

accessVoices

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF ACCESS/WOMEN'S HEALTH RIGHTS COALITION

Winter 2009

Pushing the Envelope with Reel Women

By Samara Azam

Candy, popcorn, and wine added to the lively Friday-night atmosphere at ACCESS's Reproductive Justice Film Festival. Slightly damp, but not deterred by the bad weather, guests filled the Oakland Museum with positive energy. This rainy evening marked 36 years and one day after *Roe v. Wade*—the landmark decision determining that most laws against abortion in the United States violated the Constitutional right to privacy under the 14th Amendment. It also marked the fourth day of the Obama presidency.

After over one hundred excited ACCESS supporters made their way into the theater, Executive Director Destiny Lopez gave her opening remarks. Quoting Inaugural Poet Elizabeth Alexander's "Praise Song for the Day," Lopez eloquently connected ACCESS's work to the inaugural spirit of immense hope grounded in the reality of the incredible challenges that lie ahead.

Boldly she explained, "At ACCESS we are walking forward in that light for reproductive justice,

for a time when all people have the economic, social and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our gender, bodies and sexualities for ourselves, our families, and our communities." She emphasized the importance of the knowledge, ability, and tools for safe and healthy relationships; deciding when, if, and how you will have sex; when, if, and how pregnancy will occur; once it occurs, if it will be carried to term; and the right to parent the children you have.

Lopez also argued, "Today, we come together to commemorate and challenge *Roe v. Wade*. Despite *Roe v. Wade*'s significance, the "right" to abortion means little to those whose options are already restricted by race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, or income." She also examined the ways that viewing abortion in the context of a woman's life can

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Doing it Pro Bono

By Destiny Lopez

As we wound down our 15th year of making reproductive choice a reality for California women, ACCESS wanted to seize on this pivotal moment in our history and use it as a source of energy, growth and revitalization.

In September, we embarked on a 'strategic clarity' process to better understand our intended impacts and theory of change, and how these factors affect our programs and services. Through support from the Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund, ACCESS secured a *Strategic Planning Preparation* grant from the Taproot Foundation to ensure a disciplined, data-driven, consensus-based process for making critical strategic planning decisions.

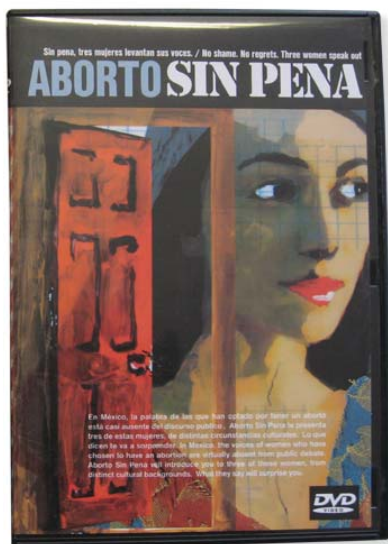
Taproot believes that nonprofits have the greatest potential for addressing our society's most challenging social and environmental problems, but often lack the operational resources to be effective. Taproot ensures all nonprofits have the infrastructure they need to thrive by inspiring and engaging the business community, not by giving cash, but by leveraging the skills and talents of business professionals.

Through our grant, ACCESS was matched with a group of pro bono consultants—Glenn, Renee, Nisha, Aparna and Elise—who worked with us over several months to define and gather contextual information about and understand associated opportunities and challenges for the healthline. Throughout the process, the team also worked with us to ensure stakeholder involvement, interviewing 17 supporters and volunteers and surveying 30

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ACCESS showcased women's abortion stories through screenings of Silent Choices and Aborto sin Pena at the Reproductive Justice Film Festival at the Oakland Museum of California on January 23, 2009.



mission

ACCESS exists to make reproductive health and choice a concrete reality—not just a theoretical right—for all women. Our programs promote real reproductive options and access to quality health care for low-income women, women of color, immigrants and women in rural or isolated areas. No other California organization provides the same range of support to women who are considering or seeking abortion care.

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Winter 2009 Interns

Catherine Gutierrez, Gabriela Castillo,

Pamela Stephens

real voices, real choices

LIFE ON THE HOTLINE

All names and other identifying information have been changed to protect our callers' confidentiality.

Christina

By Gabriela Castillo

Christina, a 17 year old undocumented woman, sought an abortion referral, funding for an abortion, and transportation assistance. She was 11 weeks pregnant and hiding it from her parents. The lack of information provided to teenagers about options for pregnant teenagers made her think that she would not have enough to pay for the services. Christina was relieved when I let her know about pregnancy-only Medi-Cal, which helps out pregnant women in need of funds. She was even more relieved when I let her know about restricted Medi-Cal, which covers the cost for pregnancy related services, regardless of immigration status, as long as she is a California resident. Christina was able to apply for restricted Medi-Cal and qualified shortly after she made an appointment with her provider. ACCESS was there to help her out with transportation assistance to and from her provider on the day of her appointment, keeping it all confidential.

Nya

By Samara Azam

On December 23rd, Nya, a woman from Reno, Nevada, in a domestic violence situation contacted ACCESS 23 weeks and one day into her pregnancy. A domestic violence prevention organization had helped her find a place to stay at an inn, while her husband awaited trial at the end of the month. As a result of her situation, and having very few minutes left on her prepaid cell phone, staying in contact with Nya was a challenge. She needed funding for an abortion and transportation to a California clinic that could see her before it was too late.

With many clinics closed for the holidays, ACCESS found a clinic in San Francisco that agreed to put together a night team and counsel Nya over the phone while ACCESS

Real Voices, Real Choices, continued on page 4

reproductive justice update

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Unfair Vaccination Requirements

By Lupe Rodriguez

In 2007, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that Gardasil, the only FDA approved HPV vaccine, be administered to females ages 11 to 26 in the United States. As a result, this recommendation became an automatic requirement for prospective immigrants when the government updated its vaccination list in July 2008. ACCESS and other reproductive and social justice advocates have questioned the unfair implications of the requirement on

immigrants and their communities, especially since, unlike the other infectious diseases addressed by the required vaccinations, HPV does not pose an immediate public health threat.

A chief concern is that while the HPV vaccine is recommended for girls and women in the United States, it is not a required vaccination for U.S. citizens in any jurisdiction, but is exclusively mandatory for immigrant populations. All women, including prospective immigrants, should be afforded the same opportunities to make informed decisions about their use of the HPV vaccine. Furthermore, the high cost (on average, \$120 per dose) of

the HPV vaccine adds significantly to the already great financial burden that immigrant families face when trying to apply to enter the United States.

In coalition with California and national organizations, we are urging the CDC to retract its listing of HPV as a required vaccination for immigrants and to direct ACIP to suspend its recommendation that the HPV vaccination be mandated for immigrants. We will take further action in the coming months to ensure that these progressive changes occur with the leadership of the CDC, and invite you to help us demand dignity and equal treatment for all women and girls!

get active with access

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Join the Volunteer Meet-Up!

ACCESS is hosting monthly meet-ups to appreciate our amazing volunteers and provide a space for sharing stories.

Thank you to Nat, Sid and Jen for your presence, suggestions and feedback at our first volunteer meet-up.

Contact Monely (monely@whrc-access.org) to find out about volunteer meet-ups in your area or to get information about becoming an ACCESS volunteer.

ACCESS International Women's Day Fundraiser

March 1–March 31, 2009
Facebook ACCESS Cause Page

ACCESS celebrates International Women's Day with a month-long campaign to raise \$2,000 through the Facebook Cause page. To join the cause, recruit Facebook friends, make a donation, or set a matching contribution, go to www.causes.com/access.

ACCESS Volunteer Meet-Up

Sunday, March 8, 2009, 1–3 pm
San Francisco

Join ACCESS staff and volunteers for a potluck in San Francisco. It will be a great time to share volunteer experiences, as well as tasty treats, or get more information if you are interested in becoming a volunteer. RSVP to monely@whrc-access.org.

Reproductive Freedom Day

Tuesday, March 24, 2009, 8:00–4:00 pm
Sacramento Convention Center

Join ACCESS and the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom for a day of education, legislative visits, and civic engagement on reproductive justice issues. Contact monely@whrc-access.org for more information.

Reproductive Justice Film Festival

Tuesday, April 14, 2009, Time TBD
Sacramento

Join ACCESS for an evening of movie snacks, wine, and reproductive justice films. Contact samara@whrc-access.org for sponsorship opportunities, event information, or to RSVP.

access out and about

Rallies, health fairs, marches, conferences, community forums—you name it and ACCESS has been there! We want pictures of you out in the community spreading the word about ACCESS and fighting for reproductive justice for California women. To buy ACCESS gear, go to www.cafepress.com/choosetoshop. Please send pictures to samara@whrc-access.org.

Clockwise from top right: (1) Nat, Sid, Jen, Monely, Lisa, and Pamela at the first Volunteer Meet-Up; (2) Thank you card to President Obama for overturning the Global Gag Order; (3) Panelists at the ACCESS and ACRJ Community Forum against harmful ballot initiatives 4, 6, 8, and 9; (4) ACCESS staff celebrate the defeat of Proposition 4.



arranged for transportation. Nya got on a bus from Reno, knowing that there was a chance that she may be farther along than 23 weeks and one day and thus the clinic would be unable to see her.

Nya arrived at the bus station and an ACCESS practical support volunteer, Jennifer, took her to the hospital. Luckily, the clinic could see her. ACCESS provided overnight accommodations so that Nya could stay in the area until the second day of her procedure. On Christmas Eve, after Nya's procedure was complete, staff dropped her off at the bus station with money for a ticket home.

Nya discovered that the bus tickets to Reno were sold out because of the holiday, but had no way of contacting ACCESS, so she slept at the Oakland Greyhound station that night. On Christmas morning, the station agent told her that the roads were snowed in and buses were not going to Reno for the day. She managed to make a call and left a message for us. Healthline Coordinator Lisa

Banh, though technically on vacation, called the Greyhound station and asked the station agent to look for Nya. Lisa offered to find housing for Nya until the roads cleared. While Lisa was arranging housing in Oakland, Nya spontaneously decided to get on a bus to Sacramento, figuring that it was closer to Reno. Luckily, the roads cleared up when she arrived in Sacramento and she was free to return back home.

Nya said it felt like a weight was lifted from her shoulders once the procedure was complete. She was so grateful to Lisa and Healthline Intern Catherine Gutierrez. Both helped Nya when they were in the office and on vacation. Even when Cat was in Puerto Rico, she answered Nya's calls. Nya has kept ACCESS posted on her situation, and knows that if she needs support, we are here for her. She looks forward to a time when she can volunteer for ACCESS and help women in similar situations.

Pro Bono, continued from page 1

healthline callers, while simultaneously conducting primary and secondary research on resource management, market and technology.

"Getting the opportunity to hear the voice of your client base was a very powerful experience. It was eye-opening to see first hand that in a socially progressive place like California, access to basic reproductive health care is still a struggle for so many women," said team member



Nisha, who was also, "impressed by your collective efforts, and humbled to see the very committed way your team is tackling the task in front of you."

The Taproot team provided invaluable time, resources and energy on this project, and a solid foundation for our strategic clarity process. We hope to make good on the potential that team members like Elise saw in us over the coming months: "Based on what we learned, ACCESS has made a huge positive impact for women in California and has the potential for even greater impact in the future. We will be looking out for great things from ACCESS!"

Many thanks to our wonderful consultant team and our Taproot champion, Ragnar. To learn more about the Taproot Foundation, visit www.taprootfoundation.org.

Reel Women, continued from page 1

destigmatize the issue and illustrate why achieving reproductive justice is essential. For instance, abortion is a matter of:

- **Racial inequity:** When a Native American woman is denied coverage for an abortion because her health care is federally funded and is therefore subject to federal restrictions.
- **Economic justice:** When a woman discovers that abortion is not covered by her insurance policy. Most women seeking services pay an average of \$468 out of pocket for a first-trimester abortion.
- **Youth justice:** When a pregnant teenager asks her boyfriend to beat her until she miscarries because she is subject to parental notification laws and feels she cannot involve her parents.
- **Violence:** When a woman is coerced into an abortion by her abusive husband or partner. Pregnant women in general are most likely to experience domestic violence.
- **Immigrants' rights:** When an immigrant woman's language barriers and lack of access to health services cause her to resort to an illegal, unsafe abortion.

The theme of viewing abortion in the context of women's lives carried through the evening's films: *Use Your Voice to Protect Mine*, an Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice youth-produced film about reproductive justice issues on the November 2008 ballot; *Aborto sin Pena*, a documentary about Mexican women's experiences with abortion; and *Silent Choices*, a documentary conveying the variety of perspectives on and experiences with abortion in the African American community.

Following the films, panelists Kimberly Robinson from Women's Health Specialists in Chico and Lupe Rodriguez and Pamela Stephens from ACCESS, answered audience questions. All panelists expressed gratitude to President Obama for repealing the Global Gag Rule, which prevented federal dollars from going to international organizations that so much as mentioned abortion. After the panel, audience members had the opportunity to sign a thank you card that would later be sent to President Obama.

Many ACCESS supporters were pleasantly surprised by the special appearance of former Executive Director J. Parker Dockray. She mentioned that she noticed a definite shift in audience emotions, from anxiety to humor, in watching clips of protests against Bush's policies so recently after that administration came to an end.

This was more than just a fun-filled evening. ACCESS supporters generously donated over \$1,200 and the ACCESS staff is preparing to bring this event to a theater near you.