

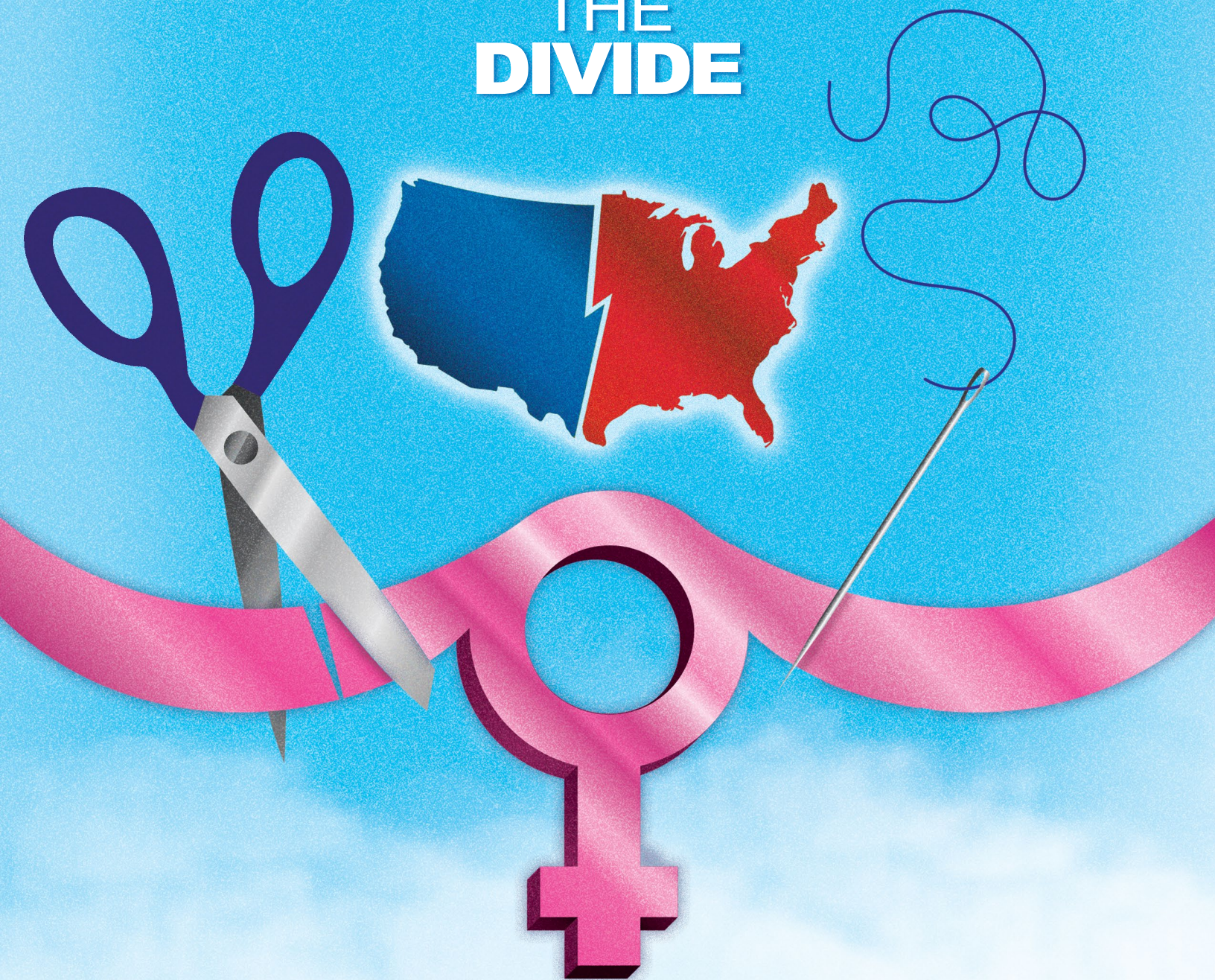
# GIRLTALK

FALL 2017

UNITY, ACTIVISM, AND  
THE REALITY OF OUR  
DIVIDED NATION

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE  
ACCESS AROUND  
THE WORLD

## STITCHING THE DIVIDE



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LETTER FROM THE EDITORS**

*By Eunice Park and Charlotte Kramon*

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL**

*By Charlotte Kramon*

**THE NEED FOR MONUMENTAL CHANGE**

*By Charlotte Kramon*

**EQUALITY IN CURRENCY IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND IN THE ERA OF TRUMP**

*By Sophie Dorf-Kamienny*

**IS THE OLD TAYLOR REALLY DEAD?**

*By Eunice Park*

**UNITY, ACTIVISM, AND THE REALITY OF OUR DIVIDED NATION**

*By Charlotte Kramon*

**WHY WE SHOULD LET NAZIS TALK**

*By Cece Sturman*

3

4

4-5

5-6

6-7

8-9

9

10

11

12-13

13-14

14

14-15

**WHY I GAVE UP ON FEMINISM**

*By Anonymous*

**LETTER FROM A NONBINARY PERSON**

*By Anonymous*

**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AROUND THE WORLD**

*By Philine van Karnebeek*

**GENDER ROLES IN PALESTINE**

*By Anushka Singh*

**THE REAL MEANING OF PRO-CHOICE**

*By Emma Greenberg*

**REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FOR AFFECTED WOMEN IN HIGH CONFLICT AREAS**

*By Eunice Park*

# WELCOME TO GIRLTALK

## Welcome to the 3rd issue of the Girl Talk Magazine!

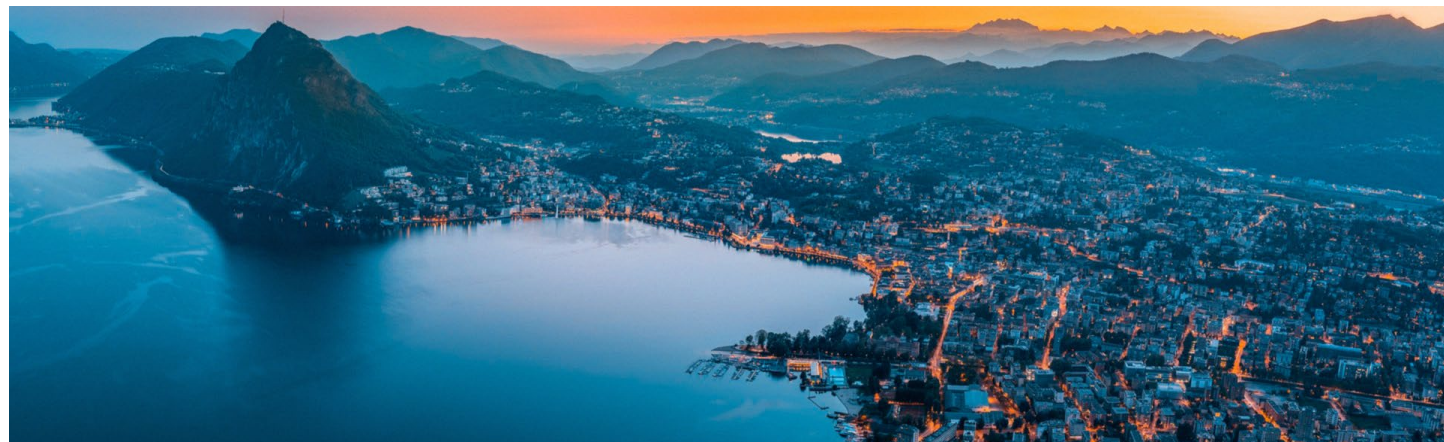
For this issue, we decided to do something different. Rather than have articles and artwork revolve around a specific theme, we opened this issue for any submission generally relating to gender, sexuality, and feminism, both politically and on a personal level. There is a lot is going on in the political world right now, and there is a lot people have to say. This is reflected in our open issue where we present to you a diverse range of articles that tackle important issues such as political unity, female monuments, gender fluidity, reproductive justice, and more.

From international voices from the Netherlands, India, and America, this issue is a special compilation of feminist discussions. It reveals deeply personal thoughts and opinions, and comments on gendered conflicts occurring in Palestine and other countries around the world. Welcoming both liberal and conservative opinions, we hear from those who dislike the feminist movement's agenda and others who feel as if the feminist movement is unfairly characterized.

The phrase "what a time to be alive" perfectly describes today's day in age. Inflammatory words are being thrown out from people with all sorts of ideologies, and it's becoming difficult to keep track of what exactly is going on not just in our country, but on a global scale. For such rapidly changing times, the only way for women to continue to remain an influential part in society is to constantly engage in discussion. Through Girl Talk Magazine, we hope to provide a feminist forum for people to try to piece together the words and events that are circulated around the world daily.

Enjoy.

- Eunice and Charlotte, Editors in Chief



## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL

by Charlotte Kramon (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

It's time to put on your favorite feminist t-shirt because International Day of the Girl is Wednesday, October 11th!

This year's theme is Girls' Progress = Goals' Progress: What counts for girls. It is each individual's responsibility to be informed on the obstacles girls face around the world.

Girls are more likely to be out of school than boys for both primary and

secondary age groups, and this includes girls coming from better-off households.

A girl in a developing country receives at least 7 years of education, but marries 4 years later and has 2 fewer children.

A girl's basic right to education is vital. For every 1,000 girls educated, 3 less women will die in childbirth.

Every year of school increases a girl's individual earning power by 10 to 20

percent.

International Day of the Girl is a time to celebrate the power of girls and further the progress in breaking the global barriers that hold them back.

At Oakwood School, we will be celebrating on Tuesday, October 10th, during lunch.

Activities will include a photo booth, bake sales, music, booths with information about girl-empowering projects, and more. Don't go to Oakwood? Spread the word at your school!

Use this day to spread awareness about the injustices girls face and to celebrate the immense power girls have.

Whether it be through a bake sale, t-shirts, or arts and crafts, there are plenty of ways to enjoy International Day of the Girl.



## THE NEED FOR MONUMENTAL CHANGE

by Charlotte Kramon (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

As protests erupt for the removal of certain historical monuments, many are calling for the addition of female monuments to the United States' collection in lieu of underrepresenting women's contribution to our history.

Out of 152 monuments listed by the National Park Service in the United States, only 3 are dedicated to

historic females, and they have each been established in the last decade. These include the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historic Park in Maryland, the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument in the District of Columbia, and the Rose Atoll in the US territory of American Samoa.

There are 5,575 outdoor sculpture portraits of historical figures in the United States. 559 involve women, or 10%, according to the Smithsonian American Art Museum's online inventories catalog.

Kanishka Karunaratne, a legislative aide for San Francisco's Board of supervisors, found that the only female

figure in the city was of "Pioneer Mother," who represents to matriarchs who moved along the Oregon of California Trails.

The city has 87 statues, and the only women depicted are former Mayor and US Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Florence Nightingale. Time reports efforts to change this involving a resolution to increase female representation throughout the city to 30% by 2020. If the legislation is successful, it would make San Francisco the first in the US to sign onto this international movement.

San Francisco isn't the only city shining light on concerns around monuments. Out of the 150 statues in all of New York City, 145 are men and 5 are women, and many aim to balance out that number. Equal Visibility Everywhere organizes projects and initiatives to diversify symbols to include more women, involving monuments, street names, stamps, currency, media, buildings, and museums.

Created by Dr. Lynette Long of Miami Beach, Florida, they recently achieved success in their efforts to add an Amelia Earhart sculpture in the Capitol's National Statuary Hall. The organization found that nine of the 100 statues in National Statuary Hall are of women, the majority of streets are

named after men, and less than 25% of the postage stamps issued by our government to honor individuals in history are of women.

Although such misrepresentation may appear to be of little consequence, messages of relevance passed to young girls can be dangerous.

Equal Visibility Everywhere reports that Eighty percent of communication is nonverbal.

Even if parents motivate their daughters to strive for success, visual communication overrides verbal communication and they ultimately learn the most from the environment and symbols that surround them.

Activism is often focused on non-visual ideas and concepts using words. The movement to increase female monuments represents a different side of recognizing inequality by focusing on the images projected upon a nation of people.

“The absence of statues honoring real women reinforces the erroneous view that women have not made notable contributions in all areas including the sciences, humanities, art, and music, political and social thought and action,” Gary Ferdman, founding director of The Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Statue Fund told Girl Talk.

“Centuries of sexist attitudes and behaviors, often reinforced by media and cultural stereotypes, are not easily overcome.”

New York City’s Central Park shows

its 40 million annual visitors 23 sculptures of men, such as 14th Century Polish King Wladyslaw II Jagiello and New York City Marathon Founder Fred Lebow, according to The Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Statue Fund Inc.

The organization has been advocating to place a statue of women’s rights pioneers Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in Central Park, the only urban park without statues honoring real women.



The few statues that represent women are of Alice in Wonderland, Mother Goose, Juliet with Romeo, along with angels, nymphs, and allegorical figures, none of which were ever real women.

The statue “will encourage women,

and, importantly, men to challenge the female stereotypes and help foster respect for women’s achievements while providing young women with important role models,” Ferdman says.

Other countries in Europe are putting effort into representing women in public areas.

The organization states that Germany passed a law requiring every new street to be named after a woman, after many advocated in response to disregarding women’s historical contributions.

The newly completed tramway which circles around Paris has stops all named after women, including Rosa Parks and social welfare and public health advocate Marie de Miribel.

The expanding worldwide push for more female monuments creates a unique outlet for people to advocate for gender equality through focusing on visual methods.

Hearing political and social movements’ messages is a key step on the path to change, but we can’t forget about the impact of ideas projected by our visual surroundings.

“Women and women’s achievements are under-recognized and under-appreciated in general,” Ferdman continues. “By celebrating our nation’s largest non-violent political movement, it reminds us that organized and committed citizens can continue, as Dr. Martin Luther King said, to bend the arc of history toward justice.

got a lot more important issues to focus on.”

Basically, Mnuchin had the audacity to deem gender and racial equality a currently trivial matter, although it is anything but.

A woman’s face on U.S. currency has been long-awaited. Of the seven types of bills being used in the country, none of them depict a woman, nor a non-white person of either gender. The last and only time an image of a woman was included was on a one-dollar certificate featuring Martha Washington in the late 1800s.

This version of the bill lasted for less than 15 years, in comparison with the almost 90 years that Jackson has appeared on the 20-dollar bill.

Trump has made it quite clear that he is not eager to remove Jackson from currency anytime soon. On the occasion of what would be Jackson’s 250th birthday, Trump traveled to Tennessee and, according to the New York Times, laid a wreath on Jackson’s tomb.

“Andrew Jackson had a great history,” Trump said in a 2016 town hall.

The gesture of respect for Jackson is appalling considering that his tomb is located at a plantation, The Hermitage, where Jackson kept more than 100 slaves.

Jackson was celebrated by populists

and was the mind behind the Indian Removal Act of 1830, also known as the “The Trail of Tears,” in which Native Americans were forced to evacuate the area east of the Mississippi River and move West. In addition, he and his supporters established the “gag rule” which, in effect, prevented Congress from considering any anti-slavery petitions.

According to Trump, Jackson’s election had been comparable to his own.

“They say my election was most similar to his,” Trump said, “1828 — that’s a long time ago.

Usually, they go back like to this one or that one, 12 years ago, 16. I mean, 1828, that’s a long way, that’s a long time ago.” And once again, this comes as no surprise considering Trump’s tendency to lean towards old-fashioned views as well as his slogan, “make America great again.”

Trump clearly expressed his concern in regards to discontinuing the Jackson 20-dollar bills.

“I would love to leave Andrew Jackson and see if we can maybe come up with another denomination,” Trump said in April 2016, after Obama’s plan was announced. He then proceeded to recommend Tubman be placed on the two dollar bill.

“It circulates in the smallest volume of any bill, about seven times less than

the \$20,” wrote the New York Times.

To make matters worse, Trump commented, “I think it would be more appropriate.” Women and African-Americans are clearly underrepresented in currency, so how would it be more “appropriate” to devalue their much-anticipated chance by placing them on the rarest paper currency in the U.S.?

Since becoming President, Trump has not addressed the redesign besides his trip to Tennessee for Jackson’s birthday, as well as through Mnuchin’s statement.

Treasury Secretary Jacob J. Lew of the Obama Administration was not expecting the next-in-line administration to reverse the plan until he heard Mnuchin express his lack of support.

“I don’t think somebody’s going to probably want to do that — to take the image of Harriet Tubman off of our money? To take the image of the suffragists off?” Lew said.

Trump’s administration has clearly had its fair share of controversies, and it is important that we don’t stand idly by while they decide what is more “appropriate” for women in our country.

It was wrong for men to tell us our place in the 18th century, and it is wrong for them to tell us where we belong now.

## EQUALITY IN CURRENCY IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND IN THE ERA OF TRUMP

by Sophie Dorf-Kamienny (MARLBOROUGH SCHOOL)

In 2016, President Barack Obama announced his plan to display the face of black abolitionist Harriet Tubman on the 20-dollar bill in place of that of President Andrew Jackson. The redesign would take place in 2020, and would be implemented within the following ten years. However, presidential candidate Donald Trump clearly expressed his dis-

dain for this plan as soon as it was conceived, and in late August 2017, President Trump’s Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin refused to support it. So the question we need to be asking ourselves is why, as time is moving forward, is our country progressing backwards?

Harriet Tubman was an enslaved African-American who courageously

made her way to freedom, only to return to rescue others. We should not be surprised that the Trump administration has yet again squandered any hope for a deserving woman of color to take the place of a privileged white man. In fact, Mnuchin told CNBC, “This is something we’ll consider. Right now we’ve

## IS THE OLD TAYLOR REALLY DEAD?

by Eunice Park (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

In Taylor Swift’s recent single “Look What You Made Me Do”, Taylor Swift brandishes a tombstone signifying the death of the “Old Taylor”. Throughout her decade long career, Taylor Swift has certainly embodied different personas. She was a sweet country singer who would soulfully sing of regrettable romances. She was an emerging pop artist that welcomed influential pop icons and

social media stars into a tightly knit girl group. Now, emerging from her year long hiatus from the music industry, Taylor Swift channels a fresh public image of a fearless feminist icon unwilling to be victimized.

*Or at least she hopes.*

The reality is, there is no “Old

Taylor”. There is no “new Taylor” either. Despite all her carefully crafted public personas and experimentations, Taylor Swift has always remained a white feminist- profiting off her white woman victimhood narrative at the expense of minority voices.

At first, I was reluctant to label Taylor as such. Women, especially high profile and highly successful women

such as Taylor Swift, are consistently told that their complaints are unjustified and insignificant. When women stand up for themselves, as what Taylor hopes to accomplish in her new album *Reputation*, they are unfairly characterized as “angry” and “demanding”. Yet, I feel comfortable labeling Taylor Swift as a “white feminist” who exploits her victimhood narrative because of the premise of her new album and her history.

Her new album, *Reputation*, which contains her single “Look What You Made Me Do”, centers around Taylor Swift’s celebrity feuds. It particularly focuses on her feud with Kanye West. Taylor Swift and Kanye’s conflict centered around a lyric Kanye West chose for his song, “Famous”, that depicted Swift sexually.

Taylor Swift had cried out in indignation over being unfairly sexualized and objectified, but was immediately exposed by released recordings that documented her consenting, and even encouraging, Kanye West to include such lyrics. Despite her expose, Taylor Swift continues to reinforce her “innocent, white woman” and “violent, black man” narrative, as she continues to profit off her false victim narrative.

Instead of asking whether the “Old Taylor” is dead, what we should really be asking is:

Where was Taylor during the election? Where was she, as a self identifying feminist icon, when Donald Trump made his infamous sexist comments glamorizing sexual assault and objectifying women? It wasn’t a coincidence that much of Taylor Swift’s original country fan base hailed from Republican states that supported Trump.

Where was Taylor Swift at the Women’s March? Where is Taylor Swift’s advocacy for intersectional feminism? Taylor loves to parade around her token minority women in her girl “squad”, yet never publicly acknowledges the unique

comply in her new album *Reputation*, they are unfairly characterized as “angry” and “demanding”. Yet, I feel comfortable labeling Taylor Swift as a “white feminist” who exploits her victimhood narrative because of the premise of her new album and her history.



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Where was Taylor Swift at the Women’s March? Where is Taylor Swift’s advocacy for intersectional feminism? Taylor loves to parade around her token minority women in her girl “squad”, yet never publicly acknowledges the unique problems minorities face in the feminist movement.

Where was Taylor’s apology when critics pointed out her blatant cultural appropriation? Although set in Africa, her music video “Wildest Dreams” contained a staggering sum of zero black people. Taylor’s music video for “Shake it Off” fetishizes black culture and stereotypes. Yet Taylor continues to remain silent against the criticism, all

the while profiting off the exploitation of culture.

Where is Taylor Swift’s response against white nationalists who worship her as an “Aryan Goddess”? White nationalists idolize Taylor Swift as a symbol of “white perfection” that reinforces their belief in white superiority.

Yes, Taylor Swift did do an outstanding job standing up for herself in her sexual assault case against DJ David Mueller. She was fearless, courageous, and feminist, in demanding that Mueller be held responsible for his actions. But that represents one isolated incident amidst an entire history of Swift’s white feminism. In line with white feminist beliefs, Swift will stand up for feminism only when it concerns her, and never when it affects others.

“Look What You Made Me Do” does not symbolize a rebirth of a new Taylor, but rather a reinforcement of her decade old and continuously harmful victimhood narrative.

## UNITY, ACTIVISM AND THE REALITY OF OUR DIVIDED NATION

by Charlotte Kramon (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

In 1972, a man lied in his hospital bed after someone shot him with the intentions of an assassin. His hand silently squeezed another hand in attempt to savor its owner’s visit for a few more moments.

As George Wallace, notorious segregationist, waited patiently for his wounds to heal and pain to drift away, Shirley Chisholm, outspoken feminist, civil rights activist, and the first African American first African American woman elected to congress and to run for president, sat by his side. Many were perplexed by her unexpected gesture.

As a nurse summoned the congresswoman to leave, Wallace held onto her hand tightly, an unspoken expression of gratitude and love.

Chisholm’s visit was intended to spread her conviction about the value of respecting opposing opinions without “impugning the motives” and “maligning the character” of the other side. Ignoring those concepts would stimulate, according to Chisholm, “the same sickness in public life that leads to assassinations.”

Over 40 years later, a nation watched the Republican primaries as Chris Christie was mercilessly bashed for accepting Barack Obama’s hug 4 years earlier after the devastating hurricane Sandy hit his city, New Jersey, resulting in massive damage and loss. Sen Corey Booker said of the moment in an interview with Ezra Klein, “I’m hugging, and it was not a good hug.”

A brewing generation is being taught to believe that when we encounter a problem, it is best to see what our opponent has done wrong rather than reflect on our mistakes. Both sides of the political spectrum are increasingly

seeing each other as the “other.” People’s instincts are to point fingers at those who believe the opposite of what they do, and label them as “bigots.”

My fellow feminists have made mistakes that ignore the values of some of the most influential feminists in history, like Chisholm. I often talk about how inclusion and respect is essential to any movement, and activists forget this sometimes.

The dehumanization, exclusion, and finger-pointing at men misrepresents what feminism should be. I will never forget my first driving lesson, when my instructor asked me typical ice breaking questions such as the types of activities I do.

When I brought up co editing this magazine and used the word feminism in the description, he (jokingly) asked me if I was going to “kill” my “male driving teacher.” It is not his fault he had this misconception. Although it’s a minority of feminists who spread such ideas, they’re certainly loud.

**"The dehumanization, exclusion, and finger-pointing at men misrepresents what feminism should be."**

For example, some of the most popular tweets under the #YesAllWomen twitter hashtag in response to Elliot Rodger’s shooting spree in Isla Vista, California, compared men to sharks and described them as “M&M candies” of which “10% are poisoned,” according to Cathy Young from Time Magazine. A well known British feminist writer see men as a group blinded by a wom-

an-hating culture and claims that “even the sweetest, gentlest man” benefits from female oppression. Her quotes have been shared by almost 84,000 Tumblr users in six months.

People involved in social justice movements aren’t only alienating others for being men. When a reporter from a generally left-leaning newspaper asked a female immigrant if she viewed her immigration rights as a privilege, she started yelling at him like a mad woman and accused him of being a racist, sexist, etc. person. The woman was allowed to have a problem with his statement. That’s the beauty of free speech.

The problem that seems to be pertinent among so many activist in modern times is that rather than calmly yet firmly articulating a valid argument on why she had an issue with his question, she let her emotions drive a reaction. This is partly perpetrated by social media, which feeds off of constant reacting.

These reactions are based on pure emotions rather than rational, critical thinking. When we let emotion-controlled reactions run wild, we don’t give ourselves the space we need understand the situation so that we can formulate clear arguments and understand and respect the other side.

By yelling at someone that they’re a misogynistic pig or whatever the remark might be, their defensive instincts will keep them from ever having any desire to understand any side but their own. And so, there we have it. Both sides won’t want to understand each other.

We are forgetting that people are allowed to express their ideas, and we don’t have to agree with them.

At a time when the political climate is facing pressing divisions, we

need to acknowledge the role of social justice movements.

For those who are feminists, we might also ask ourselves, would some of history's most essential feminist be pleased with certain parts of the movement today?

Feminists have attempted to avoid focusing to intensely on men's misbehavior in the past. Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, attempted to steer feminism from the path of "sex/class warfare," as she described it. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the earliest feminists, said, "I do not wish [women] to have power over men, but over themselves."

Shirley Chisholm articulated perfectly how alienating the other side and "malining" their character is unproductive and can lead to violent incidents we see historically as well as today.

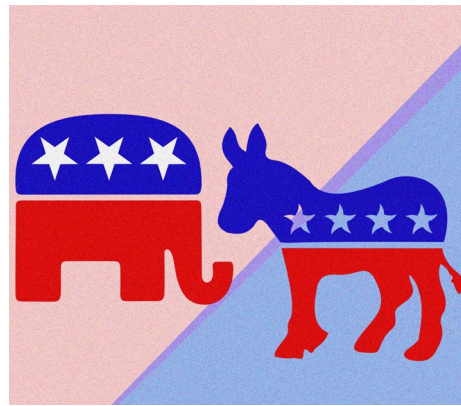
Despite the wrongdoings I see in modern feminists, I proudly identify as a feminist myself.

There is still plenty of positive efforts being made within the movement today. Although there have been some

situations where she appeared as trying to shut down her opponent, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is someone who remains strong, outspoken, and is rightfully angry about the inequality she sees in gender today. However, she avoids bashing men or any political party.

Her TEDtalk was distributed in book form throughout Sweden and a lot of the feedback she received was from boys who said they learned that feminists did not have to hate men.

We still need feminism, and women have every right to be angry about the inequality that takes place in our modern world.



## WHY WE SHOULD LET NAZIS TALK

by Cece Sturman (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

Let me start out by saying that I do not agree with white supremacists or neo-Nazis.

I also wish they would just shut up. But that doesn't mean they have to.

Last month on Saturday, August 12, a "Unite the Right" rally was held. A group of white nationalists marched around with tiki torches yelling out angry and hateful slogans.

Many slogans advocated for violence against Jews, women, and minorities.

An anti-fascist group responded, leading to violent outbreaks, and ultimately a neo-Nazi to plow his car through a group of people, killing a woman.

Just because someone is saying something you don't like doesn't mean they should stop talking. Getting angry and attacking them is not going to stop them.

People like this are angry, and won't stop screaming their opinions if there are people goading them on. If they feel oppressed they will scream even louder. If we stop stroking their fire, they will start to burn out.

Free speech is not exclusive to people saying nice things. It is for every person in America, with exceptions like not screaming "Fire!" in a movie theater.

If we start deciding who has free speech and who doesn't, what happens

However, in order for not just feminism to be successful but for unity in today's political atmosphere, we can't forget to use our rational thinking skills when formulating arguments and a willingness to understand and respect opposing views, rather than labeling them as evil.

As a group of professors from Harvard, Princeton, and Yale wrote in their letter about the importance of open-mindedness, "Merriam-Webster's first definition of the word 'bigot' is a person 'who is obstinately or intolerantly devoted to his or her own opinions and prejudices.'"

The only people who need fear open-minded inquiry and robust debate are the actual bigots, including those... who seek to protect the hegemony of their opinions by claiming that to question those opinions is itself bigotry."

Everyone is allowed to speak and everyone is allowed to have opinions. Remember, it's ok to hug someone if they're not a member of your political party.

when someone says that you are no longer allowed to voice your opinions? And who gets to decide who gets free speech and who doesn't? I know this is controversial, considering I'm defending Nazi's rights, but please don't take this as me agreeing with them.

Being half-Jewish, and not a completely awful person, I think everything they're saying is insanity. But that doesn't mean they can't say it. By allowing them freedom of speech, we are upholding the values of our country, even if they are not.

The best response to white nationalists and neo-Nazis is to ignore them, or better yet, laugh at their stupidity safely at home. Just remember, everyone has freedom of speech, but we also have the freedom not to listen.

## WHY I GAVE UP ON FEMINISM

by Anonymous

I would like to preface by acknowledging that my title may be upsetting and that what I will discuss is a fairly controversial topic in this day and age.

I do, however, hope that it does not deter you from reading my article.

I find that nowadays, and more so in America than in other countries, what has become taboo has become so mainly because of people's fear of offending others around them, and that this has plentiful harms; mainly that opinions have been stifled, and viewpoints are left to fester in the dark and fetid minds of people who feel so afraid to speak of unpopular ideas, resulting in lack of self-confidence, these ideas being implemented without perspective from other sides, and increased extremism because of a lack of balance to a more rational thought process.

As a final clarification, I am basing my opinions on feminism not on the ideals or morals of which it is founded on, but my personal experience of its implementation.

I believe that in order to have equality between genders, which is not pres-

ent in the status quo, one must build an accepting and positive culture, one that I have not found in my experience of modern feminism.

It's important here to deviate and draw a line between what feminism started as and what it has evolved into.

A prime explanation of the defamiation of the feminist culture is the reputation it has achieved as a discriminatory and abusive culture.

Although many take this reputation overboard and peg it with extremist labels, much of this reputation is accurate because of the level of hypersensitivity attached to the culture that leads it to ultimately become a divisive culture, instead of an inclusive one.

Although women make up approximately half of the population, it is still necessary for feminism to be an inclusive culture rather than a divisive one because more women begin to reject modern feminism as it becomes less accommodating to everyone.

Long-term success in political and social groups stem from inclusion; the people having a voice, and not isolating

and directing hatred at groups that don't fit the same ideology.

Ultimately, the reason I dislike modern feminism is because I feel like it's more talk than action and as much as people preach acceptance, they drive others away and ignore prominent issues they claim to support.

When my best friend was sexually assaulted, her self-proclaimed feminist friends averted their eyes and claimed it was not sexual assault and that it wasn't valid because they were familiar with the perpetrator and he was "not a bad person, really".

Maybe he wasn't. But ideals and strong words seem to be stripped in uncomfortable situations.

I don't want my best friend to feel like she does forever, inferior and weak and alone because she is female. And that is why we need some form of feminism. But I also don't want my best friend to ever feel inferior and weak and alone especially because of other women.

And that is why I reject modern feminism.



## LETTER FROM A NONBINARY PERSON

Let's address the elephant in the room: I am nonbinary. I identify as genderfluid, which is very easily explained by its name. It means that some days I feel pulled more at a masculine level, others feminine, and others both or even neither. These phases last for days, or weeks, or months or even years for some people. And it is totally a real thing.

Dysphoria is not made up, and it is one of the most uncomfortable feelings a person can experience.

Try to put yourself in a NB (nonbinary) person's shoes. You are a boy, but you are forced to wear clothes that make you uncomfortable and sit quietly.

You can't play your favorite sport, and instead you are forced to cheerlead; you are expected to act well mannered at all times and are to be seen and not heard.

Or the other way: you aren't allowed to wear any makeup even though you feel incredibly out of place without it, you are expected to be strong and to never show emotions, to go out for sports and you would much rather become a dancer.

You would constantly feel miserable and out of place.

Sometimes when I ask people to use the pronoun "they/them" when referring to me, the person will respond with, "Oh, it makes me feel weird because that's not proper grammar. Will you just pick one?"

It's crushing to hear that they care more about grammar than how you feel, and respecting you as a person. One of the hardest things for me was to accept how I felt, and it was even harder to tell my friends.

It makes me so sad when I look up nonbinary and some of the first search results are cringe compilations and rant articles. Both are blatant homophobia and not only upsetting to see, but scary.

My father can sometimes be transphobic. I feel so unsafe when I hear

him talk about trans and nonbinary people. He has no wrong intentions, but what he says is very bluntly homophobic.

I do not have a chest binder, I am expected to always dress feminine, I can't come out to my family or teachers, and *I don't want anybody to feel anywhere near like I do.*

I'm hoping that if anything, this teaches you that tolerance is important. Last year, at school, I met someone who also identified as nonbinary, and although I was calm when I met them, that night at home I cried for a very long time. Although this time I cried not out of fear or sadness, but out of relief and joy that there was someone out there like me. Someone who felt the same way. I was so overcome with joy that there were other people like this, that I realized something that has stuck with me ever since.

Wallowing in self pity, fear, and sadness helps nobody, especially not yourself. (Not to say that you can't have a good cry once in awhile).

What helped me most was one person's kindness and openness. I was at one of the worst times of my life when I met this person, and ever since I've always kept in my head a golden philosophy, which is that kindness and bravery come around. I may not be here if not for this wonderful person.

They weren't kind to me because they knew I was going through hard times, they were simply kind out of the goodness of their heart and those few lunches we ate together made my life one worth living.

It's so easy to be tolerant, and I want to try and share some knowledge so that people who identify as gender-nonconforming can feel a bit more comfortable, and you won't have to feel awkward when you don't know what to do.

by *Anonymous*

### 1. If you mess up on someone's name/pronouns

- It's totally normal to mess up at first, but you should work to grow so you and your friend can feel more comfortable. If you do mess up, though, correct yourself and move on. Don't make a huge deal about it! Just quickly correct the mistake and move past it, and everyone will leave happy

### 2. If you don't know what pronouns to use and/or make an incorrect assumption

- If you don't know what name/pronouns to use, ASK. You can be subtle or upfront. If you're embarrassed, ask if there's any nicknames they go by.

- If you wrongly assume someone identifies differently, apologize and fix your mistake. Don't try to justify yourself! It'll only make things worse. Just correct yourself and move on.

### 3. If you're unsure

- Ask! Ask about anything you feel unsure about. It's better to ask than to assume.

I hope some of you found this helpful. Or maybe you thought it was all really stupid, I don't know. But I hope you can walk away from this having learned something, whether it be a profound revelation or the smallest trivia fact, I hope this has somehow taught you something. And with that, I'm out.



# GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AROUND THE WORLD

by *Philine van Karnebeek* (AMSTERDAM)

One in three women are sexually abused in their lifetime. In times of conflict, nine in every ten women will be sexually abused or violated. So what is the relationship between gender-based violence (GBV) and conflict?

Gender based violence is defined as "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." by the UN.

Gender based violence is perpetuated by many societal factors. The main factor is the long historical inequality between the genders.

Men dominated women since the beginning of time and the idea that men should own women is rooted deeply in our society. Because of this, men sometimes feel a sense of ownership and protectiveness over their female counterparts, and this feeling easily translates into physical violence or sexual abuse.

Gender based violence is often embedded into a society as a part of the culture and/or religion. When this violence is not stopped, it usually results in murder of the women.

Most of the gender-based violence is inflicted by an intimate partner or a family member of the victim. 47% of all female homicide victims were killed by violence inflicted by a intimate partner or a family member compared to the 6% of males who were murdered in the same way. Gender based violence perpetrated by a man onto a woman is leading to activists calling on men to change this culture.

One of these activists in Ban Ki-Moon, former United Nations Secretary-General: "I call on men and boys everywhere to join us. Violence against

women and girls will not be eradicated until all of us- men and boys- refuse to tolerate it."

Eradicating gender-based violence is a key part of accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals, most significantly STG 3 and STG 5; "good health and well-being" and "gender equality".

The already high rate of gender based violence spikes even higher in a time of conflict.

In modern insurgency warfare, civilians are killed at a higher rate than soldiers. The civilians most susceptible to this are women and children.

This is because sexual violence has become integrated in modern warfare. Armies use violence against the most vulnerable parts of a society. There are



different goals that this kind of violence targets, including humiliation, terrorization, information gathering, power enforcement and ethnic cleansing.

Often, this tactic is used against minorities to enforce their control over them. Gita Sahgal of Amnesty Inter-

national said to BBC in an interview, "If one group wants to control another, they often do it by impregnating women of the other community because they see it as a way of destroying the opposing community."

This is because of the identity issue that is created if a woman of minority carries a child whose father is part of the oppressing majority. These mothers and their children are often exiled from the communities as they are culturally seen as tarnished.

These social prejudices are also a form of gender-based violence as they are only enforced because these women have to uphold an image of being the untouched. Rape is now being called a weapon of war. Rape is used to break down the fundamental strengths of the opposing communities and to spread fear to lower the moral of the opponents.

However, sexual violence is not only inflicted by the hostile forces but often also by the host forces. This form of sexual violence has very different targets.

A report published by the UN about sexual violence in peacekeeping missions inflicted by the blue hats showed that there were 480 reports of sexual abuse between 2008 and 2013, the majority of which happened in the DRC, Congo, Liberia, Haiti and South Sudan. Jane Holl-Lute.

The special envoy of the Secretary General expressed there are four things the SG is trying to tackle.

Firstly, the restoration of the respect, needs and dignities of the victims.

Secondly, the impunity of the soldiers who committed these crimes.

Thirdly, to engage civil society more in the issue and the peacekeeping missions, and lastly, to strengthen the communication between all parties of

the peacekeeping initiatives to ensure that all concerns are heard.

Sexual violence in the peacekeeping missions has been extremely controversial because the UN claims to be the enforcer of human rights, gender equality and peace. By inflicting gender-based violence they are undermining all three of those goals.

In conclusion, the violence used against specifically women is heavily

influenced by the political situation of the country.

Aside from the obvious damage caused by gender-based violence, and the physical and psychological effects, such as loss of reproductive abilities and increase of suicide attempts, there are other lesser known community based effects of gender-based violence.

This violence often is linked to restricting education and results in

detachment of the women from society and from the political atmosphere.

This causes the economy to suffer because on a large scale these women cannot participate in the economy, as without education they could not reach their full job potential. Gender-based violence is not only an infringement on the ability of the women to prosper but also the ability for the community to prosper.

## GENDER ROLES IN PALESTINE

by *Anushka Singh* (INDIA)

This article highlights the gender roles associated with men and women in the context of Palestine. I focused on the social and cultural conditioning that perpetuates the associations with gender identities of masculinity and femininity.

Further, I explored gender inequality in conflict resolution and how gender roles shape the power structures of resistance in Palestine. I found many systemic barriers that impede women's participation in political processes in Palestine.

These include social norms, gender dichotomies and the victimization of women and girls.

The gender roles and cultural norms are greatly affected by the contextual framework of the situation in Palestine. The immense political and economic instability in the region has made family the center of all forms of social life.

The traditional gender roles prescribed to family members are emphasized. I referred to a journal that examined the perception of gender in students' textbooks in History, Civics and National Education in Palestine. The study showed that men were associated with the idea of "public/war/protector" while women were characterized under "private/peace/victim". Women and girls were first and foremost seen as "wife", "mother" and "daughter".

Their identity originated in their identity in relation to the family. Essen-

tially, the social system stripped them of an individual identity. On certain pages in the textbooks, they emphasized women's equal opportunity in the workforce but any trace of gender equality was diminished by a picture of a family carrying out traditional and socially acceptable gender roles.

In respect to conflict resolution, family obligations and social norms prevent women from actively seeking political participation. The gender gap poses a huge threat to conflict resolution in Palestine. With half the segment of the population virtually unrepresented in the political sphere, the voices of women and girls are unaddressed now and will be unaddressed for future generations. The decisions made today will influence the next generations and if women are not given the space to participate gender equality will not persist later.

The perception of women solely as "victims of occupation and patriarchy" set back any progress in gender equality in Palestine. Women are victimized and deemed as unable to make decisions and participate in political processes. More importantly, cultural relativism causes a huge discrepancy between international and national legislation and the enforcement of these policies. Cultural relativism is when policies are put forward without any consideration for the cultural and social standards that permeate the region. It reflects a lack of

contextualizing the situation and leads to huge gaps in implementation.

When society hinders the integration of women into the social and political sphere, they inadvertently threaten human rights and advocate gender inequality. As child-bearers, women are endowed with the responsibility of bearing many children to increase numbers and sustain the nation. In the name of nation-building, many women in Palestine are prevented from getting abortions and are discouraged from using contraceptives. This degrades their position in society and is a violation of their reproductive rights.

The success of Palestinian society towards achieving gender equality is brought out by a Palestinian musician, Bashar Murad. Murad's song, "More Like You" is somewhat a tribute to certain individuals in Palestine who have exemplified breaking the gender boundaries created by society. It is a powerful and emotive song that is a reminder of the accomplishments the world has made so far towards ending gender identities and inequalities.

While researching for my project I realized that the only way to end gender inequality in Palestine or in the world is to have gender mainstreaming across every field and dimension. Further, we must acknowledge that the systemic power structures that conserve gender inequality have been institutionalized and normalized for centuries, so much

to the fact that they are often unconsciously promoted. For this reason, any change in the effort towards putting men and women on an equal footing is not instantaneous. Years of social conditioning created these norms and it will take many more to combat them but we must take steps now if we want to see any change in the foreseeable future.



## THE REAL MEANING OF PRO-CHOICE

by *Emma Greenberg*  
(STAPLES HIGH SCHOOL, CONNECTICUT)

There is a distinct difference between pro choice and pro life, there is also a distinct difference about what it means to be pro choice. Being pro choice does not mean you personally would get an abortion. It just means that you respect the choice of others to get one.

People need to learn that just because you identify as pro choice does not mean you are a "baby killer". By getting an abortion, no one is being killed. Abortions happen before the 24th week of gestation, which means that the "life" is not even viable before that.

There is a stigma against aligning yourself as pro choice because you are viewed by many religious communities as going against the word of god. But, you are your own free person, you do not follow the will of god, you follow your own free will.

Pro choice means allowing others to make a decision for themselves and respecting their choices. It's not supporting killing a baby who can't make decisions for themselves, it supporting the right for free-will.

You can be pro choice and still not personally get an abortion.

## REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FOR AFFECTED WOMEN IN HIGH CONFLICT AREAS

by *Eunice Park* (OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL)

Reproductive Justice is a term coined recently in 1994, by a group of black feminists during a pro choice conference.

Seeking to combine the words "reproductive rights" and "social justice", the term "reproductive justice" was created to address both a woman's right to choose and the various structures of oppression that uniquely target minority and lower income communities.

The international community, whether it be the United Nations, international non profits, or country governments, has embraced this term to address an intersectional feminist perspective, to promote a culturally respectful and situation sensitive approach to reproductive health policy.

Research is now stronger than ever that sexual reproduction rights and family planning are absolutely essential not only for women's empowerment, but for global empowerment in relation to

economic, social, and political development.

Unwanted and unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and an overall lack of awareness of safe sexual health procedures are the leading causes of poverty in many nations. These causes impact developing nations disproportionately, with the "greatest needs for services concentrated in the poorest communities and poorest countries". Thankfully, a solution is available.

A simple investment in reproductive justice of \$9 per person yields 3 million fewer unplanned births, 36 million fewer unplanned abortions, and 220,000 fewer maternal deaths in each country. The areas desperately in need of investment include funding for HIV and STD prevention, contraception, and family planning/abortion.

Although the media no longer actively covers the HIV crisis, every 5 minutes, an adolescent is diagnosed

with HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, millions of people, both males and females, around the world are stigmatized and isolated because of easily preventable and treatable sexually transmitted infections and diseases.

Organizations such as the United Nations Population Fund and the International Rescue Committee have been actively working to combat both the stigma and presence of sexually transmitted infections and diseases.

In some areas, they have experienced significant success such as in Kenya, where the provision of STD/STI medication has increased by 80 percent, but in other areas, communities still continue to be plagued with false myths and stereotypes that prevent affected people from accessing care.

Furthermore, an essential area that organizations have been focusing on to promote reproductive justice includes



the provision of contraceptives. Although 78 countries around the world require parental consent for adolescents to access contraceptives, there has been a global trend to campaign for the easily accessible and confidential provision of contraceptives.

Whether it be short term options such as monthly birth control pills or condoms, or long term options such as 10 year lasting intrauterine devices, 214 million people across the world are desperately seeking contraceptives.

The World Health Organization has designed a series of reproductive health kits that contain essential contraceptives specifically designed for emergency situations, and other organizations are working to provide a variety of contraceptives and combat the religious and social oppositions facing the provision of them.

Although many women ideally wish to prevent pregnancy before it occurs,

many women are faced with the reality of unwanted pregnancies.

Therefore, the need for abortion procedures are high, especially in countries with strict anti-abortion laws.

As Patricia Da Silva, Senior International Focus Officer at the IPPF states, "rich women abort, poor women die."

Access to abortions are increasingly regulated and sparse in poorer communities, and a multitude of other health problems arise when women in these communities seek alternative methods of abortion not offered by licensed medical professionals.

Although internationally recognized NGOs cannot fund for abortion procedures in countries where abortion is outlawed, in countries with less stringent laws, organizations have been working to promote safe, confidential, and easy access to abortion services in a non judgmental environment.

The fight for reproductive justice

is far from over, yet research and past advocacy experience from many different organizations have displayed a viable pathway to achieve reproductive justice.

As in any conflict situation, education is key - and organizations continue to recommend education for all members of society, such as education for healthy couple communication, comprehensive sexual education, and education that encourages girls to stay and finish schooling.

Both the public and private sector must come together to promote funding and research for healthy, safe family planning procedures.

Most importantly, the fight for reproductive justice will be best won with the activism of all members of society, which starts with each individual becoming involved in grassroots activism, from being initially aware of the problem and subsequently, advocating for the solution.

