

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 simultaneously attempting to limit trans peoples' rights across healthcare, schools, athletics and many other areas of public and private life. Exerting control over marginalized people is one of the many tools far-right politicians use in their sinister campaign to prevent us from creating the future we deserve. Whether we're Black, brown, or white, we have to show up for one another, as we've always done. No matter where we come from, our families deserve to live authentically, free from harm. Together, we have the power to create that world within our lifetimes.

For general inquiries, or to connect with a spokesperson while covering abortion bans or anti-transgender legislation, please contact Sue Yacka-Bible at sue@transgenderlawcenter.org.

For reproductive justice inquiries, please contact ARC Southeast staff at media@arc-southeast.org.



This guide is intended as a tool for those reporting or speaking about abortion and reproductive care as they relate to trans communities. It outlines common issues with previous reporting, along with tips and resources for reporting on this topic in a way that is sensitive, accurate, and inclusive toward people of all genders. Please be encouraged to research beyond this guide in your efforts to tell fuller, more humanizing stories about transgender communities.

*While Transgender Law Center and many others use the term "gender-affirming care" to refer to a broad range of life-saving social and medical interventions, several values-aligned organizations have shifted to using the term "life-saving medical care."

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^[1] between them. Each framework has separate end goals, even if the immediate objectives are similar.

Importantly, reproductive justice is an ideology and movement spearheaded by Black women^[2] who sought to expand the limited framework of "rights," a term that has boundaries decided by the government.



Reproductive health

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

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



Reproductive justice

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^[3] 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,^[4] immigrants,^[5] and disabled communities,^[6] 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^[7] 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^[8]: 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 exploited and marginalized groups.

Not all women have uteruses, and not all people with a uterus are women.

For tips on finding gender-neutral alternatives to common terms about reproductive justice, check out [Inspired Birth Pro's inclusive language chart](#).^[9]

"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"^[10] 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](#)^[11] and [Avow Texas](#).^[12]

Why these language shifts are 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 amplify harm to the great deal of medical violence that trans, nonbinary, intersex, and marginalized people already go through. By shifting language, we are committing to telling fuller, more truthful stories about reproductive justice. It's not simply about inclusion—it's about accuracy.

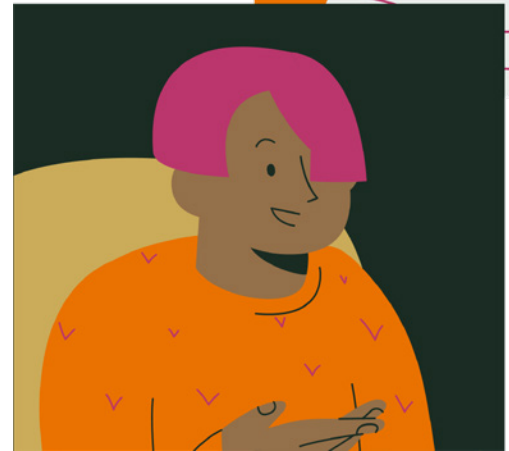
02 Talk to Trans and Nonbinary Birthing People

Storytelling is a powerful tool for humanizing political issues. For us to achieve reproductive justice, we must center the stories of people who are most 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 peoples' stories.

By sharing trans and nonbinary people's pregnancy and birthing stories, we make clear the overlap in the systemic barriers that birthing people may experience regardless of our genders. 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^[13] featuring four abortion storytellers, including We Testify storyteller, Nick Lloyd.^[14]

- ☀ When providing care to trans and nonbinary people, it is crucial to honor their past harmful 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 genitals 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.”^[15]

For many trans people, the fight to have self-determination about their abortions is one part of a whole^[16]: trans people also face barriers in having families altogether, while regularly enduring stigma, malpractice, and other barriers to accessing adequate medical care.^[17]

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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.^[18] Throughout history, certain politicians and institutions have instituted eugenicist social agendas and policies that perpetuate the beliefs that disabled peoples’ lives are not worthy of living, that our body/minds render us physically and intellectually inferior, repugnant, and burdensome. These institutions and individuals operationalize the ableist notion that disabled trans people are not capable or mentally fit to self-determine any part of their lives—that in short we are not an acceptable, necessary, or desired expression of humanity. We are very familiar with the power and destruction this creates 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.

— DISABILITY PROJECT AT TRANSGENDER LAW CENTER

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Check out Translash Media’s [“Trans Bodies, Trans Choices”](#)^[19] for a look into trans-centered storytelling about reproductive care.

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.^[20] 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 testosterone gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT, also called HRT) will leave them sterile.^[21]

What We Know:

- ✓ The use of GAHT 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. ^[22]
- ✓ Conservatives have been manipulating the falsehood that GAHT 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^[23] 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^[24] has caused deep harm and even death not only to transgender people but also to cisgender counterparts.

Pregnant BIPOC individuals have been historically underrepresented in conversations related to reproductive care.^[25]

04 Draw Attention to Far Right Forces Pulling the Strings and Follow the Money.

Right-wing opposition to reproductive justice and other progressive movements is intentionally and meticulously engineered to appear homegrown; in reality, it's powered by a small group of far-right bad actors, including legal powerhouses and dark money groups.^[26] 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,^[27] as well as with the continued forced sterilization of disabled bodies.^[28]

When reporting on reproductive justice and 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,^[29] sending draft legislation to conservative officials,^[30] and holding massive rallies and summits^[31] 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.

A Wealthy Few Are Controlling Our Democracy

We know that in politics, money is power. By injecting cash into targeted elections^[32] and funding issue- and candidate-specific lobbying groups,^[33] a small group of wealthy individuals^[34] and organizations^[35] has taken control over our democracy. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of these donors are aligned with a far-right ideology.

When writing about reproductive justice, research and report on the key players in your area funding far-right anti-abortion extremists and policies. Emphasize the need for commonsense campaign finance laws^[36] to ensure all people are given a voice in our democracy, no matter their income level, race, or genders.

You can track anti-justice groups using [Southern Poverty Law Center's hate map](#).^[37]

05 Research Beyond This Guide

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](#).^[38]

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](#)^[39] shares up-to-date information about current laws and policies impacting trans lives on the state and local level through their [Equality Maps](#).^[40]

Stay up to date on anti-abortion legislation using [After Roe Fell](#).^[41] 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](#)^[42] or [Equality Federation Member Organization\(s\)](#).^[43]

Include state and local trans leadership^[44] 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](#)^[45] is here to respond to your questions and refer you to other resources and members of our pro bono network for support.

Resources

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](#)

Resources

- 1 [Comparing Frameworks: What is Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice? | UUA.org](#)
- 2 [Did You Know The Concept Of Reproductive Justice Came From Black Women? Here's Why That's Important | Essence](#)
- 3 [What is Reproductive Justice? – Sister Song](#)
- 4 [The Troubling Past of Forced Sterilization of Black Women and Girls in Mississippi and the South](#)
- 5 [The Long, Disgraceful History of American Attacks on Brown and Black Women's Reproductive Systems](#)
- 6 [The Long Shadow of Eugenics in America – The New York Times](#)
- 7 [interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth](#)
- 8 [What's in a Name – Gender Inclusion in Maternity and Beyond | All4Maternity](#)
- 9 [LGBTQIA Inclusive Pregnancy And Birth Care Tips for Doulas](#)
- 10 [Here's How Conservatives Are Using Civil Rights Law to Pass Abortion Restrictions | Time](#)
- 11 [Resources for Journalists Reporting on Abortion | Physicians for Reproductive Health](#)
- 12 [\[https://www.instagram.com/p/CYj_71WIYs7/\]\(https://www.instagram.com/p/CYj_71WIYs7/\)](#)
- 13 ["Ours to Tell" | Planned Parenthood + We Testify Video](#)
- 14 [When Talking about Abortion, Say This, Not That | Avow Texas on Instagram](#)
- 15 [Trans dads tell doctors: 'You can be a man and have a baby'](#)
- 16 [We Must Promote Gender-Inclusive Reproductive Health Care – National Partnership for Women & Families](#)
- 17 [Nearly half of trans people have been mistreated by medical providers, report finds](#)
- 18 [With Roe v. Wade overturned, disabled people reflect on how it will impact them](#)
- 19 [TRANSCRIPT: 'Trans Bodies, Trans Choices' feat. Jack Qu'emi – TransLash](#)
- 20 [Transgender Pregnancy: Moving Past Misconceptions](#)
- 21 [Better mental health found among transgender people who started hormones as teens | News Center | Stanford Medicine](#)
- 22 [Better mental health found among transgender people who started hormones as teens | News Center | Stanford Medicine](#)

Resources

- 23 [Racism in healthcare: Statistics and examples](#)
- 24 [The ‘Father of Modern Gynecology’ Performed Shocking Experiments on Enslaved Women | HISTORY](#)
- 25 [For Serena Williams, Childbirth Was a Harrowing Ordeal. She’s Not Alone. - The New York Times](#)
- 26 [The dark money funding conservative anti-trans groups](#)
- 27 [The Next Targets for the Group That Overturned Roe](#)
- 28 [31 states have laws that allow forced sterilizations, new report shows](#)
- 29 [Insight: Conservative think tank emerges as force behind DeSantis campaign | Reuters](#)
- 30 [Inside the Secret Working Group That Helped Push Anti-Trans Laws Across the Country - Mother Jones](#)
- 31 [What You Need to Know: Heritage Foundation’s 50th Summit - Accountable US](#)
- 32 [How the Koch brothers used their massive fortune to power a conservative crusade that reshaped American politics](#)
- 33 [Meet the ‘Feminists’ Doing the Koch Brothers’ Dirty Work | The Nation](#)
- 34 [The Increasing Influence of Billionaires on US Politics: America’s Hidden Oligarchy - MIR](#)
- 35 [Follow the Money Behind Anti-Abortion Laws | Brennan Center for Justice](#)
- 36 [Limits on the Influence of Money in Politics - Common Cause](#)
- 37 [Hate Map | Southern Poverty Law Center](#)
- 38 [Cumulative Anti-Transgender Legislation | Equality Federation](#)
- 39 [Movement Advancement Project](#)
- 40 [Movement Advancement Project | Snapshot: LGBTQ Equality by State](#)
- 41 [Abortion Laws by State - Center for Reproductive Rights](#)
- 42 [State-Based Affiliates | American Civil Liberties Union](#)
- 43 [Equality Federation Member Organizations](#)
- 44 [100 Organizations Supporting Trans People in All 50 States | Them](#)
- 45 [Transgender Law Center’s Legal Information Helpdesk](#)

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