



## **Reproductive Justice (RJ) Framework**

Reproductive Justice (RJ) is a framework that emerged from Black women-led and -centered advocacy in the 1990s. It evolved from the effort to broaden the abortion-centered reproductive rights movement of the 1990s by integrating social justice and human rights. RJ applies an intersectional analysis to social issues, which means it demands recognition of the full context of a person's life and the unique social conditions we each navigate and live within. Consequently, the RJ framework demands centering the voices and experiences of marginalized individuals and communities. It is a necessary and radical framework that has ignited a global movement.

SPARK Reproductive Justice Now! (SPARK) follows in the footsteps and embraces the history of people of color who have further elaborated RJ as the fulfillment of the human rights to: 1) bodily autonomy, including the right to have safe, consensual, and pleasurable sex and with whomever we want; 2) prevent pregnancy, end a pregnancy, or to get pregnant and stay pregnant; 3) birth a child, keep or give up a child, and live through and beyond the first year of after labor, birth and delivery, for both parent and child; 4) cultivate, sustain, and grow the family one desires with the person or people one chooses, in the community one chooses. Reproductive Justice dictates that the above rights must be possible to realize and enjoy with respect and dignity and free from violence or coercion. Furthermore, in agreement with international legal norms, RJ acknowledges that governing bodies and institutions have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the above rights, by ensuring the conditions exist for every person to self-actualize and make their own decisions for themselves, their families and their communities.

As an analytic framework embedded within the human rights and social justice paradigms, RJ requires sexual and reproductive autonomy as well as gender equity for all humans. RJ offers new language, meanings, and concepts to better characterize the multiple forms of systemic and institutionalized oppression that constrain people's every day interactions, decisions, and overall quality of life, particularly for people who are marginalized or have multiple marginalized identities. We at SPARK value the breadth and depth of RJ to serve in multiple ways: as an analytic framework, a movement, a practice, and a vision.<sup>1</sup> Intersectionality is the process and human rights are the goal by which we achieve RJ and therefore meet the needs of communities that have been marginalized throughout history.<sup>2</sup>

## **Intersectionality: The Process of Examination**

The founders of the reproductive justice movement adopted intersectionality as a complementary analytic tool, as a means to strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the complex ways in which disparities in society are created and sustained. Intersectionality is a method of analysis that recognizes the historical and contemporary experiences of marginalized communities as a product of interconnected systems of oppression and discrimination.<sup>3</sup> Intersectionality acknowledges the existing power differentials at play in a person's life, based on social constructs and ideologies including but not limited to racism, sexism, gender bias, classism, ableism, xenophobia, and islamophobia. Intersectionality allows us to better recognize, understand, and describe the power relationships

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<sup>1</sup> [a] Luna, Z, Luker, K. Reproductive Justice. *Annu Rev Law Soc Sci.* 2013. 9:327-52

<sup>2</sup> Loretta Ross and Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice An Introduction. (Reproductive Justice: A New Vision for the 21st Century)* Oakland, CA: University of California Press. 2017.

<sup>3</sup> The method of intersectionality is based on the following works: Crenshaw, Kimberle. Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8, 139–167; Collins, H, Bilge, S. *Intersectionality.* Cambridge: Polity Press; 2016.



informing people's constrained social conditions and experiences, how people relate to one another, and who benefits and thrives versus who suffers and experiences social, physical and financial setbacks and indignities.

For example, when we apply intersectionality to public health and health services research and delivery, we better recognize and understand how certain people and bodies in different communities are systematically assigned different, constructed levels of value. An intersectional approach leads us to identify the interconnected power relations involved in social constructs of race, class, and gender, which work together to produce disparities in illness, poor health and wellness, and mortality.<sup>4</sup> An intersectional analysis furthermore highlights the ways in which disparities in gender, race, and class are in many cases intentionally maintained by those who benefit from systems of oppression. We uncover the roots of social inequality and injustices in healthcare. Once uncovered, we can then most effectively advocate to change policies driving institutional culture, organization, and structure that sustain inequality in healthcare and in doing so bring us one step closer to achieving reproductive justice for all.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Schulz, A, Mullings, L. *Gender, Race, Class and Health: Intersectional Approaches*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass. 2006

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*