

## Reproductive Justice: Rooted in Power

During our Week 1 discussion, we marked the 30th anniversary of the birth of "Reproductive Justice," which originated at an informal caucus of 12 Black female reproductive advocates and elected officials. Frustrated with the persistent oversight of Black women's needs in the fight for reproductive health services, these trailblazers gathered at a health reform conference in Chicago in 1994 to lay the foundation for a movement that would transform the conversation around reproductive rights. We engaged in a powerful conversation with Dr. Toni Bond, one of the founding mothers of Reproductive Justice, and activist Ericka Hart—exploring the historical evolution of Reproductive Justice in American politics. We traced its origins, uncovered systemic injustices impacting Black women's reproductive experiences, and celebrated the resilience and resistance that have fueled the fight for bodily autonomy and self-determination.

### Key Definitions

- **Reproductive Justice:** A framework that goes beyond the limited focus on abortion rights, and encompasses the human right to control our sexuality, our gender, our work, and our reproduction. Reproductive Justice can only be achieved when all women and girls have the complete economic, social, and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our bodies, our families, and our communities in all areas of our lives. At the core of Reproductive Justice is the belief that all women have: the right to have children; the right to not have children; the right to nurture the children we have in a safe and healthy environment.
- **Bodily Autonomy:** The right to make decisions about one's own body, including reproductive choices, without coercion or interference.
- **Self-determination:** The right of individuals and communities to make their own choices and control their own destinies, free from external domination or interference.
- **Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

### Key Reproductive Justice Issues

- **Maternal Mortality Crisis:** The disproportionately high rate of pregnancy-related deaths among Black women in the United States, highlighting systemic inequities in healthcare access and quality.
- **Environmental Justice:** A concept focused on the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect

to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

- **Contraceptive Equity:** The act of providing equal access to safe, effective, and affordable contraceptives so all women can make informed decisions about their bodies.
- **Economic Justice:** A fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and wealth, ensuring everyone has the means to thrive and make choices about their lives.

### Talking Points for Friends and Family:

- **Reproductive Justice was born out of necessity:** The movement emerged from the lived experiences of Black women who recognized the inadequacies of mainstream reproductive rights advocacy in addressing their unique needs and challenges. Share more information about the historical origins of the movement.
- **Systemic injustices shape reproductive experiences:** Today, Black women's reproductive lives continue to be disproportionately impacted by racism, poverty, gender-based discrimination, and other forms of systemic oppression. Discuss how forced sterilization, limited access to healthcare, and environmental and economic injustices disproportionately affect marginalized communities.
- **Resilience and resistance are key:** Despite facing immense challenges, Black women have been at the forefront of the fight for Reproductive Justice. Share stories of activism, community organizing, and advocacy that have empowered individuals and communities to demand change.
- **The fight continues:** The 30th anniversary of Reproductive Justice serves as a reminder that the struggle for reproductive autonomy is ongoing. Encourage continued engagement, education, and support for organizations working to advance reproductive justice for all.

### Remember:

- Reproductive Justice is a human right, not a privilege.
- Centering the experiences of Black women and other marginalized communities is central in the fight for Reproductive Justice.
- Collective action and solidarity are essential to achieving a future where everyone has the power to control their own reproductive lives.

