverty. As a result, transgender individuals often lack the economic power essential to realizing reproductive justice.

Reproductive Justice Demands an End to Physical Violence Against Transgender Individuals

Transgender individuals are at increased risk of experiencing violence or assault at some point in their lives. In a recent survey, at least 26% of transgender and gender non-conforming respondents had been physically assaulted and 10% were sexually assaulted because they were transgender or gender non-conforming.¹⁷ In 2014 trans women were 1.6 times more likely to experience physical violence and 6.1 times more likely to experience physical police violence than LGBTQ and HIV affected communities at large.¹⁸ Trans women of color are particularly likely to experience violence.¹⁹ In 2014, at least 13 trans women were murdered in the United States, and in the first 8 months of 2015, at least 19 trans women have been murdered.²⁰ Of these women, all but one were either black or Latina.²¹

Reproductive Justice demands that all people are able to live their lives free from violence or the threat of violence because of who they are. The prevalence of targeted violence means that for many transgender individuals expressing their gender identity increases the threat of violence. As a result, fear of violence can keep transgender people from making the decisions about their gender expression and bodies that are best for them.

Reproductive Justice Necessitates the Use of Inclusive Language

Language choices often reflect a lack of knowledge about what it means to be transgender and perpetuate stigma. For example, using incorrect pronouns or misgendering privileges certain sex characteristics and ignores an individual's gender identity. Similarly, phrases such as "naturally-born woman" or "real man" imply that it is unnatural or unreal to be transgender. Reproductive justice advocacy can perpetuate these problems. For example, materials that focus solely on "women's health" or "women's access" can exclude transgender men and other individuals who also need access to comprehensive reproductive health care.

How You Can Support Transgender Rights and Reproductive Justice

- Look at your school or employer health plan to ensure it does not exclude transition-related care. If it does, advocate with your health plan administrator to remove the exclusion.
- Find out more about federal, state, and local legislation that would prevent discrimination on the basis of gender identity.
- Think critically about the language you use when advocating on behalf of reproductive justice to be sure it is inclusive.
- Host an education session at your school with transgender rights activists in order raise awareness of these issues in your community.

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