

A SACReD Journey Worksheet 4.1 — Reproductive Justice Timeline Events

1845 – 1849

Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy endure experimental surgeries

Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy, enslaved women in Alabama, endure exploitation through dozens of experimental surgeries by J. Marion Sims, considered “the father of gynecology.”

1850s

Condoms are mass-produced in the United States

Amid opposition from conservatives and feminists alike, the first rubber condoms are mass-produced in the United States. Less than 40 years later, condoms are the most popular birth control method in the country.

April – June, 1865

Emancipation enforced in the United States

Emancipation becomes enforced throughout the United States, freeing African and African American families from reproductive and other oppressions they experienced during slavery

1866

Dr. Horatio Storer coins the concept “life begins at conception”

Dr. Horatio Storer, a devout convert to Catholicism, develops the idea that “life begins at conception” as part of his Physicians’ Crusade Against Abortion, pushing women and midwives out of birthing rooms and elevating the profession of physicians.

1866

Frances Thompson testifies before the US Congress

Frances Thompson, a freed Black trans woman, is the first known trans woman to testify before the United States Congress as part of an investigation of the Memphis Riots of 1866. She is one of the first Black women to testify about sexual assault by a white man, and her testimony helped pass the Enforcement Acts of 1870–71, which reinforced the 14th and 15th Amendments.

1869

Pope Pius IX declaration on abortion

Pope Pius IX declares that abortion is a mortal sin, any participation in which would automatically excommunicate the patient, doctor, family member, etc.

February 21, 1873

The Comstock Act

Congress passes the Comstock Act, an anti-obscenity law that makes it a crime to mail anything that's "indecent, filthy, or vile" or "intended for producing abortion." Courts clarified that this law does not apply to drugs and articles sent and received for lawful abortion care.

October 16, 1919

Margaret Sanger opens first birth control clinic

Margaret Sanger and her sister, Ethel Byrne, open the first US birth control clinic in Brooklyn, New York, offering counseling, birth control information, and supplies to local women. Nine days later, the police close the clinic and arrest Sanger, Byrne, and their staff under charges of "maintaining a public nuisance." Sanger went on to found Planned Parenthood.

June 4, 1919

The 19th Amendment Passed (Women's Suffrage)

Women are granted the right to vote by the US Senate, which approved the constitutional amendment by a vote of 56 to 25 after four hours of debate. The measure was passed in large part due to the efforts of Lucy Burns and Alice Paul, whose organizing of picket lines outside the White House resulted in their arrest and subsequent hunger strike. In reality, only white women were able to access the ballot box. Voter suppression efforts denied people of color the full right to vote until the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965.

1930

The Anglican Church approves contraception

The worldwide Anglican Communion becomes the first major Christian denomination to publicly approve the use of artificial contraception in limited circumstances.

1946

Homosexual first added to the Bible

The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible includes the word "homosexual" for the first time in any English-language Bible translation. Scholars mistranslated and conflated two Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as homosexual. A more accurate translation of the Greek would refer to exploitative relationships and abusive behaviors, not consensual same-sex relationships. The RSV is the predecessor to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE), all of which are regarded as academically and spiritually authoritative. This mistranslation gives a textual foundation to anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric, discrimination, and marginalization, which continues through today.

June 23, 1960
The Pill becomes available

Following harmful clinical trials on women in Puerto Rico housing projects, the first oral contraceptive is approved in the US. In its first four years, more than one million women use “the pill,” though it was not made available to all married women for another 5 years and all unmarried women for 12 years.

1961
Fannie Lou Hamer experiences a “Mississippi appendectomy”

Community organizer, civil rights leader, voting and women’s rights activist who coined the phrase “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free,” Fannie Lou Hamer received a hysterectomy without her consent during a surgery to remove a uterine tumor. Known as a “Mississippi appendectomy,” this procedure was a common form of forced sterilization for poor Black women.

1966
First Gender Identity Clinic in the US

Johns Hopkins University founds the first gender identity clinic in the United States. The clinic, now known as the Center for Transgender Health, diagnosed and treated trans individuals and conducted research in the field of sexology and transsexuality. In order to receive hormones, counseling, or gender-affirming surgery, one had to demonstrate that gender dysphoria started at an early age. These narrow criteria are often still required today, with physicians refusing care to trans patients without a demonstrated history of gender dysphoria, which disproportionately affects BIPOC and low-income trans individuals.

May 27, 1967
Clergy Consultation Service begins

Launching with a full-page ad in the New York Times, the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion helped women get safe, illegal abortions. Started by Rev. Howard Moody (Baptist/UCC) with 20 other clergy, it eventually grew to a network of over 1400 Protestant, Jewish, and dissident Catholic clergy across the country. Three years later, CCS opens the nation’s first freestanding abortion clinic in New York City.

June 28 – July 3, 1969

Stonewall Uprising

While police harassment at gay bars is commonplace at this time, the police raid of Stonewall Inn in New York City leads to a six-day uprising, which becomes a watershed moment for the LGBTQIA+ movement. The queer community, including Stormé DeLarverie and Marsha P. Johnson, rebelled against police targeting trans patrons for “engaging in gay behavior” and “cross-dressing.” While Stonewall is widely recognized as a turning point, it is only one of the early backlashes to this pattern of inhumane treatment.

1970

S.T.A.R. & S.T.A.R. House Founded

Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, and a group of other LGBTQIA+ activists found S.T.A.R. to offer radical resistance and organizing that was actively pro-trans. S.T.A.R. worked with the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords, and other gay/lesbian advocacy groups to organize against police violence, for bodily autonomy and freedom, and for community welfare, including clothing, food, housing, healthcare, transportation, and more. S.T.A.R. House provided housing for trans and queer young people and was among the first LGBTQIA+ shelters in the US

January 23, 1973

Roe v. Wade

In the watershed decision, *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decriminalized abortion in the United States. Having ruled in previous cases, *Griswold v. Connecticut* and *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, that married couples and single people have a federally-protected right to privacy, the court rules that women’s right to privacy is “broad enough to encompass her decision whether or not to terminate a pregnancy.”

1973

W.A. Criswell says life begins at birth

Rev. Dr. W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, says, “I have always felt that it was only after a child was born and had a life separate from its mother that it became an individual person, and it has always, therefore, seemed to me that what is best for the mother and for the future should be allowed.” While this was his immediate response to the *Roe v. Wade* decision, he later became a staunch opponent of abortion and opened a fake clinic in his church. Most evangelical Christian leaders were not opposed to *Roe v. Wade* when it became the law of the land.

1973

Homosexuality removed from the DSM

Homosexuality was removed from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1973 after a vote by the APA's Board of Trustees, a decision confirmed by a member referendum in 1974. This landmark event, which was the culmination of decades of activism by the gay rights movement, marked a significant shift, ending the formal classification of homosexuality as a mental illness.

1975

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops issues a Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issues a Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, laying out expectations for organizing and advocacy. At the time, there were 18,515 parishes and 59,000 priests, which essentially created an anti-abortion movement overnight.

January 19, 1976

Bob Jones University loses tax-exempt status for refusing to integrate

The IRS revokes the tax-exempt status of Bob Jones University, a private Christian college, for their racially discriminatory admissions policy. This demonstrates the culture shift away from racial segregation towards integration. These Christian leaders then begin looking for other political issues to maintain power in a changing society.

**September 30, 1976
Hyde Amendment is passed**

The Hyde Amendment is passed, prohibiting the use of federal funds for abortion. It primarily targets recipients of Medicaid, though it also affects federal and military employees, prisoners, clients of the Indian Health Service, and others. A policy rider on budget bills, it was the first major success of the anti-abortion movement and continues to be attached to bills today.

October 1, 1976

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act is signed

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act is signed into law, giving tribes the right to manage or control Indian Health Service programs, ending programs of forced sterilization. Various studies have revealed that, during the six years prior, the Indian Health Service sterilized between 25 and 50 percent of Native American women.

October 3, 1977

Rosie Jimenez dies because of the Hyde Amendment

Rosie Jimenez dies in McAllen, TX, after being denied abortion care because she had Medicaid coverage. Rosie was the first person to die as a result of the Hyde Amendment.

1977

Florida prohibits gay adoption

Florida becomes the only state with an across-the-board law that prohibits all homosexual people from adopting children, even as individuals. This law was struck down in October 2010.

1979

Launch of the Moral Majority

The Moral Majority, the foundational organization of the religious right, launches. Although conservatives started organizing in the early 1970s primarily to defend segregation, abortion became the central issue after 1980 when it proved useful for influencing elections.

1990

Indigenous women developed the “Reproductive Justice Agenda”

30 Indigenous women, representing 11 tribes, developed the “Reproductive Justice Agenda” at the Empowerment through Dialogue convening in Lake Andes, South Dakota. The Reproductive Justice founding mothers credit this group with informing the development of the Reproductive Justice framework.

1990

Term Two-Spirit Adopted

The term Two-Spirit is a pan-indigenous term developed over a series of five conferences, concluding in 1990 at the Third Annual Inter-tribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference, held in Winnipeg. Two-Spirit is a term used by some Indigenous people to describe roles, responsibilities, and identities that exist outside colonial understandings of gender and sexuality. The term Two-Spirit is not universal to all Indigenous nations; it was introduced in 1990 to provide a shared, pan-Indigenous way to reclaim roles and teachings that were disrupted by colonization. While it is an important identity for many, it does not replace the original terms, understandings, or experiences held within individual nations.

July 26, 1990

Americans with Disabilities Act signed into law

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law after decades of organizing and non-violent direct action guided by “nothing about us without us.” This civil rights law prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. Thanks to the protections of the ADA, many more people can access reproductive healthcare and paid leave from work, as pregnancy is considered a disability.

1993

“Women’s Rights are Human Rights” is popularized

At the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, the phrase “Women’s Rights are Human Rights” becomes popularized.

February 5, 1993

Family Medical Leave Act signed into law

After nine years of advocacy, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is signed into law. FMLA grants eligible workers up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave from work each year to care for a newborn, a newly adopted child, or a seriously ill family member, or to recover from their own serious health conditions, including pregnancy. Still, more than 40 percent of workers are not eligible for leave under FMLA, and millions of people who qualify cannot afford to take unpaid leave.

November 5, 1994

“Reproductive Justice” is officially identified

The Reproductive Justice Framework is coined by the Black Women’s Caucus at a national conference in Chicago, aiming to move away from “choice”-based language to integrate ideas of reproductive health with social justice. The Founding Mothers of Reproductive Justice are Dr. Toni M. Bond, Rev. Alma Crawford, Evelyn S. Field, Terri James, Bisola Marignay, Cassandra McConnell, Cynthia Newbille, Dr. Loretta Ross, Elizabeth Terry, “Able” Mable Thomas, Winnette P. Willis, and Kim Youngblood.

August 22, 1996

AFDC replaced by TANF

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the first welfare program in the US (1935) was replaced by the far more restrictive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) on the charge that it was causing “genetically inferior” Black communities to reproduce faster than white communities, and because it promotes laziness and single-women-led households.

March 27, 1998

FDA approves Viagra for erectile dysfunction

The US Food and Drug Administration approves Viagra as the first oral treatment for erectile dysfunction.

September 11, 2001

World Trade Center and Pentagon Attacks

Orchestrated by Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden, four planes attacked the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon, and a Pennsylvania field, killing almost 3,000 people. This led to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and funding and infrastructure for the War on Terror, which led to increased surveillance and racial profiling of Muslim and Arab people.

May 12, 2008

ICE raid in Postville, IA

The largest Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid in United States history places more than 389 immigrant workers under arrest and more than 90 children into the foster care system in Postville, Iowa.

May 31, 2009

Dr. George Tiller murdered by anti-abortion activist

While serving as a Sunday usher at his church in Wichita, Kansas, Dr. George Tiller is shot through the eye and killed by anti-abortion activist Scott Roeder. Tiller was the medical director of a women's health clinic – one of just three locations in the United States where abortions were available later in pregnancy. His patients were almost always physically endangered by, or had extraordinary difficulty with, their pregnancy.

March 23, 2010

Affordable Care Act is signed

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is signed into law by President Barack Obama, providing the most significant policy response to race-, gender-, and class-based health care inequalities to date. The ACA also significantly broadens access by US citizens to prenatal and preventative care, including contraceptive services.

July 2010

First national strategy on HIV/AIDS

Despite more than half a million people in the US dying from HIV/AIDS since 1981, HIV/AIDS is targeted with a “national strategy” for the first time. Advocates criticize the Obama administration for a lack of commitment to its funding.

June 2013

Comprehensive anti-abortion bill, HB 2, is passed in Texas

Despite the valiant thirteen-hour filibuster held by State Senator Wendy Davis to block it, HB 2, a comprehensive anti-abortion bill, is passed in a special session of the Texas Legislature. The bill established new, unnecessary standards for abortion clinics, which caused the number of abortion clinics in the state to drop from over 40 to less than 20. In a state of 25 million people, many must travel over 250 miles to get to an abortion clinic. Other states took up similarly restrictive legislation to make abortion care more inaccessible.

March 23, 2016

North Carolina passes HB2, the first anti-trans bathroom bill

North Carolina passes HB 2, the first anti-transgender bathroom bill, which requires people to use only the bathroom that matches the sex listed on their birth certificate. After significant protests, organizing, and boycotts, the bill was repealed on March 30, 2017. Recent years have seen increased attacks on transgender people, including physical attacks, access to gender affirming care, reversal of previous legal protections, and athlete bans and gender “testing.”

September 1, 2021

SB 8 goes into effect, banning abortion in Texas after 6 weeks

Texas’s extreme abortion ban, SB 8, goes into law. Abortion is not allowed after 6 weeks. Anyone who “aids and abets” someone getting an abortion after 6 weeks can be sued for \$10,000 minimum. The civil nature of enforcement makes it difficult to challenge the constitutionality of the law. This opens more ways for other states to target abortion access. For the nine months before *Roe* fell, abortion was practically inaccessible in Texas.

January 25–26, 2022
First SACReD Gathering

SACReD launches with a 2-day online convening that brought together over 450 people from 40 states, 5 countries, and 30 religious traditions and denominations to support faith and reproductive freedom.

June 24, 2022

Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization
ends the constitutional right to abortion

The Supreme Court’s 6–3 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* overturns *Roe v. Wade*, which had provided a constitutional right to an abortion for nearly 50 years.

December 2022

Hoosier Jews for Choice challenges Indiana's near-total abortion ban

The lawsuit filed by Hoosier Jews for Choice and other individuals contends that Indiana's near-total abortion ban violates the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) due to Jewish teachings on the permissibility of abortion.

July 13, 2023

The FDA approves an over-the-counter birth control pill

The US Food and Drug Administration approves a birth control pill, called Opill, to be sold without a prescription for the first time in the United States.

February 16, 2024

Alabama Supreme Court rules that frozen embryos are "unborn children"

Alabama Supreme Court rules that frozen embryos in that state are considered "unborn children" for purposes of civil liability under Alabama's wrongful death statute.

May 1, 2024

The United Methodist Church ends its 52-year-old anti-gay stance

After decades of conflict and nearly a quarter of churches leaving the denomination, The United Methodist Church overwhelmingly votes to end 52 years of condemnation of homosexuality. The Book of Discipline no longer prohibits ordaining "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" and reverses its stance that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching."

February – June 17, 2025

Adriana Smith on life support while brain-dead and pregnant

Adriana Smith, who was 8 weeks pregnant at the time, sought medical care for headaches and soon suffered brain death due to massive clots. Because of Georgia's 6-week abortion ban, she was forced to endure life support for 4 months to maintain the fetal gestation process. Once her baby was born prematurely at 6 months, Adriana was taken off life support.

Timeline Key

- **1845–1849** — Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy endure experimental surgeries
- **1850s** — Condoms are mass-produced in the United States ~
- **April–June, 1865** — Emancipation enforced in the United States
- **1866** — Dr. Horatio Storer coins the concept “life begins at conception”
- **1866** — Frances Thompson testifies before the US Congress
- **1869** — Pope Pius IX declaration on abortion.
- **February 21, 1873** — The Comstock Act
- **October 16, 1916** — Margaret Sanger opens first birth control clinic
- **June 4, 1919** — The 19th Amendment becomes Constitutional (Women's Suffrage)
- **1930** — The Anglican Church approves contraception
- **1946** — “Homosexual” first added to the Bible
- **June 23, 1960** — The Pill becomes available.
- **1961** — Fannie Lou Hamer experiences a “Mississippi appendectomy”
- **1966** — First Gender Identity Clinic in the US
- **May 27, 1967** — Clergy Consultation Service begins.
- **June 28, 1969** — Stonewall Uprising
- **1970** — S.T.A.R. & S.T.A.R. House Founded
- **January 23, 1973** — *Roe v. Wade*
- **1973** — W.A. Criswell says life begins at birth
- **1973** — Homosexuality removed from the DSM
- **1975** — The US Conference of Catholic Bishops issues a Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities
- **January 19, 1976** — Bob Jones University loses tax-exempt status for refusing to integrate
- **September 30, 1976** — Hyde Amendment is passed
- **October 1, 1976** — The Indian Health Care Improvement Act
- **October 3, 1977** — Rosie Jimenez dies because of the Hyde Amendment
- **1977** — Florida prohibits gay adoption
- **1979** — Launch of the Moral Majority
- **1990** — Indigenous women developed the “Reproductive Justice Agenda”
- **1990** — Term Two-Spirit Adopted
- **July 26, 1990** — Americans with Disabilities Act signed into law
- **1993** — “Women's Rights are Human Rights” is popularized
- **February 5, 1993** — Family Medical Leave Act signed into law
- **November 5, 1994** — “Reproductive Justice” is officially identified.
- **August 22, 1996** — AFDC replaced by TANF

- **March 27, 1998** — FDA approves Viagra for erectile dysfunction
- **September 11, 2001** — World Trade Center and Pentagon Attacks
- **May 12, 2008** — ICE raid in Postville, IA
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- **June 24, 2022** — *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* ends the constitutional right to abortion
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- **February 16, 2024** — Alabama Supreme Court rules that frozen embryos are considered “unborn children”
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- **February – June 17, 2025** — Adriana Smith on life support while brain-dead and pregnant

Discussion Questions (15 min)

- ✦ What story does this timeline tell? Is it a story of progress? Are there places or times that progress happened for some social groups at the expense of others?
- ✦ Where on this timeline do you see the following intersectional oppressions at work? How do you see them work together?
 - * Racism
 - * Patriarchy
 - * Economic Exploitation
 - * White Christian Nationalism
 - * Other forms of oppression or marginalization
 - * Faith Community Response



Facilitation Note: You may want to have participants add these to the timeline visually using sticky notes, stickers, or index cards. Virtual participants can continue to use digital sticky notes.

- ✦ What pieces or orders of this history were a surprise to you?
- ✦ What is missing from the timeline? What other events would you add?



Facilitation Note: Have each group report out their top learnings from this exercise.