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New report outlines action agenda for interlocking issues of reproductive, racial, criminal justice

Report briefing puts human face to Black women's reproductive justice challenges

WASHINGTON — Today, In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda launched its groundbreaking new report on the state of Black women and reproductive justice. The report offers firsthand accounts of the lived experiences of Black women, giving voice to issues including abortion access, the Affordable Care Act, maternal health and equal access to contraception.

"We held listening sessions with Black women across the country," said Marcela Howell, founder and executive director of In Our Own Voice. "This report documents the real-life barriers to reproductive health that Black women face and examines the impact of these barriers on our lives."

The report, "[Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Voices: The State of Black Women and Reproductive Justice](#)," exposes how both political parties give short shrift to the needs of Black women. One party consistently fails to address police violence against Black people even as we witness yet another Black woman — Charleena Lyles — being murdered in front of her own children.

And the other party ignores our needs in its frantic push to attract more white male voters into its ranks. "But let us be clear, a vision of economic equality that does not also address the multiple facets of racial and gender inequality is not progress — it's Jim Crow," Howell said.

"The time is now for Black women to use the power of our vote and our lived experiences to inform real policy change," Howell added.

After introducing the report, Howell turned the program over to a panel, which delved more deeply into the issues of Black women and the criminal justice system, abortion access, and HIV/AIDS among Black women. The panelists were Deon Haywood (executive director, Women with a Vision), Marsha Jones (executive director, The Afya Center) and Masonia Traylor (founder and CEO, Lady BurgAndy). Heidi Williamson (CEO of Idieh Consultant Group) moderated the panel.

At the end of the briefing, Howell outlined an agenda for action stemming from the report. The action agenda includes prioritizing voter engagement and GOTV efforts; collaborating with local advocates to develop and support policy change that promotes reproductive justice; investing in Black women leaders, financially and otherwise; building coordinated responses to injustice across movements, organizations, communities and systems; and above all, calling for Black women to tell the stories of their lived experiences and leadership.

“Black women need equity, but we also need to take charge of our own lives by continuing to lead in activism, run for office, finance other Black women candidates and be our own best experts in organizing for policy change,” Howell said.

For more information about “[Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Voices: The State of Black Women and Reproductive Justice](#),” or to schedule an interview with Marcela Howell or one of the panelists, contact Amy Lebowitz (amy@caminopr.com or 212-255-2575).

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[In Our Own Voice: National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda](#) is a national reproductive justice organization focused on lifting up the voices of Black women at the national and regional levels in our ongoing policy fight to secure reproductive justice for all women and girls. Our eight strategic partners include: Black Women for Wellness, Black Women’s Health Imperative, New Voices for Reproductive Justice, SisterLove, Inc. SisterReach, SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW, The Afiya Center and Women With A Vision.