No Turning Back: The Past, Present, and Future of Reproductive Justice

Schedule of Events
Friday, March 17, 2017

The Northeastern University Program in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; the Northeastern Humanities Center; and the Collaborative Research Cluster on Reproductive Justice present:

NO TURNING BACK: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

A daylong symposium at Northeastern University

March 17, 2017 | 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Northeastern University
Cabral Center, John D. O’Bryant African American Institute
40 Leon Street, Boston, MA

Reception to follow at the Northeastern School of Law, Dockser Hall, 65 Forsyth Street

Co-sponsored by the College of Social Sciences and Humanities; College of Arts, Media, and Design; School of Law and Center for Health Law and Policy; Bouvé College of Health Sciences School of Nursing and Institute for Urban Health Research and Practice; the Programs in Human Services and Politics, Philosophy, and Ethics; and the Departments of Cultures, Societies, & Global Studies, English, History, Philosophy & Religion, Political Science, and Sociology & Anthropology

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Equality under law and basic personal freedom—the right to control choices about one’s own health and body—has been an ongoing struggle for women over time and across the globe. With the new administration, abortion retains its place in the American political system as one of the most divisive issues despite women’s health being at stake. The GOP Platform explicitly states the desire of the Republican party to curb access to reproductive rights, and vice-president Pence has long been one of the most vociferous anti-choice politicians, vowing to overturn Roe as soon as possible. Many state governments have enacted legal measures that block access to abortion and other health services or mandate that women receive incorrect and misleading information. The shift in government and the ongoing attacks on abortion service providers and their capacity to provide safe healthcare for women means that we are entering one of the most anti-choice and misogynist times in recent memory. The struggle for reproductive justice continues to animate activists and theorists around the globe— to protect what little we currently have and to forge productive and wide-ranging social justice strategies. This daylong symposium - creatively engaging both on-the-ground activism and more academic understandings - is our attempt to bring into dialogue current debates around reproductive justice and to place those debates and political strategies in historical context.
8:30 am  
**Arrival and Registration**  
*Coffee and light breakfast will be served*

9:00 am  
**Welcome and Introduction**  
*Suzanna Walters, Professor of Sociology and Program Director of WGSS, Northeastern University; Editor-in-Chief, Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

*Uta Poiger, Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities*

9:10 am  
**Without Apology: Historical and Cultural Contexts**  
*Moderator: Margot Abels, Northeastern University*

**Rickie Solinger, Historian**  
*Reproductive Bondage, Yesterday and Tomorrow*

When the state criminalizes reproductive human rights, it also takes the right to treat different groups of women differently and to position the law as the gravest source of danger to reproducing persons. How does our past experience with state dominion in this arena structure our thinking about what we face in the current repressive regime?

**Kelly O’Donnell, Historian**  
*“Roe” v. “Jane”: Telling Illegal Abortion Stories*

In this talk I will examine retellings of the story of "Jane," the pre-*Roe* underground Chicago abortion group that ultimately decided to perform its own procedures. I will explore how since the 1970s pro-choice women from different generations have evoked the group's history in moments of political crisis--not just a cautionary tale, but as a source of inspiration. I will also reflect on its utility in the present day, as a story of resistance.
Dázon Dixon Diallo, SisterLove, Inc.
*A Culture of Intersectionality: Why Black Women’s Leadership Matters in the Shift of Power and Visibility in Sexual and Reproductive Justice Movements*

The role of culture and multi-generational struggles against multiple forms of oppression in the contemporary framework of intersectionality, the core component of sexual and reproductive justice. My remarks will highlight the meaning and importance of understanding and engaging the contextual story of black women’s leadership and advocacy in establishing meaningful engagement of a diversity of communities and movements in the fight to end sexual and reproductive oppression. I hope to inspire a healthy reflection on the value of exceptionalism; especially in terms of leadership, opposition, and the key issues that continue to challenge our collective progress to true sexual and reproductive liberation.

Katha Pollitt, *The Nation*
*On Stigma and Stigma-Busting*

In recent years, activists have focused on abortion stigma, moving from "Abortion is tragic but necessary" and "here are the bad things that happen when abortion is illegal" to positive arguments in favor of abortion: abortion as a social good, abortion as a normal part of life. Ways activists are trying to portray abortion as normal include storytelling, speakouts, videoing one's own abortion, writing about one's own abortion. What are the strengths and weakness of framing abortion this way?

5 minute break

11:15 am

**Undivided: Reproductive Justice and Social Change**

Moderator: *Sarah Jackson, Northeastern University*

Loretta Ross, Reproductive Justice Author & Co-Creator
*The Power of Reproductive Justice to Challenge Neo-Fascism*

The election of Donald Trump has brought to light many undercurrents of neo-fascism simmering below the surface of American life. Reproductive justice activists have long warned about the need to broaden the movement protecting abortion rights into a human rights movement against white supremacy, neo-fascism, and neo-liberalism. The presentation will provide an analysis of the different strands of the white supremacist movement, and offer a vision of how to build a human rights movement centered on justice in the United States.
Laura Harrison, State University of Minnesota Mankato
*Milk, Money, and Race: From Wet Nurse to ‘Urban Donor’*

This talk will examine an initiative by the Mothers Milk Cooperative (MMC), the first organization in the United States to pay women to "donate" their breast milk. MMC and its for-profit partner Medolac Laboratories planned a pilot program in Detroit, MI that would target African-American women as breast milk donors. The program, they argued, would increase the duration of breastfeeding among black "urban donors," and allow women to delay re-entry into the workforce. I will contextualize the rhetoric surrounding this initiative within the history of racialized reproductive labor in the U.S., and situate black women's resistance to the campaign within a reproductive justice framework.

Carly Thomsen
*Justice and Rights: Rethinking Reproductive Justice Narratives Through Campus-Based Activism*

This talk examines discourses that position reproductive justice as “beyond” reproductive rights, analyzing, more specifically, what we lose politically and epistemologically when we equate abortion with mainstream liberal feminism in our attempts to articulate a reproductive justice politic. I draw from the engaged research projects students complete in my Politics of Reproduction course and the campus-based anti-crisis pregnancy center activism of End Fake Clinics to examine the narratives reproductive justice scholars and activists tell about ourselves.

12:45 pm
*Lunch Break*

*Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts and National Network of Abortion Funds* tabling in Cabral Center lobby

1:30 pm
**Unbound: Reproductive Justice and Legal Impediments**
Moderator: Laura Green, Northeastern University

Khiara M. Bridges, Boston University Department of Anthropology & Boston University School of Law
*Class-Privileged Women of Color and Reproductive Justice*

I will discuss the fraught condition in which class-privileged pregnant women of color in the United States find themselves.
Shoshanna Ehrlich, University of Massachusetts Boston

*Disrupting the Gendered Order of Creation: Religiosity and Abortion Regret*

In its 2007 Carhart v. Gonzales decision, the United States Court upheld the federal ban on late-term abortions in order to protect women from abortion regret – an anti-abortion argument that began making an appearance in the latter part of the last century. Although recognizing that there is “no reliable data to measure the phenomenon,” the Court nonetheless cited the Amicus Curie Brief of the Justice Foundation with its accompanying affidavits from “180 Women Injured by Abortion,” to support this protectionist result. The Court’s reliance on a single amicus brief is deeply troubling, particularly since anti-abortion activists are now relying on Carhart to support restrictions on abortion. In advancing a traumatic conception of abortion, the Court has validated a perspective that is animated by religious antipathy towards abortion as disruptive of the gendered ordering of the world in which motherhood is woman’s true vocation.

Kimberly Mutcherson, Rutgers University School of Law

*A Positive Right to Procreate*

Though the U.S. Supreme Court declared procreation to be a fundamental right in 1942, the contours of that right remain unclear for those who engage in non-coital reproduction with the assistance of reproductive technology. Recognizing that rights often mean little when they cannot be realized, this presentation focuses on making the case for a positive right to procreate. Such a right demands both that the state use its power to protect access to assisted reproduction for those who may face discrimination, including LGBT people and people with disabilities, and that the state provide financial benefits to allow people with constrained resources to afford what are often very costly forms of treatment.

3:00 pm

**On the Ground: Activism and Health Praxis**

*Moya Bailey, Northeastern University*

**Nashira Baril, Birth Sanctuary Boston**

*The Birth Sanctuary: The Genesis of a Boston Birth Center*

This talk will describe the process to-date of a community-led process to launch a freestanding birth center in Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood. Built at the intersection of midwifery, public health, and reproductive justice, the Birth Sanctuary Boston will offer evidence-based care during pregnancy, physiologic birth, and the postpartum period to low-risk individuals in the greater Boston area. Driven to advance equity, the birth center will be a place for healing, connection, reparation, and transformation. Nashira will share early findings from the needs assessment, including powerful survey data from over 400 people in the Boston area.
Bayla Ostrach, Boston University School of Medicine
*From Research to Policy Change – Using Abortion Access Findings to Expedite Medicaid Coverage for Low-Income Pregnant People*

In dialogue with Nashira Baril's presentation on the Birth Sanctuary's ongoing efforts to improve birth equity and access to full-spectrum care for marginalized populations in Boston, and Susan Yanow's discussion of abortion restrictions and how people respond to them, I will present the example of how, with a colleague in public health, I used ethnographic medical-anthropological findings on obstacles to abortion access in Oregon to pressure the state health authority to expedite Medicaid coverage waiting times. This research-to-policy change advocacy framework resulted not only in improvements in abortion access, but likely also in greater, and earlier, access to prenatal care for people carrying to term.

Susan Yanow, MSW, Reproductive Health Consultant
*Putting Abortion Pills into Women’s Hands*

Politicians at the state and national levels have created barriers that hollow out the human right to abortion as a means of controlling our reproductive lives. Yet new technologies, such as medical abortion, make abortion easier and safer than ever, and make it possible for women to take control of the abortion process. This presentation will present facts about self-managed abortion with pills in countries around the world, and in the USA.

4:30 pm
**A Concluding Conversation**
Moderator: Suzanna Walters, Northeastern University

A discussion based on curated questions submitted by the audience during the day.

5:00 pm
**Reception, Dockser Hall Commons**
Welcome and Remarks, Jeremy Paul, Dean, Northeastern University School of Law
About the Panelists

**Nashira Baril** is a public health leader with 15 years of experience in community-based and organizational approaches to advance racial justice. She is leading the design process for Boston’s first freestanding birth center, a community-based effort to expand the range of options for individuals and families in pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period. She works part time at Human Impact Partners on the design and facilitation of a national capacity-building program for health equity leaders. With experience in strategic planning, workshop design and facilitation, and leadership development, she also freelances with organizations to deepen their equity work. Nashira has an MPH in maternal and child health and a BA in Women’s Studies. She lives in Boston's Mattapan neighborhood with her husband and toddler.

**Khiara M. Bridges** is a legal anthropologist and expert in race and racism(s), constitutional law, and reproductive justice. She has written many articles concerning race, class, reproductive rights, and the intersection of the three. Her scholarship has appeared or will appear in the *Stanford Law Review*, the *Columbia Law Review*, the *California Law Review*, the *Emory Law Journal*, the *Boston University Law Review*, and the *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*, among others. She is the author of *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization* (University of California Press 2011) and *The Poverty of Privacy Rights*, which is forthcoming from Stanford University Press. She also sits on the Academic Advisory Council for Law Students for Reproductive Justice, and she is a co-editor of a reproductive justice book series that is published under the imprint of the University of California Press.

She graduated as valedictorian from Spelman College and received her JD from Columbia Law School and her PhD, with distinction, from Columbia University’s Department of Anthropology. She was a member of the *Columbia Law Review* and a Kent Scholar. She speaks fluent Spanish and basic Arabic, and she is a classically trained ballet dancer who continues to perform professionally in New York City.

**Dázon Dixon Diallo** is a recognized visionary and advocate in the struggle for women’s human rights and reproductive justice, and the fight against HIV/AIDS, on behalf of communities of women living with HIV and those at risk for HIV and STIs. Dr. Diallo is Founder and President of SisterLove, Inc., established in 1989, the first women’s HIV/AIDS and RJ organization in the southeastern United States. She is a proud member of *In Our Own Voice*: The National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda, where she advocates for sexual and reproductive justice in public health and prevention policies and programs. Dr. Diallo is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Women’s Health Network, and she is a founding member of the 30 for 30 Campaign for Women in the National HIV AIDS Strategy. Diallo serves on the Fulton County HIV Task Force, and is a co-chair for the Act Now End AIDS national coalition. Diallo was recently appointed to the NIH Office on AIDS Research Advisory Council.
She has secured deep reach into a diverse local and regional community, for more than twenty-three years, as she has hosted a weekly radio program focused on black women, called “Sisters’ Time” on WRFG 89.3FM and www.wrfg.org in Atlanta. Dr. Diallo holds a master’s degree in public health from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (C’97) and bachelor’s degree from Spelman College (C’86) in Atlanta. In 2012, Dr. Diallo had the distinct honor to receive an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from her alma mater, Spelman College.

Diallo has pioneered in the women’s HIV/AIDS and reproductive justice arena by: developing and implementing “Healthy Love”, a seminal prevention intervention that is now a part of the CDC’s National Compendium of Effective Evidence-based HIV Prevention Interventions; establishing the first transitional housing program for HIV positive women and children in the South; and engaging a long-term vision for HIV positive women’s leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS and in promoting women’s human rights. She currently convenes the only national coalition of women focused on HIV and biomedical prevention, the US Women & PrEP Working Group. Since 1999, Dixon Diallo opened a SisterLove program in South Africa where they are currently an implementer with the DREAMS Innovation Challenge, a public-private partnership led by the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The project focus is capacity building and program development for local women-led HIV/AIDS organizations. She has received numerous awards and recognitions over the 30 years she has been working in HIV/AIDS, and women’s health and human rights.

J. Shoshanna Ehrlich is a proud graduate of Northeastern University School of Law, and she has been honored to have the chance to return to NUSL on several occasions to teach Family Law. She is a professor in the Women’s and Gender Studies Department at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Professor Ehrlich’s scholarship focuses on the sexual and reproductive rights of young women and abortion law. Although legally oriented, her work is also highly interdisciplinary in its commitment to situating the law in an historical and social context. In addition to the publication of many law review articles, her books include: Regulating Desire: From the Virtuous Maiden to the Purity Princess (SUNY, 2014) and Who Decides? The Abortion Rights of Minors (Praeger, 2006)), as well as a family law textbook. Professor Ehrlich is currently working on a co-authored book, For Their Own Protection: Abortion Regret and the Attack on Women’s Reproductive Freedom. She also works with a variety of advocacy organizations committed to securing the reproductive and sexual rights of young women.

Laura Harrison is an Assistant Professor in Gender and Women’s Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She researches the ways in which ideologies of race, gender, and family formation intersect with reproductive technologies and reproductive justice. Her first book, Brown Bodies, White Babies: The Politics of Cross-racial Surrogacy (NYU Press, 2016) examines the implications of assisted reproductive technologies for contemporary understandings of race, kinship, and gender. Her work on
Kimberly Mutcherson is Vice Dean and Professor of Law at Rutgers Law School where she teaches Family Law, Bioethics, Babies, & Babymaking, Torts, and South African Constitutional Law. Her scholarly work encompasses family and health law and uses health law topics to study the relationship between families and the state. She writes on issues related to reproductive justice, with a particular focus on assisted reproduction and its relationship to how the law understands family.

Professor Mutcherson has served as a Senior Fellow/Sabbatical Visitor at the Center for Gender and Sexuality Law at Columbia Law School, a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania, and as a fellow at the Institute for Research on Women at Rutgers University. Her work has appeared in the Harvard Journal of Law & Gender, Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice, the Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy, the Nevada Law Review, the Yale Journal of Law and Feminism, the Columbia Journal of Gender and Law, Minnesota Law Review Headnotes, the Journal of Gender, Race and Justice, and other publications. She is the recipient of the 2013 Center for Reproductive Rights Innovation in Scholarship Award.

Kelly O’Donnell is a historian of medicine and gender in modern America. She received her PhD in History in 2015 from Yale University, where she wrote a biography of feminist health activist Barbara Seaman. She lives in Philadelphia.

Bayla Ostrach, MA, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Medical Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Practice in the Family Medicine Department at Boston University School of Medicine, and Affiliated Faculty at Boston University’s Department of Anthropology. A Fellow of the Society of Family Planning, her applied medical anthropology research explores reproductive justice, publicly funded health systems, syndemics, and the role of social and mutual support in people’s ability to overcome obstacles. She began working directly in the field of reproductive health and abortion care in 1999, and has since worked with and volunteered at multiple clinics in Oregon, Connecticut, and Catalunya. Dr. Ostrach’s ongoing fieldwork primarily occurs in Catalunya, and with people seeking and providing abortion in the United States. She is the author of Health Policy in a Time of Crisis: Abortion, Austerity, and Access (Routledge Press, 2017).

Katha Pollitt is a poet, essayist and columnist for The Nation, where she writes frequently about reproductive rights and feminism. Her most recent book Pro: Reclaiming Abortion Rights makes the case for abortion as a social good. The New York Times listed it as one of the 100 Notable Books of 2015, and it was awarded the Woman's Way Prize in 2016. She lives in New York City with her husband and, yes, her cats.
Loretta Ross started her career in the women’s movement in the 1970s, working at the D.C. Rape Crisis Center, NOW (the National Organization for Women), SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective from 1997-2012, the Center for Democratic Renewal/National Anti-Klan Network, the National Center for Human Rights Education, and the National Black Women’s Health Project. She is one of the co-creators of the Reproductive Justice framework in 1994, and has lectured and written extensively on reproductive justice issues, human rights, racism, appropriate whiteness, Calling In the Calling Out Culture, diversity issues, and violence against women. She is the former director of the first rape crisis center in the U.S. in the 1970s, and she was the Co-Director of the historic 2004 March for Women’s Lives, the biggest protest in U.S. history at that time, with 1.15 million participants. She has worked to deprogram white supremacists in the hate movement, facilitates groups working across identity, political, and affinity differences, and endeavors to build a U.S. based human rights movement focused on human rights violations in the United States.


Ross has appeared on CNN, BET, "Lead Story," "Good Morning America," "The Donahue Show," National Geographic Channel, and "The Charlie Rose Show." She has been quoted as an expert in the *New York Times, Time Magazine, The Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post* and many other newspapers and magazines. She is a member of the Women's Media Center's Progressive Women's Voices. She has worked with the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College since 2003 helping to collect oral histories of feminists of color. She has received honorary doctorate degrees from Smith College and Arcadia University. She holds a B.A. from Agnes Scott College in Atlanta.

Carly Thomsen is an Assistant Professor of Gender, Sexuality, & Feminist Studies at Middlebury College. She completed her Ph.D. in Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara and a postdoctoral fellowship at Rice University’s Center for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality. Her work on reproductive justice, LGBTQ activism, queer rurality, and feminist pedagogy is published in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy, Feminist Studies, Feminist Formations, Queering the Countryside: New Frontiers in Rural Queer Studies, Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, and Social Justice*, and *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*.

Susan Yanow, MSW A long-time reproductive rights activist, Susan works to expand access to abortion domestically and internationally through consulting projects. She is a cofounder of Women Help Women, an international organization that provides abortion and contraception services, Creating a Clinician Corps (C3), which identifies abortion providers willing to travel to states where they are needed, and the EASE Project (Expanding Abortion Services in the South). She is a founder and consultant to the Later Abortion Initiative. She serves on the Boards of the ACLU of Massachusetts, Nursing Students for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Social Workers for Reproductive Justice, and the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women.

About the Moderators

Margot Abels is on the brink of completing her doctorate in Sociology at Northeastern and, besides exhaustion, feels tremendously fortunate to work with the Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program. Her dissertation involves an analysis of gendered discourses within school-based bullying prevention education using the lenses of medicalization, stratification and civility narratives. Currently, she is teaching Northeastern’s first undergraduate course in Reproductive Justice as well as the Human Services Program’s course on gender expression and sexual orientation.

Moya Bailey’s work focuses on marginalized groups’ use of digital media to promote social justice as acts of self-affirmation and health promotion. She is interested in how race, gender, and sexuality are represented in media and medicine. She currently curates the #transformDH Tumblr initiative in Digital Humanities. She is also the digital alchemist for the Octavia E. Butler Legacy Network. She is an assistant professor in the department of Cultures, Societies, and Global Studies and the program in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Northeastern University.

Laura Green is Professor of English and affiliated faculty in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Northeastern University, and the Book Review Co-Editor of *Signs*. She is the author of two books, *Literary Identification: From Charlotte Brontë to Tsitsi Dangarembga* (Ohio State UP, 2012) and *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Literature* (Ohio UP, 2001), as well as articles on a variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century women writers. Her current project, “Third Wave Realism,” explores
the effect of twenty-first century fiction by authors of the Anglophone diaspora on the realist tradition.

Sarah J. Jackson’s is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Northeastern University where she also serves on the executive committee of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, and advises the multicultural student organization NUMIX. Her research and teaching interests revolve around how social and political identities are debated in the public sphere. Dr. Jackson is particularly interested in how race and gender are constructed in national debates around citizenship, inequality, and social movements. Her work has appeared in the Journal of Communication, The International Journal of Press Politics, and Feminist Media Studies. Her first book, Black Celebrity, Racial Politics, and the Press: Framing Dissent, was published in 2014, her current book project focuses on the activism of digital counterpublics. Dr. Jackson is frequently called on as an expert by local and national media outlets including WCVB-Boston (ABC), WGBH-Boston (NPR), Politico, The Marc Steiner Show, and Bitch magazine.

Suzanna Danuta Walters is the Director of the Program in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University. Since 2015, she has been the Editor-in-Chief of Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society. Her most recent book, The Tolerance Trap: How God, Genes, and Good Intentions are Sabotaging Gay Equality (NYU Press, 2014), explored how notions of tolerance limit the possibilities for real liberation and deep social belonging. Walters’ previous book, All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America (University of Chicago Press, 2001), examined the explosion of gay visibility in culture and politics over the past 15 years. Her other works include books on feminist cultural theory (Material Girls: Making Sense of Feminist Cultural Theory), mothers and daughters in popular culture (Lives Together/Worlds Apart: Mothers and Daughters in Popular Culture) and numerous articles and book chapters on feminist theory, queer theory and LGBT studies, and popular culture.