

Programming and Advocacy Guide 2021

This WRJ guide is provided to help sisterhoods, women's groups, and individuals put the most recent resolutions into action. It includes program ideas, talking points, and advocacy suggestions to involve you in our newest priorities for social action.

To review WRJ resolutions and statements, you can visit the [Resolutions and Statements page](#) on our website.

Resolutions and Statements Highlighted in this Guide:

- [Addressing a Legacy of Reproductive and Gender-Based Violence Against Black, Indigenous, Women of Color in North America \(2021\)](#)
- [Labor Issues Impacting Women in the 21st Century \(2021\)](#)

Social Justice and the Reform Movement

For more than 100 years, inspired by Jewish traditions and values, WRJ has pioneered social action in the Reform Movement and the Jewish community. From advancing women's leadership and equality in Jewish life and in society at large to championing numerous critical social justice issues, WRJ has been at the forefront of major efforts in the work of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

❖ [WRJ and Social Justice](#)

❖ [Why Advocacy is central to Reform Judaism](#)

Review the resolutions with your sisterhood and devote a meeting to discussing what steps you can take to bring WRJ social justice to your community.

Monitor the WRJ blog and look out for the Weekly Digest newsletter and additional Advocacy Alert emails for social action ideas and updates. If you are not yet receiving our Weekly Digest, click [here](#) to sign up.

[2021 Resolution on Reproductive and Gender-Based Violence Against Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color in North America](#)

“One who injures another person is liable on five counts: for the injury itself, for pain, for healing, for loss of time, and for embarrassment” (Bava Kamma 8:1).

This sacred teaching alludes to the ways that individual acts of violence have repercussions far greater than the act itself. Throughout North American history, untold violence and discrimination has been perpetuated against Black women, Indigenous women, Latina women, and Women of Color broadly by the government, by public and private institutions, and by individuals. Inspired by the Jewish value of *kavod ha'briyot*, respect of individual dignity, Women of Reform Judaism commits to and calls upon its sisterhoods, women's groups, and individual members to:

- Urge elected officials at all levels of government to pursue solutions to improve racial disparities associated with maternal health care;
- Urge elected officials and political appointees to adopt legislative changes that clarify and strengthen legal frameworks to ensure and clearly define full, free, and informed consent relating to sterilization procedures; urge elected officials to pursue policy proposals that call for increased transparency and accountability from government officials and medical professionals surrounding sterilization procedures and provide reparations to victims;
- Urge elected officials and political appointees to support policies to address violence against Indigenous women and girls;
- Implement sisterhood and/or congregational programs on topics relating to the intersection of racism, reproductive and gender-based violence;
- and Support and partner with organizations working to ameliorate reproductive and gender-based violence against Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color.

Glossary of Terms:

- **Forced Sterilization** - sterilization procedures that are conducted without the patient's knowledge and/or consent or through coerced consent
- **Gender-Based Violence** - violence and harm that is directed at an individual based on their biological sex or gender identity
- **Indigenous** – for the purposes of this Advocacy Guide and the accompanying resolution, any reference to Indigenous women or nations may include: First Nations, Metis, Inuit, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, Alaska Natives, and/or Native Americans
- **Reproductive Justice** – a framework and movement created by Black women in the 1990s. Reproductive justice is not synonymous with reproductive rights or reproductive choice. Rather, using a broader social justice and human rights lens, reproductive justice seeks to advance moral and bodily autonomy, health equity, and full access to comprehensive reproductive health care for all individuals and communities.
- **Women of Color** – the political term “Women of Color” surfaced in the violence against women movement in the late seventies to unify all women experiencing multiple layers of marginalization with race and ethnicity as a common issue. For the purposes of this Advocacy Guide and the accompanying resolution, the term Women of Color refers to any women who are not considered “white.” The phrase may refer to Black women, Indigenous women, Latina women, Asian women, or multiracial women who experience oppression based on racial identity. (Source: [The Women of Color Network](#))

Recommended Programming and Advocacy:

- Organize a screening of [Belly of the Beast](#), a powerful documentary about illegal sterilization in women's prisons that raises questions around power, reproductive injustice, race, and eugenics.
- If your sisterhood or congregation has a book club, consider reading [Reproductive Justice: An Introduction](#) and host a discussion.
- Plan an educational event with a Women of Color led Reproductive Justice organization or an Indigenous-led organization in your community. See additional resources section for ideas of organizations to reach out to.
- Advocate for solutions to improve racial disparities associated with maternal health outcomes. [The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act](#) is one example of such legislation. The "Momnibus" is a federal package consisting of 13 bills to comprehensively address the maternal mortality crisis. **Run an advocacy program or day** during which participants call their Members of Congress or write letters urging them to support this important legislation. You may also choose to research local, state, and provincial legislation in your own communities.
- Advocate for policies to address violence against Indigenous women and girls, including a comprehensive reauthorization of the [Violence Against Women Act](#). **Run an advocacy program or day** during which participants call their Members of Congress or write letters urging them to support this important legislation.
- Advocate for policy proposals that call for increased transparency and accountability from government officials and medical professionals surrounding sterilization procedures.

Talking Points: Racial Disparities in Maternal Health

- At 26.4 deaths per 100,000 live births, the U.S. has the worst rate of maternal death in the developed world and is the only developed country with a maternal mortality rate that has been steadily rising for the last three decades.
- Black women are dying at 3 to 4 times the rate of white women, regardless of education, income, or other socioeconomic factors.
- Though data is limited in measuring maternal mortality in Indigenous communities, available data indicates that the maternal mortality crisis for Indigenous women is compounded by the fact that approximately 40 percent of all Indigenous people live in rural communities.
- While overall maternal health outcomes in Canada are far better than in the U.S., Black women in Canada still have substantially higher rates of premature births than white women.

Talking Points: Forced and Coercive Sterilization

- In 1927, the U.S. Supreme Court case *Buck v. Bell* set a legal precedent that allowed for compulsory sterilization of individuals with intellectual disabilities, mental illness, and epilepsy "for the protection and health of the state."

- In the decades following *Buck v. Bell*, dozens of states passed eugenics laws. In total, more than half of the states in the U.S. have had some form of eugenics law on their books.
- Throughout the 1970s, widespread sterilization abuse occurred throughout the U.S., targeting poor Black women, Indigenous women, Latinas, and people living with HIV/AIDS.
 - In the 1970s, it was estimated that approximately one-third of all Puerto Rican women aged 20-49 and as many as 25-50 percent of Indigenous women were involuntarily sterilized, oftentimes under the guise of being seen by a doctor for other procedures like tonsillectomies or appendectomies.
- Forced sterilization in U.S. prisons and immigrant detention facilities remind us that the legacy of reproductive violence against Women of Color has continued into modern-day.
- Canada's disturbing history of forced sterilization mirrors U.S. history. In particular, women with intellectual disabilities and Indigenous women have been forcefully sterilized by the Canadian government for decades.

Talking Points: Violence Against Indigenous Women

- More than 4 in 5 Indigenous women in the U.S. experience physical violence and/or sexual assault during their lifetime, the highest rate of any racial group.
- In some regions in the U.S., Indigenous women are murdered at more than ten times the national average.
- While the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act expanded tribal jurisdiction over non-Indigenous perpetrators of domestic violence, Indigenous communities lack authority over crimes of sexual assault, stalking, child abuse, and trafficking perpetrated by non-Indigenous offenders
- In Canada, the national homicide rate for Indigenous women is at least seven times higher than for non-Indigenous women and the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women has been described as a national crisis and a Canadian genocide.

Additional Resources:

- [SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective](#)
- [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#)
- [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)
- [In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda](#)
 - In Our Own Voice works in partnership with [eight local Reproductive Justice organizations](#)
- [National Indigenous Women's Resource Center](#) (NIWRC has a [Speakers Bureau](#))
- [KAIROS Canada](#)

[2021 Resolution on Labor Issues Impacting Women in the 21st Century](#)

Our Jewish tradition is replete with texts affirming the dignity of work and teachings on the connection between workers' wages and workers' dignity. Deuteronomy 24:14-15 instructs, *"You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay out the wages on the same day, for the worker is needy and urgently depends on it."* In Leviticus 19:13, we are taught that to withhold a worker's wages is to defraud them, an act akin to robbery.

Inspired by these texts and Jewish values, Women of Reform Judaism has a proud history of advocating for issues related to economic justice and labor rights. This resolution seeks to address the intersection of workers' rights, pay equity, and gender-based violence and some of the critical labor issues disproportionately impacting women in the 21st century by calling upon Women of Reform Judaism sisterhoods, women's groups, and individual members to advocate for: local, state, provincial, and/or federal legislation that would extend bedrock labor protections to domestic workers; provide domestic workers with guaranteed paid time off, privacy protection, and a written employment contract; limit employers' abilities to require arbitration clauses, class action waivers, or non-disclosure agreements related to harassment, discrimination, and other workers' right violations as a condition of employment; and the phasing out of the tipped minimum wage.

Glossary of Terms:

- **Arbitration** - a form of alternative dispute resolution that does not involve the courts
- **Domestic Worker** - refers to a category of workers employed by private households who perform tasks such as housekeeping, childcare, and home health aide
- **Fair Labor Standards Act** - established a minimum wage and the concept of overtime pay
- **National Labor Relations Act** - guarantees employees in the private sector the right to join unions and engage in collective bargaining and curtails certain private sector labor and management practices that harm the general welfare of workers
- **Non-Disclosure Agreement** - legal contracts that prohibit the sharing of information deemed confidential

Recommended Programming and Advocacy:

- Host a screening of the documentary [Waging Change](#), a moving piece that shines a spotlight on the challenges faced by restaurant workers trying to feed themselves and their families off tips
- Plug into state advocacy efforts to advance [One Fair Wage policies](#)
- Read Michelle Alexander's thought provoking piece, ["Tipping is a Legacy of Slavery"](#) and have a discussion with your sisterhood
- Advocate for the [National Domestic Workers Bills of Rights](#) and similar local and state legislation that would extend basic wage and hour protections to domestic workers
- Advocate for legislation, like the [Raise the Wage Act](#), that would phase out the subminimum tipped wage and raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. **Run an advocacy program or day** during which participants call their Members of Congress or write letters urging them to

support this important legislation. You may also choose to research local, state, and provincial legislation in your own communities. [The Service Employees International Union \(SEIU\)](#) has a list of local and state campaigns on their website.

- Advocate for legislation, like the [Forced Arbitration Injustice Repeal \(FAIR\) Act](#), to prohibit companies from using mandatory arbitration clauses in employment contracts. **Run an advocacy program or day** during which participants call their Members of Congress or write letters urging them to support this important legislation. You may also choose to research local, state, and provincial legislation in your own communities.

Talking Points: Domestic Workers

- The term “domestic worker” refers to a category of workers employed by private households who perform tasks such as housekeeping, childcare, and home health aide.
- Today, there are over 2.5 million domestic workers in the United States
- Domestic workers are overwhelmingly women (91.5%), and just over half of domestic workers (52.4%) are Black, Latina, or Asian American/Pacific Islander women.
- Domestic workers are three times as likely to live in poverty as other workers, largely because they have historically been excluded from bedrock labor protections, including labor protections afforded under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
 - Due to these coverage gaps, many domestic workers do not earn a living wage, work excessively long hours, often with little privacy, and work without access to health care, paid sick days, or paid time off.
 - Without the protections afforded to other employees through the NLRA and FLSA, domestic workers are also vulnerable to physical, mental, and sexual abuse and are often afraid to speak up about abuse, discrimination, wage theft, and unsafe working conditions for fear of losing their jobs
- According to a survey conducted by National Domestic Workers Alliance, more than 90% of domestic workers had lost their job as a result of COVID-19, and nearly three-quarters of those workers did not receive any compensation when their jobs were eliminated.
 - (add point that while unemployment is getting slightly better, Women of Color are still facing higher levels of unemployment, particularly Black women)

Talking Points: Tipped Wage

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of minimum wage earners, and more than two-thirds of tipped minimum wage earners. Low wages are a large driver of the gender-wage gap.
- Tipped workers, including workers in the restaurant, hospitality, and salon industries, are not subject to the same federal wage standards as other workers.

- In the U.S., the federal tipped minimum wage is currently set at \$2.13, assuming that qualifying workers will take home at least \$7.25 per hour (the current federal minimum wage) when wages and tips are combined.
- The tipped minimum wage itself has not increased since 1991, losing over 40 percent of its value in that time.

Talking Points: Mandatory Arbitration and Non-Disclosure Agreements

- Arbitration is a form of alternative dispute resolution that seeks to resolve disputes outside the courts. While arbitration can be a cost-effective alternative to resolving disputes in court, the share of employees subject to mandatory arbitration has skyrocketed, barring millions of employees from taking to court any disputes with their company.
- According to the Economic Policy Institute, the share of workers subject to mandatory or forced arbitration employment clauses has risen from just over 2 percent in 1992 to over 55 percent today
- Over 30 percent of employers who require arbitration also include class action waivers. As a result, workers not only lose the right to file a lawsuit on their own behalf, but they also are barred from engaging in collective legal action to address widespread violations of workers' rights in a workplace
- A 2018 Harvard Business Review Report found that over one-third of the U.S. workforce is bound by some form of non-disclosure agreement.

Additional Resources

- [National Employment Law Project](#)
- [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#)
- [Interfaith Worker Justice](#)
- [One Fair Wage](#)
- [Economic Policy Institute](#)
- [Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network](#)