

accessVoices

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

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Photo by Jason Jao (mochamonkey.com)

Lupe Rodriguez, with Destiny Lopez, Lisa Banh and Samara Azam, introducing the 2009 Jane Champion Award at the 16th Anniversary Event.

Super Sweet 16 Success

By Samara Azam

On a beautiful, warm Oakland evening in August, ACCESS supporters made their way over to the Den at the Fox Theater in the vibrant Uptown neighborhood. This was a special night to celebrate sixteen years of ACCESS and the removal of barriers to sexual and reproductive health care for California women and girls. ACCESS used the idea of turning 16—when teens get a driver's license—to encourage people to consider the ways transportation impacts access to care.

For the Super Sweet 16 Party, some guests traveled hundreds of miles to support ACCESS. With deejays spinning, tasty treats from Little Saigon Deli, and ACCESS thongs, boyshorts, and boxer-briefs, the party was in full swing. About half way through the evening, Pamela Stephens and Nat Okey received the 2009 Jane Champion awards for individuals who personify our mission to challenge the barriers to reproductive health care. Law Students for Reproductive Justice received the 2009 Reproductive Justice Leadership award for the organization whose tireless work brings us closer to attaining reproductive justice.

Here is the scoop on why these three awards were distributed. Former ACCESS intern, Pamela Stephens developed a wiki to organize information for the healthline and still returns to ACCESS to volunteer. Long time practical support volunteer, Nat Okey, provided housing for many people coming to the Bay Area for reproductive health care services and has an incredible passion for the issues. Law Students for Reproductive Justice mentors and mobilizes a diverse group of law students as an essential long-term strategy for building additional capacity, vision, and leadership in the reproductive justice movement.

Delving into some investigative journalism, we took the opportunity to interview two of the award recipients:

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Reproductive Justice and ENDA for Transgender Californians

By Chibo Shinagawa

Currently, in California non-discrimination protection is available for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the workplace. California and 13 other states have these protections. This year, Senator Merkley of Oregon said that the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) would possibly be law by the end of this year and that LGBT and particularly transgender workers will not face discrimination because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Transgender people in California face an enormous amount of barriers in accessing quality health care. According to the Transgender Law Center (TLC), 30% of transgender Californians have been unemployed because of their gender identity. As a result, they face many disparities in accessing quality, affordable health care. Reproductive services for transgender clients are often very costly as well. Some of the other barriers according to the TLC are that: 33% of transgender Californians were denied surgery; 27% were denied hormones; 21% were denied counseling and mental health services; 15% were denied gender-specific care (such as pap smears for transmen and prostate exams for transwomen); and, 10% were denied primary health care.

The most alarming news from TLC's *State of California* report was that 35% percent of respondents had to explain *Transgender Californians, continued on page 4*

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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ACCESS Voices Editor

Dorothy Cervantes

real voices, real choices

LIFE ON THE HOTLINE

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

Anna

by Dorothy Cervantes

Anna called ACCESS to find assistance paying for an abortion procedure. Anna already had six children and Child Protection Services was involved with her family. Anna could not ask her abusive partner for a ride to her appointment, but had procured a ride from her neighbor to the nearest clinic in Riverside, and she was able to pay for gas. The health line worker assured Anna that ACCESS would be able to pledge at least \$100 to her \$395 procedure, and would look into helping with more if possible.

Anna told us about her situation with Child Protection Services (CPS). She said that she is currently in custody of two children, one of which has an open case with CPS. If Anna were to have another child while her older child has an open case, her newborn could be taken away right after birth. This regulation is called a 'J hold'. During the time that ACCESS and Anna were fundraising for her procedure, Anna's ex-boyfriend found out that she was planning to have an abortion and broke her phone in half. Anna had him arrested and called ACCESS on speakerphone, which still worked.

Anna mentioned a cable T.V. program that President Obama was on, he was talking about the pregnancy options for low-income women. Anna said "it touched my heart," and reflecting on the help ACCESS gave her, she said, "You saved me from a lot of heartache, thank you." Eventually ACCESS pledged the entire cost of Anna's procedure and, after a few setbacks at the clinic, everything worked out for Anna to terminate her pregnancy.

Reflecting on the help ACCESS gave her, she said, "You saved me from a lot of heartache, thank you."

reproductive justice update

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Our Time is Now

The Voices of ACCESS Callers and Communities in Health Insurance Reform

by Lupe Rodriguez

Comprehensive access to health care is a matter of reproductive justice, and at ACCESS we are working to ensure that the current health care reform debate includes the everyday experiences of California women, especially women of color and their communities. This summer we launched two campaigns to raise the voices

of women of color and to raise awareness about how health insurance reform must be responsive to the needs of low-income communities of color in California.

Through our *Women Inform the Reform!* campaign, we captured the hopes and dreams for health care reform of women and girls from all around California in photographs. Their messages and faces prove that women of color throughout the state are interested in and passionate about health care reform, and they want real change that will make health care more affordable and accessible for all.

We have also analyzed health care reform legislation through a reproductive justice

perspective, and through our *Health & Justice Now!* campaign are advocating for specific measures of affordability, coverage for all Californians and for comprehensive health benefits, including reproductive health care. The petition component of this campaign was sent to all California Legislative leaders.

We have a significant opportunity right now to transform public and private systems to make them more responsive to the needs and experiences of all individuals. The time is now to create lasting change that will allow California women and communities to thrive.

Join the Board!

ACCESS seeks Board members who are committed to reproductive justice and have experienced barriers to reproductive health care, had an abortion and/or used our healthline services.

At this time, we are particularly interested in people with **backgrounds in finance and/or accounting** in the non-profit or corporate sectors to serve as Board Treasurer.

Women of color strongly encouraged to apply.

For more information, please contact Board Recruitment Committee Chair Erika Scott at erikascott@gmail.com.

Dirty Dancing Film Screening

January 30, 2010, 8pm
Delancey Street Theater, San Francisco

Get your costumes ready! ACCESS reflects on 37 years of *Roe v. Wade* with a screening of the cult classic, *Dirty Dancing*. More details to come. For more information or to join the event host committee, please contact Executive Director Destiny Lopez at Destiny@whrc-access.org.

Reproductive Justice in Action Training Program

February 6, 2010, 9–5 pm, Oakland
February 27, 2010, 9–5 pm, Sacramento

Interested in getting active with ACCESS? Attend this amazing training program. Applications are due by January 20 for the Oakland Training and February 10 for the Sacramento Training. For an application, details, or information about co-hosting a regional training, please contact Program Manager Lisa Banh at volunteering@whrc-access.org.

Reproductive Freedom Day

March 18, 2010, All day
Convention Center, Sacramento

Become part of the ACCESS delegation to the annual California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom's Reproductive Freedom Day. We will attend workshops, hear about issues impacting reproductive freedom at the state level, and visit our legislators to make our voices heard. For more information or to reserve a place in the delegation, please contact Program and Policy Direct Lupe Rodriguez at lupe@whrc-access.org.

Reproductive Justice Film Festival

March 2010
Location to be announced

The Second Annual Reproductive Justice Film Festival will take place in the Bay Area close to International Women's Day. To get more information, recommend a film, or to be involved with the event planning, email info@whrc-access.org.

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 and girls. Please send pictures to info@whrc-access.org. To buy ACCESS gear, go to cafepress.com/choosetoshop.

Clockwise from top right: (1) Staff of ACCESS and California Latinas for Reproductive Justice host a joint policy briefing in Sacramento; (2) 2009 Reproductive Justice Leadership Award recipients, Law Students for Reproductive Justice, enjoy themselves at the Super Sweet 16 Party; (3) ACCESS staff in San Francisco rallying for the inclusion of immigrants and abortion services in health reform; and (4) Interns Chibo, Olimpia, and Dorothy with 2009 Jane Champion Award recipient Pamela Stephens at a fundraising house party.



ACCESS Unveils 3 Year Strategic Clarity Plan

This is super and paints a picture of your work that really helps us understand. Thank you so much for sharing this with us.

Erin Garner-Ford,
CoDirector, ACT for
Women and Girls of
Tulare County

Exciting things are happening at ACCESS! Starting in late 2008 and going through 2009, the ACCESS staff and board embarked on an organizational journey to be clear on three things: where we have been, what we are doing effectively, and how we should move forward.

With the help of some amazing consultants including folks from the Taproot Foundation, Diane Tompkins of the Curious Group, Alexis Sanford, and Sujin Lee, the ACCESS team developed new ways to talk about our work that are concise, raise-up the stories of our callers, and steer clear of jargon. The 2010-2012 Strategic Clarity Plan is available on our website: whrc-access.org. It is truly a work of love.

Check it out and share it with friends and family who are passionate about the issues.

Grounded in the reproductive justice frame and with our work outlined until 2012, we prepared to launch ACCESS into the next decade with new beginnings. In the fall, we began the Reproductive Justice in Action Training Program as a pipeline to get young women, women of color, and low-income women involved in our work. In October, we said goodbye to our old office space and made the best of the economic downturn with cheaper leasing prices to find our new home in Uptown Oakland. Early next year there will be at least one more exciting surprise for ACCESS supporters so stay tuned!

Transgender Californians, continued from page 1

to their doctor about being transgender and what kind of health care services they need. While California prohibits discrimination in medical care based on gender identity or sexual orientation, many transgender Californians, as well as lesbians, gays and bisexuals, face an overwhelming amount of marginalization and discrimination.

This year, ACCESS organized *Women Inform the Reform!*, a health care reform campaign which gathered photos of California women displaying their hopes and dreams for reform. Health care should be accessible for all women, including transwomen.

Reproductive justice is achieved when all people have the economic, social and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our gender, bodies and sexuality for ourselves, our families and our communities. We hope that ENDA will pass and that everyone will be able to access quality health care, especially transgender Californians.



Photo by Chibo Shinagawa

Super Sweet 16 Success, continued from page 1

ACCESS: If you were a flavored or scented condom, which kind would you be? Does this hold true to if you were a dental dam?

Law Students for Reproductive Justice: Mint, because LSRJ brings a fresh perspective to the reproductive justice movement. Same for dental dam.

Pamela Stephens: Vanilla because it seems classy. Same for dental dam.

ACCESS: When did you realize reproductive justice is important to you and why are you still passionate about it?

LSRJ: Reproductive justice has been important to Law Students for Reproductive Justice since our start in 2003. We're passionate about educating, organizing, and supporting law students to ensure that a new generation of advocates will be prepared to protect and expand reproductive rights as basic civil and human rights. (Check out their website at lsrj.org).

PS: I don't think there was a specific point in time when I realized that RJ is important to me. I think it was more of a progression where I realized that having reproductive health rights isn't enough for people who face multiple, intersecting oppressions. Working with women who have faced barriers to reproductive health care has kept me passionate about reproductive justice.

ACCESS: Why did you want to work with ACCESS?

LSRJ: ACCESS embodies the spirit of reproductive justice – the staff, board, and volunteers are so committed to ensuring that low-income women from around the state can access the reproductive health services they need.

PS: I wanted to learn about reproductive health and all that it can possibly entail through the stories of actual women rather than theoretical frameworks.

ACCESS: Describe ACCESS in one word that cannot be “access.”

LSRJ: Passionate!

PS: Family!

Over the last 16 years, ACCESS has worked extensively with over 25,000 people in need of information, referrals, counseling, funding, rides, childcare, meals, housing, and other support to demand health, justice, and dignity. In addition to incredible volunteers and allies, this kind of work on a shoestring budget could not happen without an amazing staff and board, and even more so the time, support, and enthusiasm of people like you reading this newsletter right now.