

voice

IN OUR OWN

National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

June 2016 Newsletter

2016 Women's Reproductive Health Blueprint

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda will be the co-convenor, along with Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), of the 2016 Women's Reproductive Health Blueprint which outlines the national and international sexual and reproductive health priorities of reproductive health, rights and justice organizations. As in the past, the 2016 Blueprint will be presented to the new Administration.

To ensure that this year's Blueprint process incorporates a Reproductive Justice frame, a Reproductive Justice organization has been named as co-lead for each of the working groups. Additionally, as a co-convenor, we will seek advice and input from each of you as the process goes forward. This is an exciting time as the reproductive rights, health and justice communities intentionally design a process that will ensure all voices are heard.

We look forward to working with PPFA, our fellow RJ colleagues and the community of advocates to once again make the Blueprint a truly impactful report that reflects our collective priority to positively impact the health and wellbeing of all women and girls.

Do No Harm Act of 2016

In Our Own Voice joins reproductive health, rights and justice advocates to recognize and thank Congressmen Joe Kennedy III (D-MA) and Bobby Scott (D-VA) for introducing the Do No Harm Act on May 18. This bill amends the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and clarifies the law's original intent; to protect the fundamental American value of religious freedom without allowing that freedom to inflict harm on others.



This legislation is significant and necessary at this time as there has been a significant increase in the number of states proposing legislation modeled after the federal RFRA, with explicit intentions to restrict rights to others. LGBTQ communities, single mothers and women of color would be especially vulnerable if any of these bills passed. As example of the potential impact, in 2014 the Supreme Court ruled in [Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores](#) that under RFRA certain employers could refuse to provide birth control coverage guaranteed to their employees under law. This decision left women employees without coverage until an accommodation was extended to them, and even that accommodation has been challenged in [Zubik v. Burwell](#).

Summer Intern

In Our Own Voice is pleased to welcome our 2016 Summer Intern, Kayla Fisher. A recipient of a Tananbaum Fellow, Kayla just completed her junior year at Vassar College where she is studying political science and sociology. She comes to us with a track record in social-justice organizing and leadership both at Vassar and in the surrounding Poughkeepsie community.

Kayla is working on our *Next Generation Leadership Initiative*, a two-year program to train and mentor young students at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and young staff from our partner organizations.



We are excited to have her as part of the team!

Organizational Partner Updates



**BLACK WOMEN
FOR WELLNESS**

Black Women for Wellness [Get Smart B4U Get Sexy Program](#) Coordinator Issachar Curbeon was out and about during May, presenting workshops at Gardena & King Drew Medical Magnet High Schools, the RISE UP Youth Conference and the Leimert Park ART Walk. Issachar was also tabling at Spring into Love and meeting weekly with the young women of the Women's Leadership Project.

In May and June young women meet weekly at Black Women for Wellness to create a curriculum and video addressing the sexual harassment and violence women faced daily in school. Each week young women discuss the challenges and solutions; create reproductive life plans and discuss issues related to a culture driven by media stereotypes.

To learn more about these programs and the other work happening at Black Women for Wellness, click [here](#).

On May 11th, during National Women's Health Week, SisterReach founder and CEO, Cherisse Scott, spoke live with GirlTrek about the sexual health wellness of Black women and girls as a critical component to their overall health and wellness. [GirlTrek](#) is a groundbreaking national nonprofit and health movement that mobilizes women to live their healthiest, most fulfilled lives through developing a routine of walking. Click [here](#) to listen to Cherisse and GirlTrek's mini-documentary and discussion.

SisterReach and Provide hosted a special faith-specific all options pregnancy counseling training on May 18 in Nashville. Participants learned about issues that impact a family's ability to make their best reproductive healthcare decisions in Tennessee as well as how people of faith they can offer compassionate care to other believers who might seek their counsel in the midst of an unexpected pregnancy. The session and conversation were based on the spiritual foundation framed by SisterReach's own Rev. Faye London. To learn more about this training click [here](#).



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