Access in the bluegrass

Kentucky Health Justice Network
I want you to picture a number in your head: $1,034.

$1,034 is the average cost of the abortion procedures Kentucky Health Justice Network funds. You read that correctly: over $1,000. Many of our callers get their abortion early on, when the cost is between $650 and $850, but many don’t, and pay $1400, $1700, $2000 or more. All of our callers are paying for their abortions out of pocket, since in Kentucky, public Medicaid funds can’t be used to pay for procedures, and neither can most private insurance.

$1,034 in other contexts might mean paying out of pocket for hormone therapy or gender confirmation surgery. In our 2014 survey of trans* Kentuckians’ access to healthcare, 1 in 5 respondents reported that they do not currently have health insurance. And three quarters of respondents who are insured reported that their insurance does not cover any healthcare related to trans* identity, leaving them to cover the full cost of care of their own, or go without.

$1,034: could you afford that out of pocket? I couldn’t. Many of us couldn’t. That’s why organizations like Kentucky Health Justice Network are so critically important: when restrictive policies keep people from the resources they need to be healthy, amazing volunteers like the folks who work with us organize and advocate to correct this issue, on an individual and an institutional level.
Nobody should have to choose between putting food on their table and getting an abortion. Nobody should have to go into debt or take out a payday loan to pay for gender-affirming healthcare that helps them live their life as they want to live it. Nobody should have to forego getting necessary treatment because they don’t speak the language the doctor speaks, or they don’t have a ride to the clinic. Nobody should have to avoid having a child because police brutality or pollution threatens their community.

Thanks for your support around these issues, and I hope you’ll continue to back KHJN and other local and national organizations working on reproductive justice and social justice issues. We’re part of a vibrant movement making a difference every day!

In solidarity,

Caitlin Willenbrink
Chair, KHJN board of directors
Our mission states, "Kentucky Health Justice Network supports Kentuckians towards autonomy in our lives and justice in our communities."

We work from a reproductive justice framework. As defined by SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice collective:

The reproductive justice framework – the right to have children, not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments -- is based on the human right to make personal decisions about one's life, and the obligation of government and society to ensure that the conditions are suitable for implementing one's decisions is important for women of color.

It represents a shift for women advocating for control of their bodies, from a narrower focus on legal access and individual choice (the focus of mainstream organizations) to a broader analysis of racial, economic, cultural, and structural constraints on our power.

Reproductive Justice addresses the social reality of inequality, specifically, the inequality of opportunities that we have to control our reproductive destiny. Our options for making choices have to be safe, affordable and accessible, three minimal cornerstones of government support for all individual life decisions. (sistersong.net)

Every day, here's what that means for us:

- We talk with people seeking abortion, advocate with and for them, and provide financial assistance, transportation, interpretation, and lodging to ensure they can get an abortion safely.
- We investigate the barriers that trans*-identified Kentuckians face to accessing basic, competent, gender-affirming healthcare, and opportunities for improving access.
- We educate and dialogue with our community about reproductive justice, power and privilege, sex and sexuality, and self-care.
- We support the work and leadership of people and groups in our community that are doing anti-oppression and racial justice work.
- We support policy development that addresses historical oppression.
This year, KHJN had our third annual Bowl-a-Thon, where we raised over $12,000 (our new record!) to fund abortions and practical support.

Earlier in the year, we also held our third burlesque and variety show that included fire eaters, a local hip hop artist (Tiara P!), a contortionist, a good ole strip tease, and the Salty Shakers (a hip-hop line dancing troupe led by our awesome volunteer Meg!).

And KHJN also took part in the inaugural "Taco or Beer Challenge," a response to the Ice Bucket Challenge that asked donors to do basically the easiest thing ever - eat a taco and/or drink a beer - while also donating to an abortion fund! Learn more at tacoorbeerchallenge.tumblr.com.
This year Kentucky Health Justice Network participated in the Kentuckiana Pride Festival. The annual event kicks off with a parade down Market and Main. The festival continues with a celebration on the Belvedere that includes booths, food, and shows. We shared a table with Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky.

At Pride we debuted our trans health postcards which our organizer designed with information from our trans* health study. They highlight the need and lack of competent and compassionate gender-affirming healthcare. Check them out in this zine.

Throughout the festival we got the chance to talk to people about the All Above All campaign to repeal the Hyde Amendment. Additionally we gave a few condom demonstrations, got a ton of support for comprehensive sex education in schools, and spread the word about KHJN.
In June of 2015 Kentucky Health Justice network attended the Southern Girls Convention held at the Tim Faulkner Gallery in Louisville, KY. Along with a funding contribution we also hosted 4 workshops. 1. on menstruation and the hormone cycle. 2. on how to give yourself a cervical, breast, and pelvic exam, 3. a trans health discussion in which we answered questions about trans health care and healthcare rights in Kentucky for LGBTQ persons.

The SGC had previously been hosted in the early 2000s. The interest of this year's organizers was to bring together a multigenerational, multiracial and intersectional group of feminists in order to promote sharing of information and knowledge via grass roots methods. The SGC also hosted workshops which were aimed at teaching younger generations of feminists how to make zines and share their own stories. The conference is organized by and targeted towards youth. However people of all ages are encouraged to come and share.
I feel worn out and tired. I'm an African American woman living in the south. I've known about racism and I've been experiencing it for sometime. However, with the advent of Facebook, my own transformation as a person, and my passion to bring about social change I feel that racism has become an inescapable specter constantly looming on the horizon of my mind. With that being said, over the past 5 years I have become passionate about social justice and education. I became this way through self education as well as professors, friends, community members, and countless other resources.

What I found was amazing to me, so many experiences and viewpoints that I had never even considered. I couldn't have conceived of those ideas on my own, and I am deeply appreciative for all that has been shared with me. As I have become more vocal I have used social media tools to educate others, to help them perhaps view situations and ideas in a new light. With these actions I make it well known what my interests are.

An unexpected problem has arisen which I did not foresee though. After a horrific event like the murder of Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, or Trayvon Martin there are many days of discussions (usually via social media) I am sought out for my opinion. My white ally friends come to me to express sympathy, sadness, and solidarity with me as a supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement and anti-racism actions all together. It didn't happen at first, but after weeks of videos, pictures, and discussions of these murders I occasionally experience a sadness and fear penetrating so deep I can not fully express it. I feel the need for anything to temporarily distract myself from the violent and racist reality in which I live. because self care is important.

We must take care of ourselves so we can carry on fighting. It is good and necessary to occasionally step back from situations. In the past when these overwhelming periods of sadness and fear came to me, and I was approached by someone saying, "So, like lets talk about police brutality, I mean what do you think happened with Sandra Bland?" I tried to carry on the conversation without letting on my inner turmoil. Now I have developed some tools which have helped me and I hope they can help you too.

1. I make it known how I am feeling and that I am triggered by this conversation. For allies it is necessary to understand that discussing how I feel about police brutality, racism and the ability for white people to kill blacks can be extremely triggering. This is not an abstract concept for me as a black woman, this is my daily life. I feel like this point applies to allies of many sorts. Be aware that even though you're trying to be helpful you could be bringing harm.

2. I like to find an article or two which reflect my views on the situation so I can simply refer them to the link.

3. I am lucky enough to have cultivated many friends and allies who are able to pick up the conversation and carry on when I can not, just as I do for them. This is an excellent way for me to feel supported and like my voice isn't being lost due to my necessity for self care.

4. I remind myself and I remind them (if it seems needed) of the following. A. I do not owe you a lesson, apology, or explanation. B. There is a world of information at your fingertips, smartphones and computers to access innumerable sources of information. I am willing to make some suggestions about which sites and books may set you on your course.
The final point (4) is hard for me sometimes. I've heard the excuse "All racism is just ignorance, you know? If someone sat these people down and explained why it's wrong and harmful, then white people (or whoever) would stop being racist. That's the real problem here, nobody has ever explained why racism is wrong to these people." This puts the weight of making my humanity known to every person I encounter who wants an explanation. This puts the weight on me that if I do not explain myself I am continuing to let someone live in ignorance.

I feel that at this point in our technological advances this argument is itself incredibly harmful. I do not need to humanize myself to someone else. This same thread lends itself to the problem of separating "well spoken" and "respectable" African Americans who don't deserve to be killed from the "hood rats" and "baby mamas" seen as less redeemable and more disposable. "Well she *did* have marijuana in her system." "Well he *did* have a criminal record." The burden is not on me to make someone not be a racist. Sometimes when I attempt to step away by following these steps I'm met with arguments about how I'm selfish. Do not let this dissuade you. Take care of yourself because we have to keep fighting.
The Past Year with Kentucky Support Network

Volunteers drove clients 4497.1 miles to access abortion care.

We worked with over 425 clients.

71.5% had children, 28.5% didn't.

Of the clients that reported having children, 30% had 3 or more children.

Volunteers provided over 455 services:
- Financial advising to 278 clients
- Transportation to 60 clients
- Interpretation to 7 clients
- Lodging to 12 clients
- Clinic referral to 57 clients
- Backline referral to 16 clients
- Other services to 25 clients

Procedure grants: $8,470
Transportation grants: $992
Lodging grants: $1,721

Services:

- financial advising
- transportation
- interpretation
- lodging
- clinic referral
- backline referral
- other
We worked with clients of various ages (figure 1).

The age of our clients was very similar to the ages of clients nationally (figure 1 and figure 2).

We worked with clients who identify with many races and ethnicities (figure 3).

More of our clients identified as white or black than clients nationally. KSN worked with less clients that identify as Hispanic than national groups. (figure 3 and figure 4)
sound bites
Client quotes from follow-up interviews...

"It's so expensive, it keeps people pregnant till the end up with a kid."

"I never thought it would happen to me. I was always very careful, but it did."

"I want it to not be such a taboo."

"Helping pay for it was huge. I work hard, but my money goes to supporting my little boy. I'm a single mom and didn't want to do that again."

"I wish it was more like going to the normal doctor's office."
Written by: Jerusha Beebe (they/them)

The year is 2015. Unintended pregnancies, STIs, and abortions are at an all time low because a variety of birth control options are available and affordable. Sex education is accurate and accessible. There are no restrictions on Medicaid coverage for abortion services and every state has enough abortion clinics to cover the needs of residents. The institution of policing has radically shifted into the hands of communities. Black and brown communities are no longer terrorized with senseless violence, arrests, and murders by police. Families have the resources they need to live healthy lives. Trans folks are no longer denied coverage for trans related health care. Queer people and people with disabilities are represented in sex education and trainings for healthcare professionals. There’s still work to do, but we are closer to an environment where we have autonomy over our lives and our communities can support one another.

Oh wait.
That’s not accurate.
Let’s try that again.

The year is 2015. Planned Parenthood - a health care provider and education resource for low-income people, young people.... all people – has been the victim of a smear campaign designed to create opposition towards this vital organization. Their website was attacked and down for a few days. Not long after, Congress introduced a bill to remove federal funding for Planned Parenthood. It did not pass the Senate, thankfully. Anti-abortion bills continue to be introduced in various states. Some sources estimate that close to 700 people have been killed by the police since January. The #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName movements continue to be necessary because few, if any, changes have been made to address police violence against Black communities. So far this year, the news reports that ten trans women have been murdered – a majority were trans women of color. As an organization, KHJN partnered with researchers at U of L and found that many transgender Kentuckians are not receiving adequate care, access, or coverage for health care.
It is difficult to write that out and not feel a little defeated, but all this opposition reminds us why our work is so important. Our movement consists of the people who need these services, who second-guess having children because of the environments they will be born into, who fight for self-determination and access to health care, who love and care about someone who has been affected by injustice. We deserve and demand access, safety, autonomy, affordability, and accountability. While it is important to focus on and fight the efforts designed to stop us from achieving justice, it is equally important to spend time caring for ourselves and taking proactive steps toward change.

Despite the struggles encountered so far, 2015 has brought forth some positive efforts and movements to achieve justice. Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, and Congresswoman Diana DeGette introduced a proactive bill this July - the EACH Woman Act. This bill would ensure that all people who obtain care or insurance from the federal government would have coverage for abortion services. The bill would also stop any legislation that tries to interfere with private health insurance companies’ decision to cover abortion services. This bill would have a huge impact on the accessibility of abortion for low-income people, people of color, young folks, and immigrant communities. It would also have a huge impact on Kentucky because we are one of many states that have a multitude of restrictions on abortion coverage. While the course of this bill is unknown, we stand behind and support this proactive effort to protect abortion coverage for all. Head over to www.allaboveall.org to learn more about the bill and how you can show your support!

Another important effort for change in 2015 is the #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName movements. The #BlackLivesMatter movement continues to grow and fight for change in regard to police brutality faced by Black communities. In May of 2015, the #SayHerName report was released – expanding the scope of the conversation around police brutality. #SayHerName brings attention to the stories and experiences of Black women who have faced police violence. Both of these hashtags bring attention to the connection between police brutality and reproductive justice – as safety and the ability to raise children without fear are crucial components for reproductive autonomy and justice. You can read more about #SayHerName at http://www.aapf.org/sayhernamereport/.
Continuing the trend of highlighting barriers to reproductive justice that low-income people face, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg reminds us that:

“There's a sorry situation in the United States, which is essentially that poor women don't have choice. Women of means do. They will, always. ... That we have one law for women of means and another for poor women is not a satisfactory situation.”

While awareness is never enough for bringing about change, it is still helpful to have a prominent, vocal supporter for reproductive justice.

There is still a few months left of this year, and there will no doubt be continued attacks on our communities. We can expect some interesting comments and moves with the upcoming presidential election. But we will continue to fight. We will continue to support one another, find connections between movements, share our ideas, and work toward achieving change.

I'll see you there. :)

She argues that high-tech culture changed the terms with which we used to consider ourselves. Kinda' like how folks used to think the sun crowded the earth, huh?
Volunteer Spotlight with Pat Canon

What brought you to Southern Indiana/Kentucky? What does your life look like outside of KSN? I was raised in Champaign II. and left when I was 21. I wandered around and have lived in 7 different states. There's no short story, but I had a third cousin who had a ten acre farm in Henryville, IN. She was trying to sell the farm right when I wanted to move with my son, who was 3 years old then. I had visited the farm once when I was 14, and I bought it based on what I had seen then. I raised goats and farmed for 8 years. My son is an only child, and when he was 11, I realized his friends were exclusively goats. At that point, I thought we should move into town. Since then I continued to parent as a single mom and made a living through independent and corporate accounting. Recently, due to health issues, I'm taking it easy, volunteering as I can and spending time with my granddaughter.

What do you do for KSN? What other reproductive health volunteerism are you involved with? I started escorting in 2010. Shortly after, I began transporting clients to and from the Louisville clinic when the clinic requested it. Previously, A Fund had been doing transportsations to the Louisville clinic as needed. Transportation has been my central effort, because even though abortion is legal, it is not truly accessible if you can't get there. Since the beginning of KSN, I have continued the transportation effort and also work with the hotline. Because of my health I've had to back off a bit. That's really heartbreaking, but I am still involved in the administrative and decision making side of KSN.

How open are you about your volunteerism? I've always been open, but not incredibly vocal. As I've gotten more involved, I started writing for the escort blog (EverySaturdayMorning.net) and was interviewed about my work. So I can't be shy about it now. The surprising re-occurrence is that when I do publicly talk about escorting or KSN, someone will take me aside and tell me they've had an abortion, that they directly relate to the cause, even if they feel they can't be open about it. The personal stories I hear make me glad I'm open about how I volunteer.

Why do you support reproductive justice? Everyone should have a choice when and if to have children. I've seen lives destroyed from not having the choice, in the form of public ridicule, rushed marriages, and the list goes on. Also, every child should be a wanted child. For example, I wanted to adopt my younger
cousins who were abused. I worked for a year to get parental rights signed to me. I couldn’t get it done as an unmarried, 18-year-old woman. I also had an interesting upbringing. Every summer my mom would send me to my grandparents, who worked one summer at St. Joseph’s. I donned there, because ‘it was good for me’. And it was in an unnerving way. I heard stories at 8 or 9 you shouldn’t have to hear, and it convinced me every child should be wanted.

**What experiences or events prompted your activism?** I have always been interested in reproductive rights starting at an early age. Like most people, life happens and we get caught up in our day-to-day chores. The murder of George Tiller in May 2009 was my wake up call. It made me realize I needed to reprioritize my life to free time to be more active in support of abortion. I started reading and asking questions. A friend and I were talking about his murder and have the common bond of both being spurred to activism by that crime. She was able to start right away, but I was delayed almost a year before I could start volunteering. It has changed my life.

**Unlike other KSN volunteers, you lived through Roe V Wade. What were your concerns/hopes for this decision?** I was 23 when the decision was made. My friends and I were more concerned about not getting pregnant in the first place. Abortion was a side issue, and what I really hoped for was more access to birth control and education. There were people I believe had an abortion, but it wasn’t something you could talk about, with anyone. The news didn’t address it like they do now either. I was more supportive of the Equal Rights Amendment, which was filed, again, in 1972. I wanted equal rights and equal pay. I even joined NOW for a short stint. I hoped for the ERA so we wouldn’t have to do this inch by inch work for reproductive rights. Only 35 of the necessary 38 states ratified, and it could never pass in today’s political climate.

**What cultural and policy shifts are needed for true reproductive justice?** We are in a poor social/political climate for that kind of change. We are in a bad social/political climate. There’s a meme with “The 1950s called, and they want you back.” We are in a similar climate when it comes to women’s health. Young people are great about using social media, but we need to get more and more people out there. I’m hoping the Planned Parenthood sting backfires. People are coming out to support PP, who would normally not be vocal. Most importantly, vote locally. Pro-life organizations advise people to start in local politics, to move up into power and control to take control of a city. If you don’t vote for school board members, guess what? If you don’t vote for your local councilmen, guess what happens?
Volunteer for Kentucky Support Network

KSN is entirely ran by volunteers. KSN is Kentucky's only abortion fund, which also provides practical support through transportation, interpretation and financial referrals. KSN operates with the help of the following volunteer roles.

**Transportation**

What is the need: Clinics require patients have someone ride them to and from the clinic. Many of our clients do not have a supportive person to drive them. Also, only two clinics operate in Kentucky, meaning many rural are even more disadvantaged.

Who we are looking for: Supportive individuals with a functional car. We look for volunteers with varied schedules and from every city to accommodate our array of clients.

**Interpretation**

What is the need: The surgical procedure is only a small part of accessing an abortion. During appointments, clients are required to take in a lot of information. Interpretation is required for non-English speakers. However, the clinics do not provide this service. Sometimes clients will bring non-supportive family members or even anti-choice professional interpreters to assist them. You can imagine how vulnerable our clients are in that situation.

Who we are looking for: Bilingual supportive individuals. While some languages are more common than others, ideally we want to have a volunteer for every language we might encounter.

**Hotline**

What is the need: Clients access KSN services through our hotline. Many clients who call have not told another person that they are seeking an abortion. Hotliners are there to guide clients through information, options and planning on a topic that is otherwise unspoken.

Who we are looking for: Supportive individuals who can commit to managing the hotline for rotating week-long shifts. During a shift, the hotline will respond to each message within a 24 hour period. Volunteers should have an ability/interest in case management.

Sounds good?

email us at organizer@khjn.org
Ways to practice self care

REMEMBER: everyone is different. What works for some will not work for all. Pay attention and learn what works for you and be realistic about what to expect from yourself. It’s to be expected that “what works for you” could change.

During a crisis

Count slowly as you breathe (inhale for 5, exhale for 5…)
Change your environment – take a short walk, or step outside. Even a trip to the bathroom or water fountain.
Do something small that feels normal to you – draw a little doodle; make a list; touch something familiar to you.
Ask yourself if your body has the fuel it needs.
Address any shortages.
Call or text a supportive friend (or ask a nearby friend to sit/talk with you)

Day to day

Get enough sleep
Eat well (within reason) based on your needs and abilities
Exercise
Spend time with people/animals who bring you joy
Spend time with YOURSELF
Pamper your body (inside and out) and your mind!
Have some orgasms!! (With or without a buddy!)

Do NOT be hard on yourself about a) things you can’t control; b) the fact that the things you can control can be hard to change, and results take time. This can apply to physical, mental, and emotional states.
Allow yourself to indulge in the maybe-not-so-healthy things in life.
Try not to overindulge.

Compassion fatigue, also known as secondary traumatic stress (STS), is a condition characterized by a gradual lessening of compassion over time. It is common among individuals that work directly with trauma victims such as nurses, psychologists, first responders, and health unit coordinators.

Ask yourself:
Is this struggle worth my stress?
What do I have control over in this situation?
Can I ask for support/backup from other folks so I don’t feel like this is all on me?

Vicarious traumatization (VT) is a transformation in the self of a trauma worker or helper that results from empathic engagement with traumatized clients and their reports of traumatic experiences. Its hallmark is disrupted spirituality, or a disruption in the trauma workers’ perceived meaning and hope.

Things to watch out for:
Vicarious Trauma - cannot be avoided. See lists above for coping mechanisms. Sometimes professional help is needed.

Compassion fatigue – is avoidable. A strong focus on self care will help limit the possibility of compassion fatigue.

BURNOUT – Is avoidable. Maintain realistic expectations of how much you can take on, both for yourself and others.
Abortion access is just one small piece of health justice. People in our community experience lots of other challenges to their bodily autonomy, and all of these issues matter. KHJN is beginning to address some of these issues through our trans* health program.

Jayden Thai (a PhD candidate in psychology at UofL) and Jhalak Dholakia and Lindsay Snow (students at the UofL School of Medicine) lent their expertise and many hours of service to make this survey a reality. Giselle Henry is the current KHJN organizer and has begun building a workshop from this research that will share resources and strategies that trans* people and allies can use to advocate for equitable healthcare.

Farah Ardeşir, KHJN’s organizer from 2012 through 2014, planted the seeds for this program by partnering with the University of Louisville to develop a survey that would get input from trans* and gender-nonconforming Kentuckians about their experiences with accessing primary, gender-affirming, and reproductive and sexual healthcare within the geographical, social, and economic context of our state. We received 81 valid responses, and those responses inform the findings presented here.

Respondents reported that their current primary healthcare provider(s) is not competent in providing care to transgender-identified individuals.
Country-wide organizations are doing important research and advocacy work on this front, most notably the National Trans Discrimination Survey conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National LGBTQ Task Force. But these projects sometimes lack the local expertise and connectedness of organizations like KHJN, which was why our survey was imperative. We were able to gather and analyze a higher volume of data than the NTDS and will be able to leverage our community connections to turn data and needs assessment into education and action.

Respondents traveled over 25 miles one way to access trans* related specialized healthcare.

Respondents insurance plans do not cover any healthcare related to trans* identity, leaving them to cover the full cost of care of their own, or go without.

This page paints a picture of some experiences that trans* Kentuckians have had in trying to access basic healthcare, but this is just a starting point. Access to healthcare that’s affordable and respectful is a human right and a matter of reproductive justice. Housing and employment protections, access to a living wage, immigration reform, freedom from police brutality -- these are all relevant and important issues in the lives of trans* and gender nonconforming Kentuckians too!
Unforeseen Challenges and surprises of reproductive rights work from my perspective

by Giselle Wilde

I come from a background of fundamentalist Christianity which disregards the idea of reproductive rights, if for nothing else, but the belief that a woman’s body is not her own, it belongs to God. Bodily autonomy was a non existent concept in my life until I was 19 years old. At that point I had finally started to find avenues towards educating myself about reproductive rights. When I was around 15 years old I realized that the system I lived within was terrible and controlling, nobody respected my body. My body belonged to my parents and eventually it would belong to my husband, if I attempted to ever operate outside of that then I was bringing “dishonor” on my family. We briefly discussed “liberal activists” occasionally and from an anti/non social justice/activism background I envisioned a utopian existence for activists in which everyone agreed and fully supported each other, but reality isn’t so simple, when I was growing up the idea of activists like those who I currently work with was idealized, “everyone just gets a long”. But that isn’t the real world, in fact the issue of hierarchies and power struggles is very present within reproductive rights activism and other forms of activism, and just as the fundamentalist conservatives around me refused to humanize reproductive justice advocates I’ve found (much to my shock at first) that occasionally reproductive justice advocates have the same problem.

A big challenge for me is learning how to navigate the reality of hierarchies within activist circles. I suppose one of the biggest things I’ve found in myself is the belief that each person should be encouraged to be an autonomous unit within the movement, there should be no singular spokesperson, everyone should be informed and encouraged to ask questions and be authoritative.
As far as “who gets it” I feel that it’s really hard for people who used to be radical activists (who have toned it down a bit for whatever reason) to recognize the validity of younger and different people in their space, without the need for the older persons to be recognized for their earlier work. I never foresaw this issue but I'm betting it's present in a lot of organizations. This allows for 2 things

A. For the organization to not become stale and B. for the explicit understanding that there is no homogeneity within activism— and that's a good thing. It DOES make everything difficult because it takes more time to communicate and understand each other, but it's empowering.

A reality of this work is the prominence of white folks, this makes it easier for some internalized racism to remain alive within the work we do. I have encountered the misconception from well meaning white activists that I come from an impoverished family, that I am probably the first in my family to get a degree from a university. These forms of racism are not violent but they are present and they do need to be corrected with the presence of people of color. Women of color have historically been reproductive justice activists and we remain to be so, we must be empowered to call out racism, even when it may come from powerful allies.

Furthermore, this work is often associated with heteronormativity and disgendered persons, and often activists can use gendered language, "women who are seeking abortions...” “women who need the birth control pill...” etc. If we are to call ourselves intersectional and a reproductive justice/reproductive rights interested people then we must overcome the indoctrination of gender norms. Just as we have to seek out people of color and empower them, allowing their voices to be heard and carefully listening, the same must be done for LGBTQ people. Reproductive justice is not a need specific to “women” or “men”, it is a human need.
Kentucky Support Network Hotline Number
1-855-KSN-4KSN (1-855-576-4576)

http://khjn.tumblr.com/

https://twitter.com/KyHealthJustice

https://www.facebook.com/KentuckyHealthJusticeNetwork

http://www.kentuckyhealthjusticenetwork.org/

Made in Louisville, KY in 2015 by Giselle, Caitlin, Olivia, June, Meg, Jepusha & Meredith