



## Journalist Resource Series

# A Language Guide for Journalists and Communities: Abortion and Reproductive Care

We want a world where all of us have autonomy over our bodies. Whether it's abortion access or gender-affirming care, our bodies are our own. But that's something the far-right has attempted to take from us again and again. Over the past several decades, they've significantly escalated their attacks on reproductive justice—while attempting to limit the rights of trans people in healthcare, schools, and athletics more broadly. Exerting control over marginalized people and our bodies upholds a patriarchal, ableist, white supremacist society. Whether we're Black, brown, or white, we have to show up for one another, as we've always done. Our families, no matter where we come from, deserve to live authentically, free from harm.

To connect with a spokesperson while covering abortion bans or anti-transgender legislation, please contact K Richardson at [k@transgenderlawcenter.org](mailto:k@transgenderlawcenter.org).

For general inquiries, please contact Xoai Pham at [xoai@transgenderlawcenter.org](mailto:xoai@transgenderlawcenter.org).

For reproductive justice inquiries, please contact ARC Southeast staff at [media@arc-southeast.org](mailto:media@arc-southeast.org).

This guide provides suggestions and resources for drawing vital connections between various movements in your reporting on reproductive justice—including trans justice, economic justice, racial justice, and disability justice. Please be encouraged to research beyond this guide, which serves as a starting point rather than an all-encompassing resource.



# 01 ✨

## USE ACCURATE AND AFFIRMING LANGUAGE

### Understand and distinguish between reproductive health, rights, and justice

While reproductive health, reproductive rights, and reproductive justice are interconnected, it's crucial to draw **distinctions** between them. Each of them have separate end goals, even if the immediate objectives are similar. Importantly, reproductive justice was an ideology and movement **spearheaded by Black women** who sought to expand the limited framework of "rights," a term that has boundaries decided by the government.

✨ **Reproductive health** as a movement aims to increase access to reproductive healthcare services, with a particular focus on preventative care (such as contraception) and culturally safe health services.

✨ **Reproductive rights** is primarily a legal framework for protecting access to reproductive healthcare services. While abortion access is an important goal, the reproductive rights movement also extends beyond this.

✨ At its core, **reproductive justice** is the antidote to reproductive oppression, by which people with the ability to give birth are exploited for their reproduction, labor, and sexuality. **Reproductive justice** as a framework aims to address overarching issues affecting the reproductive lives of birthing people, including the "right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children or not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities." With a long history of the U.S. government forcibly sterilizing women of color and disabled communities, reproductive justice addresses the fact that the self-determination of families to have children is as important as the resources needed to prevent or terminate a pregnancy.

### Use gender-neutral language when discussing reproductive justice

Not all women have uteruses, and not all people with a uterus are women—more specifically, the majority of trans women do not have uteruses, while a large number of AFAB (assigned female at birth) trans and nonbinary people do. Additionally, **intersex** people may or may not have the ability to give birth, even while many identify as women. The idea is to expand public knowledge of who this issue impacts.

It is vital that all content about reproductive justice use gender-neutral and affirming language in order to support justice for *all* birthing people—not just for women. Trans and nonbinary people are harmed by many of the same **systems** as other birthing folks: namely, a for-profit medical industry that creates inequitable access to lifesaving care, a patriarchal paradigm that seeks to deny us bodily autonomy by exercising control over our decisions, and a white supremacist stronghold over medical institutions that leads to increased negative health outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color (BIPOC).

By using gender-neutral language, we name what we deserve—reproductive justice for *all* birthing people—while also encouraging solidarity among several exploited groups.

For tips on finding gender-neutral alternatives to common terms about reproductive justice, check out Inspired Birth Pro's [inclusive language chart](#).

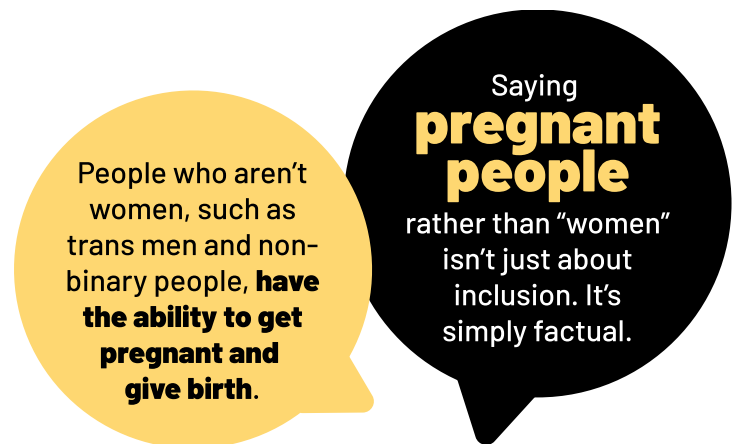
### "Say this, not that"

Along with several terms that are simply outdated or counterproductive to the goals of the reproductive justice movement, the conservative right has created a set of intentionally inflammatory phrases to advance reproductive oppression. By repeating these terms, we unintentionally contribute to their dangerous agenda.

For example, anti-choice conservatives embrace the intentionally misleading framing of near-total abortion bans as "**heartbeat bills**" to elicit an emotional response that they hope will sway people to oppose abortion. In order to avoid playing into their agenda, instead, use the term "six-week abortion ban." For more examples, check out the "say this, not that" lists from [Physicians for Reproductive Health](#) and [Avow Texas](#).

### Why shifting language in the above ways is important

Language reflects our world. When we leave communities out in our messages, we erase vast experiences that the public already lacks knowledge about. Furthermore, we add more harm to the great deal of medical violence that trans, nonbinary, intersex, and others go through. By shifting language, we are committing to telling a fuller, more truthful story about reproductive justice. It's not simply about inclusion. It's about accuracy.



# 02



## TALK TO TRANS AND NONBINARY BIRTHING PEOPLE



Storytelling is a powerful tool for humanizing political issues. For us to achieve reproductive justice, we must center the stories of people who are directly impacted by reproductive oppression. As we expand our language to be more gender-inclusive, it is also crucial that we share trans and nonbinary pregnant and birthing people’s stories.

By sharing trans and nonbinary people’s pregnancy and birthing stories, we make clear the connections across the systemic barriers that many birthing people experience. We also highlight the specific barriers and harm that trans and nonbinary people face.

For examples of inclusive storytelling, check out “[Ours to Tell](#),” a short film featuring four abortion storytellers, including [We Testify](#) storyteller, [Nick Thixton](#).

- ✱ When providing care to trans and nonbinary people, it is crucial to honor experiences that may have been harmful in past interactions with the medical industrial complex. Never assume how someone refers to their body or body parts. For example, many trans people refer to their gonads in different ways that are more gender-affirming than mainstream, limited definitions. Creating space for birthing people to ask simple questions about what their bodies will endure is a first step to ensuring harm is mitigated.
- ✱ Be cautious of making blanket statements that “pregnancy is for women”—all bodies are different and it is known that [“you can be a man and have a baby.”](#)
- ✱ For many trans people, the fight to have self-determination about their abortions is [one part of a whole](#): trans people also face barriers in having families altogether, while regularly enduring [stigma and malpractice](#) in medicine.
- ✱ Disabled trans individuals navigate a cluster of overlapping oppressions in our day to day life. This is heightened for BIPOC and/or poor disabled trans people as we persist within the crosshairs of white supremacy, ableism, misogyny, and anti-poor fervor. Reproductive choice and bodily autonomy [were never fully ours](#) even when Roe existed. Ableism states that disabled trans people are not capable or mentally fit to self-determine any part of our lives. The ongoing influence of eugenic social agendas and policies perpetuate the beliefs that our lives are not worthy of living, that our body/minds render us physically and intellectually inferior, repugnant, and



burdensome. That in short we are not an acceptable, necessary, or desired expression of humanity. We are very familiar with the power and destruction this brings and continue our collective struggle for disability justice—to have our lives, rights, needs, and contributions, including that of raising children fully realized. Central to our resistance and politics is a deep understanding of the critical need to have actual control over our reproductive health. This is how we resist the slow, insidious, and deliberate erasure of our (disabled) people.

Check out Translash Media's '[Trans Bodies, Trans Choices](#)' for a look into trans-centered storytelling about reproductive care.

Note: This section was written with collaboration from The Disability Project, housed at TLC.

# 03

## REFRAME MISINFORMED NARRATIVES ABOUT PREGNANCY

One of the most common **misconceptions** about reproductive care and trans bodies is the ability or inability to conceive. Regardless of gender, it is important that we shift the narrative from harmful misinformation to a place of accuracy and truth. Many birthing people have been told that the use of **hormone replacement therapy** (HRT) will leave them sterile. The use of hormone replacement therapy is not exclusive to trans people; people going through menopause similarly use it in the interest of their health. The use of any hormone does have the ability to change certain functions in the body and while further research needs to be done, many transgender birthing people are able to conceive in as little as **six months after stopping HRT**. Conservatives have been manipulating the falsehood that HRT results in sterilization in order to introduce legislation that criminalizes parents and doctors of trans youth: they claim that these providers are sterilizing children.

Black people assigned female at birth (AFAB) experience high rates of **medical racism** while simultaneously combatting transphobia in healthcare settings. The common anti-Black falsehood that Black people do not **experience pain** in the same way as non-Black people has caused deep harm and even death not only to transgender people but also to cisgender counterparts.

Pregnant BIPOC individuals have historically been underrepresented in conversations related to reproductive care.

While the use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may change some aspects of reproductive organs, it does not dictate a person's gender or the quality of care they should receive. Using testosterone does not remove the possibility of pregnancy. It is possible for a person with a uterus to conceive if they engage in unprotected sex—the same as our cisgender peers.



# 04

## DRAW ATTENTION TO FAR-RIGHT FORCES PULLING THE STRINGS. FOLLOW THE MONEY.

Right-wing opposition to reproductive justice and other progressive movements is intentionally designed to look homegrown; in reality, it's powered by a small group of far-right bad actors, including legal powerhouses and dark money groups. They disguise their nefarious agenda as being "pro-woman" while actively seeking to enact policy to surveil, police, and control marginalized peoples' bodies. This is evident in the mass proliferation of anti-abortion and anti-trans legislation, as well as with the continued use of [forced sterilization](#) on disabled bodies.

When reporting on reproductive justice, and on various pieces of anti-justice legislation, make sure to highlight:

### Anti-Justice Hate Groups are an Organized Machine

Far-right legal powerhouses are largely responsible for the recent onslaught of anti-abortion legislation.

- ✳ Behind the scenes, these groups have a long history of throwing their weight behind anti-abortion candidates, sending draft legislation to conservative officials, and holding massive rallies and summits to organize around their nefarious agenda.
- ✳ Notable players include Alliance Defending Freedom, Family Research Council, Liberty Council, Heritage Foundation, Susan B. Anthony List, Family Policy Alliance, and Concerned Women for America. You can track anti-justice groups using [Southern Poverty Law Center's tracker](#).

### Dark Money is Funding the Right

- ✳ [Dark money](#) groups have for years organized to inject cash into targeted elections and [take over](#) the courts, thus fueling their hateful agenda of [advancing reproductive oppression](#), attacking queer and trans folks, gutting voting rights, and suppressing votes.
- ☆ Many of these groups masquerade as "independent" and "nonpartisan" women's groups in order to stealthily [push hyper-partisan right-wing views](#).
- ✳ Major players include Club for Growth, Judicial Crisis Network, Independent Women's Forum, Concerned Women for America, Network of Enlightened Women, and Federalist Society.



# 05

## RESOURCES

### STAY UP TO DATE ON THE REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE MOVEMENT AND BAD LEGISLATION

Stay up to date on this year's anti-transgender legislation using the Equality Federation | Legislative Tracker. This tracker focuses on data from the current legislative session and therefore does not contain historical data about anti-trans legislation. It's also important to share accurate information about introduced legislation vs. which of that legislation becomes law. Sharing accurate and up-to-date information about current laws decreases confusion and fear and helps people access information about their rights. [Movement Advancement Project](#) shares up-to-date information about current laws and policies impacting trans lives on the state and local level through their [Equality Maps](#).

Stay up to date on this year's anti-abortion legislation using [What If Roe Fell](#). This tracker provides an overview of what is happening to abortion rights in the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and the five most populous U.S. territories following the Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision.

Include information about how your readers can obtain legal assistance and/or take action in their state, including but not limited to contacting their [local ACLU affiliate](#).

Include state and local trans leadership in your reporting. Your local ACLU and Transgender Law Center may be helpful in connecting you with trans-led organizations. You can connect with TLC's Legal Information Helpdesk is here to respond to your questions and refer you to other resources and members of our pro bono network for support.

#### LEGISLATION TRACKERS

- [Sexual and Reproductive Health State Policy Tracker - Guttmacher Institute](#)
- [LGBTQ Rights Policy Tracker - ACLU](#)

#### TRANS LIBERATION ORGANIZATIONS THAT ENGAGE IN REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

- [Transgender Law Center](#)
- [The Knights & Orchids Society](#)
- [TGI Justice Project](#)
- [Solutions Not Punishments Collaborative](#)
- [Sylvia Rivera Law Project](#)
- [Intransitive](#)

#### REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS TO FOLLOW

- [Access Reproductive Care-Southeast](#)
- [Repro Legal Defense Fund](#)
- [National Network of Abortion Funds](#)
- [SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective](#)
- [Solutions Not Punishment Collaborative](#)
- [SPARK Reproductive Justice Now](#)
- [URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity](#)
- [Indigenous Women Rising](#)
- [Midwest Access Coalition](#)
- [Yellowhammer Fund](#)

#### MORE ABORTION RESOURCES

- [Find your local abortion fund](#)
- [Find an abortion provider](#)
- [Digital security for abortion access](#)

