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# Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights, Justice, Pleasure, and HIV

*Last updated: January 3, 2024*

*Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.*

#onewomanatatime

[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

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# Introduction

Sexual/reproductive healthcare separate from HIV care

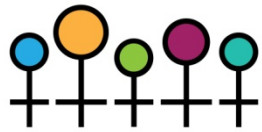
— Impact of racism, sexism, poverty, violence on wellbeing

- **Reproductive health:** Care and services needed?
- **Reproductive rights:** Laws needed for that care?
- **Reproductive justice:** Change needed for all people to live their best and freest possible lives

Related concepts:

- Policy change based on rights
- Care from reproductive health care professionals

Justice: Power for change in the hands of affected people



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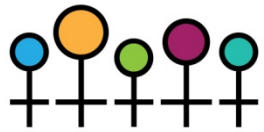
# What Is Reproductive Justice?

Human right to:

- maintain personal *bodily autonomy*
- have children, or not have children
  - *fertility decision making*
- live and parent children in safe communities
  - *social justice*

Human rights principle:

- Basic dignity for every human simply because they are alive
  - *Not based on citizenship, social identities, circumstances*

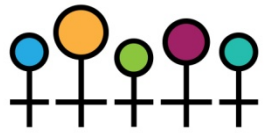


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# What Are Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights?

Includes **entire lifespan**, not just time when someone may be able to become pregnant

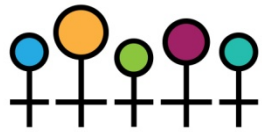
- Sexual and reproductive **health**:  
care, services, education
- Sexual and reproductive **rights**:  
practical ability to access these services



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# Sexual and Reproductive Health

- Sexual health:
  - Comprehensive education
  - Prevention of gender-based violence
  - HIV and STI prevention
  - Psychosexual counseling
- Reproductive health:
  - Perinatal care
  - Contraception
  - Fertility care
  - Safe abortion care



## HIV-related sexual and reproductive healthcare:

- HIV-related stigma
  - Lack of provider training
  - Provider views bias who is offered HIV testing, prevention counseling, etc.
- Other aspects of person's experience impact care needed:
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Gender identity and expression
  - Parental/caregiving responsibilities
  - Socioeconomic situation
  - Experience of violence/trauma



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# Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Not just abortion rights

Right to:

- Enjoy sexual health
- Fulfill and express one's sexuality
- Decide whether or not to have children

Freedom from discrimination when exercising these rights

HIV criminalization laws = *reproductive oppression*

- U = U
- Very low chance of vertical HIV transmission when on treatment



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# HIV Care

HIV separate from other aspects of (women's) health:

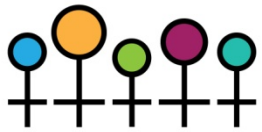
- Useful in past to get funding

**But:**

- Stigmatizing
- Doesn't serve women across gender spectrum

Need to integrate sexual and reproductive health care with HIV care and prevention!





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# Racism and Reproductive Justice

## *Reproductive justice:*

Term coined in 1994 after meeting of Black women activists in US South

## Reproductive justice and HIV:

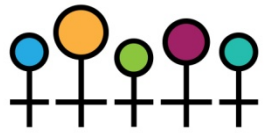
- HIV rates highest among people who are already marginalized and stigmatized
  - Result of generations of unequal treatment

## History:

- Medical experimentation on Black women
  - E.g., gynecological surgery on enslaved women

## Now:

- Belief that Black people feel less pain
- Black maternal and infant mortality rates
  - E.g., Serena Williams giving birth in 2017
- Systemic racism



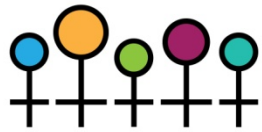
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# Sex, Pleasure, Freedom, and HIV

***All women living with HIV across the gender spectrum deserve to have full, satisfying sexual lives.***

Pleasure rarely discussed in HIV context

- Fear of transmitting the virus may block pleasure
- Providers need to overcome their own biases
  - Need to provide sex-positive information on HIV, U=U, PrEP
- Women's *wellbeing* main indicator of HIV care success

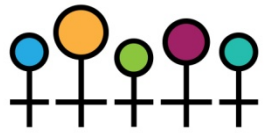


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# Sex, Pleasure, Freedom, and HIV

## Also needed:

- Research into sexual pleasure in women living with HIV
- More attention to needs of historically underserved women
  - Black, indigenous, other people of color
  - Gender/sexually diverse
  - Engaged in sex work
  - Using drugs
- Sexual health education centering pleasure
- Comprehensive sex education in schools
- Sex positivity across entire society



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# Language Matters

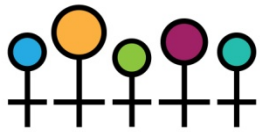
“Risk”:

- Focuses on individual behavior, not social realities

Replace with language that acknowledges:

- Desire
- Relevance
- Reasons
- Strength

*How do **you** want to see HIV talked about outside of the risk "box"?*

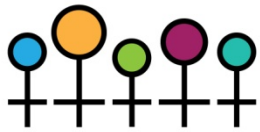


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# Take Action!

Join Well Project's and others' effort to secure sexual and reproductive justice for everyone:

- Shift the research agenda
- Promote a culture of wellness
- Keep uplifting U=U
- Follow our partners
  - [Positive Women's Network – USA](#)
  - [SisterLove](#)
  - [SisterSong](#)
  - [The Afiya Center](#)



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# Learn More!

- To learn more:
  - [Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights, Justice, Pleasure, and HIV](#)
- For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV:
  - [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)
  - [www.facebook.com/thewellproject](https://www.facebook.com/thewellproject)
  - [www.twitter.com/thewellproject](https://www.twitter.com/thewellproject)
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