

People of Faith

Reflections on
Women & Reproductive Issues

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No Room for Mary

by Theresa D. McClellan

Mary is young
Just old enough to bleed, so old enough to breed.
Who will protect her?
Who will shield her inner child forced to become a woman
Too soon
At the hands of one physically stronger
The hands of someone whose face, whose eyes,
whose last name is the same as hers.

Her body is changing now
Who hears her cries as she watches the news of a
devastating ruling
And she watches her belly rise, her dreams fall
Through no fault of her own
Except for being born a girl child in a dominant
male household
Where no means nothing
Where she is invisible in her home, in her state
Where there is no room
in Texas
For Mary

Mary watches as men who will never bear children
tell her she can
Yes, even with rape and incest
She watches the news as a woman of means with a
child dying inside of her is forced to leave
the state
To save her own life and have the chance to bear
again.
Mary wonders who will save her and the multiple
Marys without means who look and live like
her
In Texas in this nation.

I pray for women whose oppression is ripped from
the pages of the Bible
Yes ripped, because these snatches of pain are
partial words
Snippets of Scriptures meant to control, to level, to
make small

I pray that those who claim to
know God
Recognize
the full-bodied message of Christ
The arms open wide God
The One who raises you up and away from man-
made laws meant to separate God's children
into categories of other and less than and
everyone but you
When you are black, brown, queer, trans, non-
binary, poor, immigrant

I pray that those who claim to know God call on the
Holy Spirit to change unjust laws. I pray that
those who claim to know God will use their voice,
their votes, their feet, and their resources to
resist those who gut the help for the neglected, the
forgotten, the emotionally wounded.

I pray for a world where there is no room in the inn
for the spineless ones who wreak havoc on
hearts, bodies, and souls.

We acknowledge

Anonymous

We acknowledge your suffering and grief
We are sorry for your loss and the emotional and
physical pain endured
We see and hear your cries of injustice of not having
bodily autonomy in Tejas and beyond.

Cruel
Inhumane
Callous

All women and pregnant people deserve to be
treated with dignity and with respect as full human
beings.

Brittany, we send you loving kindness
Kate, we send you loving kindness
Austin, we send you loving kindness

The Father, Son and the Holy spirit love you with an
enormous love

Almighty God we pray for all those who are
suffering and being hurt by not having access to the
reproductive care they need.

Give us courage to fight for justice and be a voice
for those cannot speak for themselves.

Still I Rise

Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.
Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.
Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.
Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?
Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.
You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.
Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?
Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise

For the women who came before us

Elizabeth Wright Veintimilla

“Yo quisiera haber tenido las fuerzas
para decir algo cuando tenía tu edad”
I wish I had the strength
to say something when I was your age

Who brought you to the world
Who birthed you
What happened
before she gave birth to you?

My mom admires me because
I go to protests
I share my opinion
I built my life the way I wanted to.

It is not my story to share,
but I think that's why
she once said to me,
with a lot of pain and regret

It makes me happy to know
she admires me
but I hope she knows
how much I admire her.

“Yo quisiera haber tenido las fuerzas
para decir algo cuando tenía tu edad”
I wish I had the strength
to say something when I was your age.

She didn't go to protests forty years ago,
but she joins me now.
She didn't share her opinion when she was younger,
but now she defends and protects mine.
She once couldn't build her life the way she wanted
to,
but she supports me as I build my own.

Tell me
what does justice look like
for the women who came before us?

Elizabeth Wright Veintimilla is a gender specialist and feminist advocate from Quito, Ecuador. Having been raised by a widowed mother, she learned early on about the importance of women's autonomy and self-reliance. Her areas of interest and expertise include sexual and domestic violence, reproductive justice, migration and mental/emotional health. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Hampshire College and a Master's degree on Gender, Violence & Conflict from the University of Sussex. She is the creator of Picture Her Story and Me Voy de Casa, and currently leads a transnational feminist co-mentorship program with the Society of Gender Professionals. Ely is currently based in Stockholm, Sweden and recently joined RFSU, an organization that runs projects and programmes to promote access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, both in Sweden and internationally.

“Women make up more than half of the world's population and potential, so it is neither just nor practical for their voices, for our voices, to go unheard at the highest levels of decision-making.”

Meghan Markle

A Prayer for Women Leaders Around the World

Diann Neu

Praise to you, women leaders of the seven continents, for your many works of justice.

Praise to you, women leaders of Asia, for confronting trafficking of women.

Praise to you, women leaders of Africa, for raising your voices to stop AIDS.

Praise to you, women leaders of Europe, for your peacekeeping.

Praise to you, women leaders of North America, for confronting economic inequities and racism.

Praise to you, women leaders of South America, for struggling against U.S. domination of your land.

Praise to you, women leaders in Antarctica, for your scientific research.

Praise to you, women leaders of Australia, for supporting indigenous cultures.

Reflection

Anonymous

In 1972, at 36 years of age, married, Junior high school English teacher, with daughters ages 11 and 13, I found myself pregnant again. I was not happy! If abortion had been a legal option, I might have considered it. This pregnancy seemed to be an interruption in my life's plan. I was married to the father of this child; I was not raped, ill, or underage, and there was no physical danger to me carrying the fetus to term. I am profoundly grateful that termination was not a choice, because my son has been a joy since he was born. Now in my cronehood, I have enjoyed and have been supported and loved by him for 52 years. My life would have been incalculably less wonderful without this late life child. I'm grateful for him every day.

I didn't have a choice then, and it worked out fine. But now, in a totally different environment, I 100% support the right of any person to make their own life-changing decisions, including terminating an unwanted or dangerous pregnancy or making a gender change. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to support family members who chose abortion and others who chose gender transition. They are all happier and more productive because of their decisions. And I'm a happy great-grandmother pushing 90. Life is good; God is good!

I Am Not Childless

Kerry

I am not "childless" – not less – a part of me is not missing.

People often say "but you are so good with children" As an unspoken question.

So I answer - "Yes, I love children so much I chose not to have any."

Sometimes that says enough.

I Am Poem

Marcy Antiuk

I am vulnerable

I am resilient

I am afraid

I am brave

I am insecure

I am strong

I am my mother and father's daughter and nothing defines who I am

I am enough and right where I am supposed to be.

And for that, I am eternally grateful

Remember

by Joy Harjo

Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.

Remember the moon, know who she is.

Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.

Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother's, and hers.

Remember your father. He is your life, also.

Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.

Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have
their

Joy Harjo is an American poet, musician, playwright, and author. She served as the 23rd United States Poet Laureate, the first Native American to hold that honor. She was also only the second Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to have served three terms.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joy_Harjo

tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to
them,

listen to them. They are alive poems.

Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She
knows the
origin of this universe.

Remember you are all people and all people
are you.

Remember you are this universe and this
universe is you.

Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.

Remember language comes from this.

Remember the dance language is, that life is.

Remember.

For Women Who Are Immigrants and Seek Refuge

Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Ignacio Castuera

Gracious God, you who guided Naomi and her
family to look for bread in Moab, a foreign land,
protect the women everywhere who have to leave
behind their home or homelands so that they and
their families can survive.

May those who are escaping the ravages of war find
shelter and sustenance. May the land in which they
seek refuge welcome them and treat them with
hospitality.

May those who are seeking to stop the threats of
violence against them find a peaceful and healing
place. Help them hold on to their hope for a new
beginning. And may those who are fleeing from the

famines that starve them and their children find
relief from their painful and debilitating hunger.
May they find food both for their journey and for
their bodies.

You who guided Ruth to go to the Promised Land,
grant that, like her, women may be lifted from the
fields where they harvest to be part of royal lineage.
And grant that we who are the spiritual descendants
of those of old who were told that the holiest of
trinitities was made of the widow, the orphan and the
migrant, be given the courage to see your face, your
real presence, in the faces of women who have great
need.

from 16 Days of Prayer and Activism against Gender-Based Violence (2023)

by Erin Martine Hutton

Gracious and loving God,

Give us knowledge, resources, training and wisdom to recognise that domestic abuse takes many forms.

Guide us to be attentive to the signs of abuse, to understand the dynamics of abuse, and to be swift to hear and safely act.

Grant us justice in our cause, informed by evidence and good practice, and enlightened by your truth.

Jesus, shepherd and redeemer,

You know how it feels to be betrayed, to be lied to by someone close to you, to be abused, harmed and wronged by someone

who claimed to love you.

Join to your own suffering and redeeming work, the women and children, poor and orphans, helpless and homeless, who face domestic and family violence.

Holy Spirit, helper and gift of God,

Change your churches and communities to be places of refuge and wholeness where gender equality is fostered and domestic abuse is prevented.

Transform your people, heal the wounds of our bodies, minds and spirits.

We pray this, faithfully and urgently, in your name.
Amen.

Erin Martine Hutton works as the Moderator and Inclusion Manager at the Australian College of Theology and is currently completing an interdisciplinary PhD exploring Song of Songs as a model for the primary prevention of Domestic and Family Violence.

Source: https://www.commongrace.org.au/prayer_for_16_days_of_action

Be fair to the poor
and to orphans.
Defend the helpless
and everyone in need.
Rescue the weak and homeless
from the powerful hands
of heartless people.
Psalm 82:3-4 (CEV)

Commitment

“The difference between involvement and commitment is like ham and eggs. The chicken is involved; the pig is committed.”

– *Martina Navratilova*

I Feel Peace

Marcy Antiuk

I am beyond childbearing years oh Great one!
It took over half a century to believe; that I am a child of God and a person of worth.
Thank you for placing him in my life. I feel loved and respected.
I don't regret not having children.
At times there is sadness I had not found anyone whom I felt comfortable having children with.
Just knowing that he is the one, the one to have had a family with, generates blessed joy.
Our children would have been smart and loving. I feel peace.

Hallelujah

Mary Oliver

Everyone should be born into this world happy
and loving everything.
But in truth it rarely works that way.
For myself, I have spent my life clamoring toward it.
Halleluiaah, anyway I'm not where I started!
And have you too been trudging like that,
sometimes
almost forgetting how wondrous the world is
and how miraculously kind some people can be?
And have you too decided that probably nothing
important
is ever easy?
Not, say, for the first sixty years.
Halleluiaah, I'm sixty now, and even a little more,
and some days I feel I have wings.

A God Created Woman

April Hubert

I am a woman formed and created by God!
Reproducing life and bearing it for 9 months is a
most important job.
I am a God created woman, not made by or for a
political party, or every man!
God created us with parts HE didn't give others
intentionally, to keep the peace of HIS master
plan.
I am a God created woman, so who are you to
interfere?
Well, apparently you have no God, or don't know
HIM, to tell me what I can't do with my body or
what I can!

For most of history, Anonymous was a woman.

Virginia Woolf

We are fearfully and wonderfully made: A Prayer for the Journey toward Reproductive Justice

by Rev. Elizabeth Kaeton

Holy, gracious and loving God
You are wise beyond our knowing
You have gifted us with
intelligence, memory, reason, and skill.
You fill our lives with
experiences in which we
may freely use these gifts.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Before we were born, you knew us.
You know our deepest thoughts,
our fiercest passions,
our desperate longings,
our ancient hurts,
our wildest dreams and
our strongest fears.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

When we were being shaped and formed
in the secrets of our mothers' womb
You also knit together in us strong threads of
liberation and justice,
will and grace,
and set us free to live our lives
as human beings fully alive.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

We are complex beings,
living complicated lives.
Give us the courage to
discern what is right
and what is good,
knowing that the two
may not always be the same.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Help us – and help us help others –
to respect all of life
especially the lives of women
who have been denied justice
their intelligence questioned
their choices limited
their freedom denied.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Inspire our minds
fire our spirits, and
strengthen our wills
that justice and compassion
may always be our
companions on this journey
and we may know your peace.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Source: <https://rcrc.org/a-prayer-for-the-journey-toward-reproductive-justice/>

I am deliberate and afraid of nothing
Audre Lorde

Unsanctioned Loss

Linda Klitzke

Motherhood has many joys and challenges even when everything goes well and as planned. As an older woman well beyond the concerns that bring others to write about this part of life, I would like to write about the unsanctioned loss of an adult child.

The absence of an adult child who chooses to have no contact with you is very painful for many who suffer this loss. It does not seem to matter how or why this comes to be the case, the same pain and questioning ensues.

Our oldest daughter, her husband and their now young adult daughter have been estranged from us since before this grandchild was born. This is a longstanding grief. There's no process or stage to acknowledge. There's no celebration of life. There is not even the nothingness of never having had her. I know she lives. I have 3 other children, and their oldest sibling has no contact with them either. They have tried. They love her as do I. They are frustrated as am I. We grieve. Her birthday is in March. I will try not to include too much of their struggles with this issue or my husband's, as their grief is their grief to share or keep to themselves.

Over the years, now spanning 2 decades, I have tried to reconcile this relationship both with my adult child and within myself. I have made some strides within myself. I have forgiven her for her part in this. I have forgiven myself and my husband who has his own grief over this. I have prayed for reconciliation, and every day I pray for her, her husband and daughter. I have hope that if my daughter cannot reach out to me that my granddaughter will even if it's out of curiosity. She is now 20.

I dream about my daughter. Not every night, but fairly often. More times than not she is well and very receptive to me. I know there is still a deep connection, and if it needs to live in my subconscious and rest in God, I am grateful for everything about this connection, this Love! A few years ago I fasted on her birthday. I have a peace lily that I blessed in her name. It is thriving and has offspring. I am reminded by my other children and my husband that she is still with us even if separated in such real ways.

So by now some of you may be asking, does “she” have a name? Of course, but I use it with some sense of sacredness with those who know her. I honor the fact that she made me a mother. I cherish the memories of raising her to be the incredible woman that she is.

It is truly in God's hands. I believe I have learned again from this unsanctioned loss that I am not in control. I trust that God is in control.

WORDS OF THANKS

Terri

Thank you to all the women and men who have supported my reproductive journey and my choices. I'm grateful for the women and men who have encouraged me through the joys and challenges of life. You represent the divine and I thank you!

Wellbeing

Alice d'Abouville

I am blessed and sacred
To be capable of creating miracles
That outlive me
But I am also a soul
Who seeks discovery, pleasure, and glee
I am strong but vulnerable,
Whilst living within institutions built by men
Men who believe that the beat of my heart
Isn't as important as that of a group of cells
I fight for reproductive justice
For when my body follows instructions
But my soul desires freedom and my world is put at risk
I can keep ahold of the reins
And preserve my own health
Because my wellbeing goes beyond that of a choice
It spans throughout the community that is my sanctuary
The spirituality that is my strength and the access to
Economic and political security
My independence is what allows me to fly
My body is what allows me to thrive
Reproductive justice is what enables me to live
Because "Abortion is Self-Care"

Alice d'Abouville is a French/American young professional working in the nonprofit sector on public health. She has a bachelor's degree in International Development Studies and completed research on the history of reproductive justice in Canada. She is very passionate about reproductive justice and volunteered with the Montreal Abortion Access Project where she also trained as an Abortion Doula. Alice has also spent many years taking fine arts courses and painting. Poetry has recently become a new interest of hers in her creative expressions.

Source: <https://www.srhm.org/poetry-for-sexual-and-reproductive-justice/>

Why can't it just be okay

Aliye Runyan

Routine
Mundane
Another medical procedure that we accept
Can sometimes be necessary,
Lifesaving,
Difficult -
But not always.
Not every end to a pregnancy is sad
Some pregnancies end in joyous birth
Some end with grief for what could have been
Some end with a sigh of relief
Freedom to be a parent or not to be
Freedom to choose one's path in life
Abortion is an act of love
Abortion is common
Safe
Should not be an undue burden to access
Why can't it just be okay
The story of abortion is made to be
Black and white
Good vs evil
When it is simply a part of life
Part of a person's reproductive journey
Part of being a human
Abortion is an act of love
Why can't it just be okay

Dr. Aliye Runyan is originally from St. Petersburg, Florida, USA, and graduated from the University of Miami Miller SOM. She did health policy and medical education work in the DC area from 2012-2014. She then completed obgyn residency at Wayne State University/Detroit Medical Center in 2018. She now works as an obgyn and family planning specialist in New York. Aliye's career interests include family planning, international public health, reproductive rights, medical humanities and wellness, and medical education.

Source: <https://www.srhm.org/poetry-for-sexual-and-reproductive-justice/>

Mae Jemison

1956–



By Kerri Lee Alexander, NWHM Fellow | 2018-2019

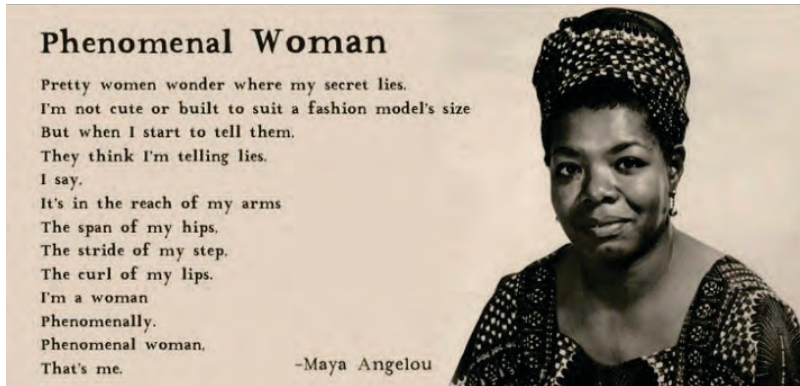
As a doctor, engineer, and NASA astronaut, Mae Jemison has always reached for the stars. In 1992, Jemison became the first African American woman to travel in space. She has also written several books and appeared on many television programs including an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In addition to her many awards, Jemison has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame and the International Space Hall of Fame.

Currently, Jemison is leading the 100 Year Starship project through the United States Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). This project works to make sure human space travel to another star is possible within the next 100 years. She also serves on the Board of Directors for many organizations including: the Kimberly-Clark Corp., Scholastic, Inc., Valspar Corp., Morehouse College, Texas Medical Center, Texas State Product Development and Small Business Incubator, Greater Houston Partnership Disaster Planning and Recovery Task Force, and the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering. Jemison is a member of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, and has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame, National Medical Association Hall of Fame and Texas Science Hall of Fame. She has received multiple awards and honorary degrees including the National Organization for Women's Intrepid Award and the Kilby Science Award. She currently lives in Houston, Texas.

Alexander, Kerri Lee. "Mae Jemison." National Women's History Museum. 2019. www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mae-jemison.

Maya Angelou

1928–2014



“A woman in harmony with her spirit is like a river flowing. She goes where she will without pretense and arrives at her destination prepared to be herself and herself only.”

– Maya Angelou

“I am a feminist. I've been a female for a long time now. It'd be stupid not to be on my own side.”

– Maya Angelou

Source: <https://nikkiskies.wordpress.com/2018/04/04/happy-birthday-mother-maya-angelou/>

Byllye Avery



About a year after *Roe v Wade* legalized abortion care in the US, Byllye Avery and three other women opened the only clinic in Gainesville, FL to provide abortion, birth control, and other reproductive health care. For much of her career, Byllye has focused on improving the health of Black women in particular. She founded the Black Women's Health Imperative; developed a documentary film "On Becoming a Woman: Mothers and Daughters Talking to Each Other" where Black women shared their perspectives on periods, sex, and love; and joined 14 others in forming the organization African-American Women for Reproductive Freedom, which worked to end stigma around abortion care in Black communities.

Source: <https://powertodecide.org/news/nine-women-who-fought-for-reproductive-freedom>

Judy Chu

U.S. Congresswoman (CA-28)



Since 2009 Representative Judy Chu has served in the House of Representatives. The first Chinese American woman to be elected to Congress, Judy serves on the Ways and Means Committee as well as its Subcommittee on Health. She introduced the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA), which if passed would have created a statutory right for health care providers to provide abortion care and a corresponding right for their patients to receive abortion care without medically unnecessary restrictions, such as mandatory waiting periods, biased counseling and mandatory ultrasounds.

Judy is also part of the Pro-Choice Caucus and chairs its Contraception and Family Planning Task Force. She is working to better support the evidence-based Title X Family Planning Program and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, both of which have faced attacks in recent years. "We need what but to ensure that no matter where you live, what your background is or what your zip code is, you have the same rights to make decisions about your own body as anyone else."

Mary Calderone

1904–1998



With a medical degree from the University of Rochester and a master's in public health from Columbia University, Mary became the medical director the Planned Parenthood Federation in 1953. She believed strongly in sex education and founded the Sexuality Information and Education Council (known today as SEICUS). She also believed that everyone deserved access to information about family planning and birth control so that they could make informed decisions. Because of Mary's work the American Medical Association overturned a policy that dissuaded physicians from giving information about birth control to their patients. In large part thanks to Mary's work conversations around sex, sexuality, and reproductive health are part of the mainstream.

Source: <https://powertodecide.org/news/nine-women-who-fought-for-reproductive-freedom>

Georgia O'Keeffe

1887–1986



“I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life—and I've never let it keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do.”

– Georgia O'Keeffe

“I feel there is something unexplored about women that only a woman can explore.”

– Georgia O'Keeffe

*Georgia O'Keeffe. (2024, January 27). In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_O%27Keeffe
Photo credit Alfred Stieglitz, 1918*

Ellen Barrett

1946–



Ellen Marie Barrett is an American priest of the Episcopal Church. She was the first open lesbian to be ordained to the priesthood following the Episcopal Church's General Convention approval of the ordination of women in 1977. Barrett's candor about her homosexuality caused great controversy within the church. Even prior to her ordination, she was a prominent spokesperson for the rights of gays and lesbians in the church, especially regarding their ordination.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen_Barrett “Rev. Ellen Barrett | Profile”, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network, accessed January 30, 2024, <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/profiles/ellen-barrett>.

Anna Pauline “Pauli” Murray

1910–1985



Pauli Murray was an American civil rights activist, advocate, legal scholar and theorist, author and – later in life – an Episcopal priest. Murray's work influenced the civil rights movement and expanded legal protection for gender equality.

“One person plus one typewriter constitutes a movement.”

– Pauli Murray

By Carolina Digital Library and Archives - Carolina Digital Library and Archives. “Murray, Pauli, 1910-1985.” 5 July 2007.

Online image. UNC University Library. Accessed 8 April 2011.

http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/vir_museum&CISOPTR=431, CC BY-SA 3.0,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=42140761>

Pauli Murray. (2023, October 17). In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauli_Murray

When it comes to reproductive issues, men are involved, but women are definitely committed. I find it difficult to understand why decisions regarding reproductive health are in some cases being directed by people other than the committed individual. I feel women should have the right to decide when and if to have children and to make the decisions regarding their health.

Harold Robertson

Wilma Mankiller

1945–2010



First Native American woman elected to serve as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation

“One of the things my parents taught me, and I’ll always be grateful . . . is to not ever let anybody else define me; [but] for me to define myself . . .”

“I want to be remembered as the person who helped us restore faith in ourselves.”

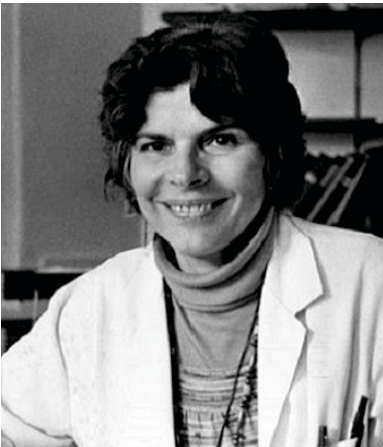
– Wilma Mankiller

Prior to my election, young Cherokee girls would never have thought that they might grow up and become chief.

– Wilma Mankiller

Helen Rodríguez Trías

1929–2001



Dr. Helen Rodríguez Trías was the first Latina President of the American Public Health Association and a passionate advocate for women's health. A native of Puerto Rico, Helen fought to close the gaps faced by people of color when attempting to receive reproductive health care. She also drew from the experiences of too many Puerto Ricans (and other women of low income) who were forced into sterilization and drafted ethical guidelines for sterilization. In 1979, some of her suggestions were enshrined into federal guidelines that require a patient's written consent prior to a sterilization procedure.

Source: <https://powertodecide.org/news/nine-women-who-fought-for-reproductive-freedom>

“A strong woman understands that the gifts such as logic, decisiveness, and strength are just as feminine as intuition and emotional connection. She values and uses all of her gifts.”

– *Nancy Rathburn*

“There’s something so special about a woman who dominates in a man’s world. It takes a certain grace, strength, intelligence, fearlessness and the nerve to never take no for an answer.”

– *Rihanna*

“If they don’t give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.”

– *Shirley Chisolm*

“Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn’t be that women are the exception.”

– *Ruth Bader Ginsberg*

“The success of every woman should be the inspiration to another. We should raise each other up. Make sure you’re very courageous: be strong, be extremely kind, and above all be humble.”

– *Serena Williams*

“No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens.”

– *Michelle Obama*



*The beliefs, words, and deeds
of clergy and leaders in this
congregation will embody
these principles at all times.
We pledge to make our
congregation a safe, accepting
space for everyone.*

Reproductive
Freedom
Congregation