



TBE Congregants for Reproductive Justice

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

October 21, 2022

The decision by the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade* on June 24, 2022, resulted in a reproductive equity crisis in the United States. Rabbi Harper and Cantor Zell initiated a call to action which activated congregants to create TBE Congregants for Reproductive Justice (CRJ). We invite our committed and compassionate congregants to join with us as we educate ourselves about reproductive health, rights, and justice, and take action to repair our world—Tikkun Olam.

What is Reproductive Justice?

Reproductive Justice is a human rights framework that addresses bodily autonomy and reproductive decision-making. It intersects issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and gender identity. A term first coined in 1994 by a Black women's caucus, the Reproductive Justice movement's core belief centers on the right to have children, the right to not have children, and the right to nurture children in a safe and healthy environment. For TBE's CRJ, it encompasses reproductive health, rights including abortion, and equity.

Why is This a Jewish Issue?

Jewish foundational texts define when life begins, drawing distinction between a fetus and a full-fledged human being—a *nefesh* (technically, "a soul"). The Torah, Mishnah and Talmud do not view a fetus as a soul until it draws breath. Rabbinic commentators Rashi, Maimonides and other rabbinic authorities from medieval through modern times debate the issue of when an abortion is permissible, but above all, recognize that the physical and psychological well-being of the pregnant person is of utmost value. Forcing someone to carry an unwanted pregnancy or one that endangers the pregnant person's life is considered a violation of Jewish law because it places greater value on the fetus over the pregnant living adult. The US Constitution guarantees religious freedom and therefore, anti-abortion legislation is an infringement of our Constitutional rights.

Why Now?

In our current political culture, conservative Christian views disproportionately inform national, state, and local institutional policymaking. The national debate on abortion centers around Christian theology, morals and values which define life as the moment of conception. According to this extreme view, abortion, regardless of extenuating circumstance (rape, incest, viability of pregnant person or fetus, pregnant person's life situation) is considered murder and a sin.

How Can I Learn More?

- [Reproductive Equity Now \(https://reproequitynow.org\)](https://reproequitynow.org)
 - Contraceptive access information, information on medical abortion on MA and New England college campuses, extensive resources including action agenda (massbeyonddroe.com)
- National Council of Jewish Women ([NCJW.org](https://ncjw.org)) and Rabbis for Repro (rabbisforrepro.org)
 - [Abortion and Jewish Values Toolkit](#)
 - [The Torah of Repro Justice](#) (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1agabZyclBxqV4PequN-xpDKONVyfgaXr>)
 - [Jews for Abortion Access \(https://www.jewsforabortionaccess.org/fund\)](https://www.jewsforabortionaccess.org/fund)
- Reform Religious Action Center ([RAC.org](https://rac.org))
 - [Path Forward on Abortion Access Resource Guide](https://rac.org/blog/path-forward-abortion-resource-guide) (<https://rac.org/blog/path-forward-abortion-resource-guide>)
- [Women of Reform Judaism Reproductive Health & Rights](https://wrj.org/social-justice/reproductive-health-rights) (<https://wrj.org/social-justice/reproductive-health-rights>)
- [Access Abortion Front \(https://aafront.org\)](https://aafront.org)

What Can I Do? Action Steps!

- Support Reproductive Equity Now's endorsed MA Senate and House of Representatives candidates (<https://reproequitynow.org/2022endorsements>)
- Decorate and send postcards to support abortion providers
- Join JALSA/NCJW's phone banking to protect access to abortion ballot initiatives in Kentucky and Michigan. Sign up for alerts on the JALSA home page (<https://jalsa.org>)
- Support the NCJW's Jewish Fund for Abortion Access to connect people who need abortions with money they need to access care (<https://www.jewsforabortionaccess.org/fund>)
- 58% of abortions are performed by independent abortion clinics yet they receive only a fraction of public support. Since 2015, one third of all independent clinics have been forced to close their doors. [Keep our independent clinics \(https://keepourclinics.org/\)](https://keepourclinics.org/) supports these independent abortion providers.
- In MA there are three times as many "Fake Clinics" as licensed abortion providers. These "pregnancy crisis centers" use misleading advertising, do not provide comprehensive reproductive health care, and may cause delays in women accessing care. [Expose Fake Clinics \(https://www.exposefakeclinics.com/\)](https://www.exposefakeclinics.com/) provides information and action steps to end these predatory practices.
- Educate yourself on the new vernacular when talking about abortion and reproductive justice and learn more about how to respond to "rumors" and "news" that are going around. Stay tuned for upcoming workshops and lectures by NCJW MA that will focus on updated vernacular and values-based messaging.

TBE's CRJ members:

Abigail Posner and Meredith Ross, Co-Chairs

Staci Eisenberg

Marjorie Freiman

Ediss Gandelman

Amy Gorin

Marilyn Komessar

Clergy/Staff Liaisons: Rabbi Vanessa Harper, Cantor Shanna Zell and Tikkun Olam Organizer Jess Friedman

For more information and to join the efforts of the CJR, please write to TBEreprojustice@gmail.com