

# Two Things Every UU Should Know About Reproductive Justice

## 1. “Reproductive justice” has a broad agenda, and is different than “reproductive rights”.

The understanding of reproductive justice has evolved over time, and there is no universally accepted definition. However, all definitions recognize that the need for access to resources goes far beyond abortion alone. These four principles are accepted by many as representative:

- People have a right to have children.
- People have a right not to have children.
- People have a right to raise their children in safe and healthy environments.
- People have a right to health and self-determination regarding their bodies and sexuality, free from oppression and shame.

*Notably, reproductive justice is not simply a different phrase that is interchangeable with reproductive health or reproductive rights, and nor is it intended to replace these concepts.* Instead, reproductive justice is a framework created by women of color that combines the fields of reproductive rights, social justice, and human rights. It is grounded in the particular experiences, values, priorities, and leadership of women of color.

## 2. Reproductive justice has a different approach.

It's not enough to focus on reaching a set of end goals through any means possible. Instead, our approach must reflect the world we are trying to create. This includes:

- **Constantly talking about the impact our personal identities (including race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, wealth, etc) have on our viewpoints and actions.** In order to successfully change the culture, we must be open to growth and change ourselves.
- **Centering the marginalized.** Changing structures of power means that leadership must come from the groups most affected by the denial of access to rights and resources, including women and people of color, people struggling to make ends meet, and young people.
- **Intersectionality.** The work must be intersectional, which means engaging multiple identities and building coalitions rather than trying to keep people and issues confined in separate boxes. Changing structures of power requires that we view identities as linked and formulate solutions that are based on collaboration and solidarity.

For people who support reproductive justice and are not already familiar with the framework, it is sometimes challenging but always important to seek relationships of accountability and leadership with women of color and organizations they lead. This is critical because it helps to avoid misappropriation, where people are claiming to do reproductive justice work without knowing what it means and without being accountable to the experiences and leadership of women of color.