

# voice

IN OUR OWN

## National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda



As another year ends, *In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda* gives a special "thank you" to our seven Strategic Partners— Black Women for Wellness, Black Women's Health Imperative, New Voices for Reproductive Justice, SisterLove, SisterReach, SPARK Reproductive Justice Now, and Women With a Vision – for your tireless work and unwavering commitment. You are a thrill to work with.

To our Reproductive Justice co-conspirators who have our backs every day; our reproductive health and rights colleagues who continue the fight to improve the lives of all women and our funders who demonstrate consistent support and faith in our work— We Thank You!

This end-of-the-year newsletter highlights just a few of our activities in 2016.

### U.S. Supreme Court Amicus Brief

On January 5, 2016, *In Our Own Voice* filed an [amicus brief](#) on behalf of eleven other Black women's Reproductive Justice organizations in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Whole Women's Health v. Hellerstedt*. The *amicus* brief highlighted the devastating impact on Black women's reproductive health caused by the passage of Texas



sham law HB2. The Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) law forced the closure of more than half of the 40-plus clinics in the state.



On July 29, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the law in a 5-3 decision, reaffirming a woman's constitutional right to make her own decisions about her reproductive health.



## Ad Campaign Takeover

March 14-18, *In Our Own Voice* promoted a week long ad campaign, calling out Rep. Sean Duffy's (R-WI) suggestion that members for the Congressional Black Caucus aren't "standing up for their communities" if they support abortion access. The campaign included homepage "takeovers" on the websites of major Washington, DC publications, including The Hill, Politico and Roll Call. A hardcopy wrap ad was also included with the Washington Post and distributed to all Congressional offices on March 15.



## Anti-Abortion Race and Sex Selection Bill



Marcela Howell, Founder and Executive Director, *In Our Own Voice*, and other activists joined Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) and Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) for

## Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls

Marcela Howell, Founder and Executive Director for *In Our Own Voice*, provided [testimony](#) about Reproductive Justice during the historic launch hearing for the Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls on April 28, 2016. She was joined by several other notable names, including Melissa Harris Perry, formerly of MSNBC, Sharon Cooper, mother of Sandra Bland, Kimberle Crenshaw, professor at UCLA and Columbia Law Schools and Beverly Bond, founder of Black Girls Rock, to name a few.

Representatives Bonnie Watson Coleman



apress conference on Capitol Hill to publicly denounce PRENDA.

In April, *In Our Own Voice* submitted [testimony](#) to the House Judicial Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice discussing the devastating impact of race and sex selection abortion bills. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Trent Frank (R-AZ) targets women of color who seek abortion healthcare services by imposing “criminal penalties on anyone who knowingly or unknowingly assists with an abortion” sought on the basis of sex-selection or race-selection.

(D-NJ), Robin Kelly (D-IL) and Yvette Clarke (D-NY) are co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls and are credited with recognizing the need for better national focus on the issues impacting Black women and girls on the federal level.



## All Access 2016



September 10, *In Our Own Voice* was a proud cosponsor of the All Access 2016 national concert in support of abortion rights and access in Cleveland, OH. The sold out concert, hosted by comedienne Jessica Williams, featured performances by singer Sia, comedienne Leslie Jones, and singer/dancer Teyana Taylor.

Simultaneous events took place across the country, including events hosted by *In Our Own Voice* partner organizations. Besides being part of the national coordinating group for the main Cleveland

## Second Annual Strategic Communications for Policy Change Summit

Our second annual *Strategic Communications for Policy Change Summit* took place in Washington, DC from September 23-27. Once again Dr. Dorothy Roberts delivered the keynote address around our 2016 theme - “Race in America: Where We (Black Women) Enter.”



More than 68 staff, board members and activists from our partner organizations participated in panel discussions, strategic planning groups around leadership development, policy shift and advocacy, movement building and joint campaigns. Activists heard from several experts on food deserts, the fight for \$15, affordable housing and gentrification, and voter engagement. Activists also participated in an all-day strategic communications training coordinated by Black Women’s Health Imperative. The five-

concert, New Voices for Reproductive Justice also hosted events in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and a boat ride and rally in Cleveland. Our other partner organizations also hosted events in their respective states, including SisterReach in Memphis, Black Women for Wellness in Los Angeles, and SPARK Reproductive Justice Now in Atlanta.

day Summit culminated in a “Hill Education Day” where activists met with more than 35 congressional members and staff to discuss abortion rights and access, contraceptive equity and comprehensive sex education.

Check out this slide show!



## Building Our Power: Reproductive Health, Rights & Justice Advocacy

*In Our Own Voice* and Planned Parenthood Federation of America co-convened an eight-month policy and advocacy process where national and state sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations identified the priority policy issues for 2017. During this process, all of our partner organizations served as co-chairs of the various working groups.

On Tuesday, December 13, more than 300 reproductive health, rights and justice activists convened to further develop these policy issues and to strategize on ways to work together in the face of what is sure to be a hostile Administration and Congress. More than 90 organizations signed onto a [joint statement](#) of solidarity, and commitment to protecting and expanding access to reproductive healthcare.



## What's Ahead in 2017!

In 2017 we will continue to lift up the voices and leadership of Black women, enhance our work on policy change and movement building, and expand our voter engagement programs. In March, we will release *Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Voices: The State of Black Women and Reproductive Justice*, an innovative, first-of-its-kind report that examines the impact state policy has on the health and wellbeing of Black women and girls. *In Our Own Voice* will be a 10-city tour to brief state policy makers, reproductive health, rights and justice colleagues, and community leaders about the critical findings of the report. We welcome your attendance and support.

*In Our Own Voice* will also commission a new national poll to ascertain the attitudes of Black women and men on abortion rights and access, contraceptive equity, comprehensive sex education, economic justice, especially increasing the minimum wage and equal pay, and voting rights. The poll release date is in early Summer.



**Wishing everyone Happy Holidays!**

Marcela, Michelle & Donna

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