

What is Reproductive Justice?

HEART's

Application of RJ



RAHIM
A PROJECT OF  HEART

WHY REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE?

Reproductive Justice (RJ) was pioneered and founded in 1994 by Black and Indigenous women in response to the reproductive rights movement's fundamental failures. Before the RJ movement the needs of women of color and nonbinary individuals were not centered, and there was also a failure to acknowledge the way race and power operate in regards to sexual and reproductive health (SRH). RJ expands our thinking beyond limited issues like abortion and infertility, and pushes us to understand the holistic and expansive nature of our reproductive lives.

The history of organizing for RJ includes decades of Black feminist leaders in the South recognizing the lack of inclusion of their lived experience and their contributions in the fight for reproductive rights.¹ To fully understand this history, we need to understand the difference in reproductive rights, reproductive health, and reproductive justice frameworks. Reproductive rights focused on issues such as the legal right to abortion, which was mainly spearheaded by white feminists. They focused on writing laws and pushing for policy change as the key goal of the reproductive rights movement. In the reproductive health sphere, advocates tried to ensure reproductive health services were being resourced. A key gap in the conversation on reproductive rights and reproductive health was addressing the systemic barriers in

accessing legal health care. For example, where was the funding for comprehensive sexual health education? For access to affordable contraception? Were there enough trained professionals in the medical field who could provide reproductive health services? This is where RJ comes in.

WHAT IS RJ?

SisterSong was founded in the 1990s by organizations and movement leaders doing groundbreaking RJ work. Still a leading organization today, SisterSong defines reproductive justice as “the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.”

Sistersong’s Tenets of Reproductive Justice

The right to:

have children

not have children

parent children in
safe and healthy environments

maintain personal
bodily autonomy

There are many definitions of RJ. Other organizations such as [Forward Together](#), [SPARK RJ Now](#), and HEART have also developed their interpretations of the terminology.

Forward Together

All people having the social, political, and economic power and resources to make healthy decisions about their gender, bodies, sexuality, and families for themselves and their communities.

SPARK RJ

Reproductive Justice is about more than a person's bodily autonomy. It's a social justice movement rooted in the belief that individuals and communities should have the resources and power to make sustainable and liberatory decisions about their bodies, genders, sexualities, and lives.

HEART

Reproductive justice includes the basic human right to:

- Be treated like the sacred beings we are
- Make informed decisions about our bodies, safety, health, and wellness. This includes being able to make decisions informed by one's faith, individual experiences, and moral agency as one chooses to.
- Access to culturally sensitive, affordable and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health resources
- Live, work, pray and/or parent in communities free from gendered and other violence and that sustain and support Muslims, not that oppress or harm them.

RJ leader, Charity Woods, highlights the common thread of these definitions of RJ is that they center **access**, not just choice.² We have seen time and again that there is no choice without access to culturally relevant information, systems, resources and laws.

REPRODUCTIVE OPPRESSION

RJ emerged as a response to the various ways that reproductive oppression impacts our communities. Forward Together defines reproductive oppression as “the regulation and exploitation of women and girls (both biologically and socially) through their bodies, sexuality, and reproduction by families, communities, institutions, and society through the use of multiple tools of oppression based on race, gender, and class.”³

If our current political landscape has taught us anything, it is that we cannot rely on laws to protect us, especially for those of us belonging to communities of color. Laws can - and do - easily change based on who is elected and who has proximity to power. Just as *Roe v. Wade* was overturned with the Dobbs Supreme Court decision in June 2022, court judgments that have historically protected marginalized communities can be overruled depending on the judge’s politics. Even when we have laws protecting reproductive rights, bureaucracy delineates whose rights are protected and revoked.



RJ bridges the gap between rights, health, and community care infrastructure for the communities that need them most.⁴ This requires us to look at disparities based on identity. People can have the best services available, but there will still be barriers if we don't increase funding, language access, and culturally accessible education to access those services.

One barrier our Muslim American communities are currently facing is understanding how Islam relates to and understands RJ.

HEART'S APPLICATION OF RJ

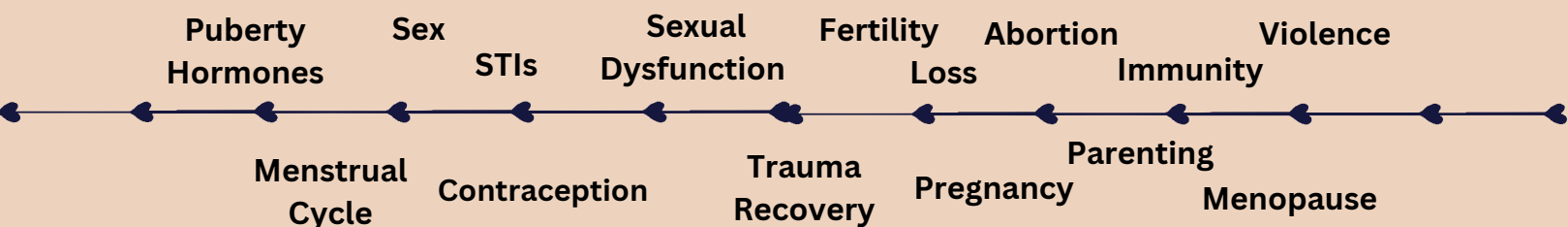
HEART is led by a team of individuals impacted by reproductive oppression. We make decisions for our reproductive wellness. We are there to support our own families and friends as they make decisions. We do this grounded in our faith values. These personal experiences inform HEART's work.

RJ includes the multiple ways people make choices about their sexual and reproductive lives such as:

- Access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health care
- Clean environments
- Living wage job
- Quality education
- Freedom from systems of oppression
- Communities that support healing, empowerment, and self-determination

We use the language “**reproductive lives**” as a part of RJ. Reproductive lives refers to the reproductive choices we make across the lifespan. This includes things like early puberty, family planning, sex education, and maintaining one's sexual health. Using “reproductive lives” broadens our discussions and advocacy on sexual health, reproductive health, and more.

REPRODUCTIVE LIVES



HEART'S DUAA FOR RJ

Ya Basit, the One who amplifies abundance. Bless the efforts of those tirelessly fighting to end reproductive oppression. Our love for You unites us, our passion to achieve reproductive justice guides us, expand and widen our hearts and souls, and give us the wisdom to struggle together and draw upon our shared values to achieve liberation.

Ya Haadi, You are the Best Guide we could ask for. You are the only Guide we need. We pray you guide us to always be on the side of reproductive Justice and accept our work toward reproductive justice in service to You. We pray you grant us with the unwavering faith of our global ummah.

We pray that you Guide us to build communities that are safe and free of violence and oppression, where all people can exercise self determination over their reproductive lives, in the communities they live, work, and pray.



REFERENCES

Through our educational resources, referral network, and RJ fund, we hope to bridge the gaps that exist for those navigating their sexual and reproductive health. Read our [RAHIM Framework](#) to know more about HEART's approach to RJ.

Below is a list of our references for this resource:

1. Abrams, A. (2019, November 21). How advocates of reproductive justice found their spotlight. Time.
<https://time.com/5735432/reproductive-justice-groups/>
2. Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice. (2005). A new vision for advancing our movement for reproductive ... Forward Together.
<https://forwardtogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/ACRJ-A-New-Vision.pdf>
3. Woods, Charity. "Reproductive Justice 101: Theory & Framework" Lecture, Workshop for HEART, Virtual, 2022.
4. Reproductive justice. Sister Song. (n.d.).
<https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>