eproductive justice, as opposed to reproductive rights, is often
defined as the ability to parent, not to parent, and—if one is a
parent—to raise children in a safe and healthy environment. While
reproductive rights have often been narrowly understood as the
legal right to terminate an unwanted or dangerous pregnancy, an
understanding of reproductive justice broadens our analysis in critical
ways. It raises up the structural inequalities that render reproductive
choice and care disproportionately unattainable for people of color,
poor people, undocumented immigrants, trans people, and other
marginalized groups, and it reminds us that reproductive justice is
inextricable from housing justice, from food justice, from transit justice.
Indeed, the creation of a safe and healthy environment for all parents
and all children requires the broad realization of social justice.

Unfortunately, full reproductive justice remains a distant prospect, and it was
dealt a significant blow in [June 2014’s] Burwell v. Hobby Lobby decision, in
which the Supreme Court ruled that corporations have religious rights—rights
that were hampered by the Affordable Care Act’s (ACA) contraception mandate.
In addition to its manifold and ominous implications for civil rights, this decision
poses a severe threat to low-income workers’ reproductive health care access.
The decision reminds us—those of us with the privilege to be sheltered from
a constant barrage of reminders—that attacks on reproductive justice are not
confined to standard anti-abortion efforts.

“The decision reminds
us... that attacks on
reproductive justice are
not confined to standard
anti-abortion efforts.”

—continued on page 3
WHAT IS THE CIVIL LIBERTIES AND PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM (CLPP)?

Civil Liberties and Public Policy is a national program dedicated to educating, mentoring, and inspiring new activism and leadership for the reproductive justice movement. Combining activism, organizing, leadership training, and movement building, CLPP programs advance a broad and inclusive agenda that connects reproductive freedom and autonomy with other social justice issues.

PROJECTS

Annual Reproductive Justice Conference
CLPP’s national conference for student and community activists, From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom, connects people to organizations and campaigns locally, nationally, and internationally, and provides them with information, analysis, and “how-to” organizing to bring back to their own campuses and communities. Join us next year, April 10-12, 2015!

Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps (RRASC)
RRASC is a national program that supports the leadership development of local students interested in connecting their academic studies to reproductive justice activism through summer internships.

New Leadership Networking Initiative (NLNI)
NLNI is a training and leadership-building network for new and emerging activists working in the movement. Through semi-annual convenings and a Summer Leadership Institute, members gain valuable skills and create new relationships and collaborations that are energizing and expanding the movement.

CLPP Student Activist Group
The CLPP student group consists of activists from the Five Colleges and broader community who want to develop their skills to organize for reproductive and social justice. The group runs “Activist 101” trainings and is the driving force behind CLPP’s annual conference.

Classes and Community Engaged Learning
CLPP faculty and staff teach courses at Hampshire College that introduce students to a broad range of reproductive justice issues and the history of activism surrounding them. Local students can fulfill high school, college, and graduate-level community service and community engagement requirements through involvement with CLPP.

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The Ettinger Foundation
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The Moriah Fund
The Oma Fund of the Ms. Foundation for Women
The Overbrook Foundation
This argument is not merely a new stratagem to undermine the ACA. For years, initiatives such as the American Life League’s “The Pill Kills” campaign have sought to inflame conservative religious sentiment against contraceptives. Significantly, the Right has also undertaken much more subtle and insidious attempts to limit birth control access. Perhaps surprisingly, these attempts often are not explicitly rooted in religious conviction.

Many anti-contraceptive arguments couched in secular rhetoric are designed to incite fear, even panic, concerning not the deaths of “preborn children,” but rather the demise of entire populations. In her review of a documentary titled Demographic Winter: The Decline of the Human Family (2008), Kathryn Joyce discusses how the film tacitly invokes right-wing Christian morality and ideology to undergird claims posited as “research-driven” and “based on social science alone.” The never-quoted statement Joyce extracts from the documentary is that “birth control and the sexual revolution, and the widespread cultural decision of women to limit their fertility” are the egregious “sin” that will precipitate the fall of civilization. Political prospects such as marriage equality are, of course, easily subsumed into this nebulous menace.

“Many anti-contraceptive arguments couched in secular rhetoric are designed to incite fear, even panic, concerning not the deaths of ‘preborn children,’ but rather the demise of entire populations.”

The U.S. Right’s demographic agenda is highly racialized; in recent years, however, the doomsday argument for traditional family values has gained global currency. Its momentum is largely attributable to organizations such as the World Congress of Families (WCF), which has scant visible presence in Demographic Winter but enormous behind-the-scenes influence. Theresa Okafor, a Nigerian right-wing activist who has worked closely with WCF and Family Watch International, espouses anti-LGBTI and anti-reproductive health measures based substantially on tenuous correlations between demographic trends and development in sub-Saharan Africa. In a 2012 interview, Okafor decried contraceptives as superfluous before saying, “It is instructive that Nigeria and Ethiopia which have high fertility rates feature among the fastest growing economies in the IMF 2011 economic survey. The UN data is evidence that population growth does lead to economic prosperity.” Okafor has gone so far as to allege that the provision of reproductive health care in Africa is part of an imperialist Western “conspiracy,” a claim reproduced in the WCF newsletter. (Much of Demographic Winter was filmed at the 2007 WCF conference. On the heels of the Hobby Lobby decision, WCF announced that their 2015 conference theme will be “religious liberty.” The regional conference is to be held in Salt Lake City.)

That Okafor’s politics appear to be lockstep with the U.S. Religious Right is indicative of the latter’s success in imposing their agenda in the Global South. Furthermore, that Okafor cries imperialism while promoting the U.S. Right’s imperial agenda illustrates the Right’s facility with shaping narratives to obfuscate the presence of their own aims. However, it would be inaccurate to assume that Okafor’s work is entirely congruent with, let alone identical to, that of her U.S.-based collaborators. Her stance on demographic winter differs from that of the U.S. Right in one critical respect: for Okafor, augmenting population growth in the Global South is a priority; for the U.S. Right, it is a threat.

Because, as Joyce pointedly shows, nativism and racism constitute another hidden cornerstone of Demographic Winter and the reactionary movement it represents. She observes, “The concern is not a general lack of babies, but the cultural shifts that come when some populations, particularly immigrant communities, are feared to be out-procreating others;” a fear that “permeates nearly all of the current debate on demographic worries.” Joyce names a bevy of books published since 2001 that gravely forecast non-white immigrants supplanting white populations in the Global North. Joyce also cites an assertion made at the 2007 WCF conference by a U.S. anti-contraception activist, who pronounced that the children of immigrants are “too many, and too culturally different from their new countries’ populations to assimilate quickly … They are contributing to the cultural suicide of these nations as they commit demographic suicide.”

The white supremacy underlying demographic winter prophecies is also visible in the work produced by the Population Research Institute (PRI), a right-wing organization run by Steven W. Mosher. Mosher, a Catholic social scientist, specializes in Chinese demography, and PRI aims to dismantle “population control” efforts across the globe. Ostensibly, PRI is a natural ally to activists like Okafor. However, articles such as “How to debunk the myth of overpopulation in three easy steps,” written by Mosher and Anne Roback Morse and published on LifeSiteNews.com, deploy demographic winter rhetoric exclusively with respect to Europe in contrast to Africa, implicitly conjuring up the specter of white supremacy’s collapse. “Africa’s growth,” the authors assure, “is not something to worry about. Europe’s decline, however, is something to worry about.” Eventually, they warn, “the French, German, Italians and British will virtually cease to exist.”

The scare tactics employed by PRI, WCF, and other organizations on the Right exemplify the urgency of reproductive justice work. Right-wing efforts to chisel away reproductive freedoms are not random attacks on uteri. They are carefully crafted elements of powerful Americans’ long-standing attempts to determine and regulate who ought to procreate and who ought not to.

This article was originally published by Political Research Associates. reprinted with permission. Subsequent parts to this series, as well as this article, can be found here: www.politicalresearch.org/2014/07/03/demographic-winter-right-wing-prophecies-of-white-supremacies-decline

Sources:
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2014 RRASC INTERNS!

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INTERVIEWS WITH OUR 2014 INTERNS

In 2014, RRASC interns worked in 26 organizations across the United States, ranging from community-based groups to international advocacy institutions. Students gained hands-on learning experiences and provided invaluable support to their host organizations. Enjoy some of the highlights of these emerging activists’ experiences:

How has your internship shaped your view of the reproductive justice movement?

Pooja Ghosh
National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum, Washington, D.C.

My internship really gave me access to the reproductive justice movement in a way that I could never have imagined. It solidified my understanding that all justice movements are rooted in relationships and respect.

Within our work, we represent the transformative visions we hope to make truths.

Alissa Robbins
SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW, Atlanta, GA

My time spent at SPARK has helped transform my view of reproductive justice into a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding. I have always viewed and was taught reproductive justice from a very selective perspective/narrative. I have especially gained a better understanding of the many issues facing women of color, queer/trans youth of color, and young families living within the south and how that interplays with reproductive justice.

Chemi Chemi
The Doula Project, New York, NY

My internship at The Doula Project allowed me to explore the reproductive justice movement through a unique lens. I worked as an abortion doula at Planned Parenthood and Bellevue Hospital in New York City. I was listening and providing support to patients throughout first-trimester surgical abortion procedures, laminaria procedures, and during waits before second trimester abortion procedures.

My internship experience reinforced the fact that Reproductive Justice is only achieved when women and girls have the economic, mental, and political power to make healthy choices about our bodies.

What is one idea about the movement that you learned during your internship that will stick with you as you continue your academic and professional career?

Serena Z. Valentino
Sylvia Rivera Law Project, New York, NY

Working at SRLP made evident several huge barriers people face to just surviving, let alone to creating the kinds of lives and families that they want. Racism, classism, queer- and transphobia can be immense barriers to accessing healthcare, legal and social services.

Alissa: I was introduced to the concept of “space” while at SPARK and it has opened my eyes to how I interact with people in whatever context. I had to examine my privilege and the space that I fill in society as a white, hetero, cisgender woman. This understanding has allowed me to critically examine how institutions and individuals don’t create safe spaces for marginalized groups.

Creating space for individuals, whether it be trans or queer folks or people of color, is so important.

—continued on page 6
Chemi: My internship with The Doula Project has taught me to comprehend people and their stories at a humane level. Despite the many differences among women, I have learned we all have a story to tell. In particular, I realize, we cannot afford to lose hope when thinking about reproductive rights. There may be many events that jeopardize women’s access to reproductive care, but we have many more reasons not to give up.

Justina Trim
SistersSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, Atlanta, GA

Self-care. It is something we voice a lot, but actually doing it is a different story. I learned awesome self-care techniques during this time. We are cognizant of the fact that the work we are doing is heavy and draining in every aspect. I had trouble coping and making sure I took time to listen to my body and my emotions. The SisterSong staff was awesome in letting us take breathers and a day off here and there if we needed it.

What was the most exciting or memorable moment of your internship?

Serena: I really enjoyed attending the Trans Day of Action march with other staff and interns. It was nice to attend an LGBT related event that put the “T” front and center, rather than letting it drop off of the end.

Justina: One of the most exciting moments of my internship was actually seeing everyone arrive for the conference we helped plan, and especially the march to the courthouse following the conference. It was such a surreal moment.

I remember thinking, “Wow. This is actually happening. I helped plan this awesome conference.”

Pooja: There were a few actions I participated in that really invigorated and inspired me. One of them was during an action NAPAWF participated in with the Not1More campaign, calling for an immediate halt to deportations and administrative relief for the millions of undocumented immigrants in this country. Hundreds of us marched toward the White House and our procession was literally alongside thousands of people who were also marching that day for a Free Gaza and end to the Israeli occupation in Palestine.

It was a brilliant moment that demonstrated the physical reality of a truth we all know: all liberation is connected.

In what ways did your organization and its area of concentration intersect or align with the reproductive justice movement?

Justina: This summer at SisterSong, we worked on planning a conference for Marissa Alexander titled “Standing Our Ground” to voice why Marissa Alexander’s case in itself was a reproductive justice issue, and why domestic violence against women of color is something that needs to be voiced and molded into the mainstream reproductive justice movement. Marissa had a newly-born baby that she could not breast feed while incarcerated; she was taken into custody for protecting her body; these are reproductive justice issues.

It surprised me that there are so many situations that can be filed under reproductive justice, and studying and learning more about Marissa Alexander’s case made me realize that.

Chemi: I now truly believe doula work in and of itself brings women closer to one another. It creates a society where women are able to witness each other go through some of the toughest issues in their reproductive health. It teaches women that we all share the experience of birth, abortion, and other circumstances despite ones race, religion, socioeconomic status.

How has your RRASC experience influenced your academic or professional track?

CLPP Welcomes New Staff

Jennifer Su

Jennifer is CLPP’s temporary Communications Assistant. Prior to this position, Jennifer worked as one of the 2014 Student Group Conference Coordinators and was a RRASC intern at the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF). Jennifer graduated from Hampshire College in May 2014 and wrote a Division III project that confronted race-and sex-selective abortion bans in the U.S. and building solidarity within the transnational feminist movement against sex selection.

Johanna Rincón Fernandez

Johanna directs CLPP’s national leadership programs, including the summer internship program and emerging activist network. She has previously worked in labor organizing, sexual assault and violence prevention, and human rights education. She most recently served in the research and publications department of Cultural Survival and managed a student leadership development program at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Johanna holds a BA in Political Science and a MS in International Relations with a concentration in non-profit organizations.

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Every year, we work to make our programs more accessible to more people, and every year, we wish we could do more.

Your gift to CLPP will help us close the gap so all our programs remain diverse and powerful.

“CLPP’s work is more important than ever, given the makeup of the Supreme Court and their decisions that roll back reproductive choice.” — LUCY GARNETT, DONOR
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SAVE THE DATE FOR NEXT YEAR’S CONFERENCE!
APRIL 10-12, 2015

Build a stronger movement for reproductive freedom by learning, networking, strategizing, and celebrating. Join student and community activists - and speakers from the U.S. and abroad - for inspiring workshops and trainings. See you there!
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