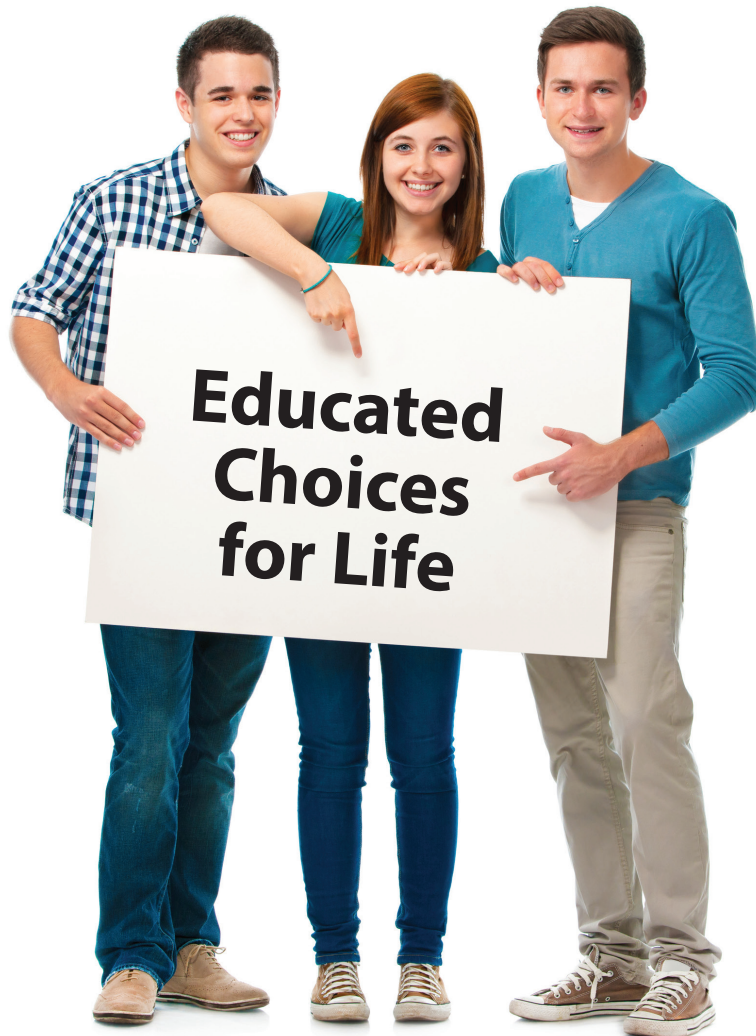




Voices for Choice

Winter 2021
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Citizens for Choice promotes reproductive justice through education, health care access and advocacy. We exist to inform and enable choice.

THE HEIGHTENED NEED FOR BIRTH CONTROL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ACCESS

By Lynn Wenzel

A new poll released by Power to Decide shows that 51 percent of respondents age 18 and over (and 59 percent of respondents age 18 to 34) are concerned about the ability to afford or access contraception considering the most recent change in the Supreme Court. The same survey also revealed a notable increase in appreciation for birth control from 2019 to 2020. In 2019, 72 percent said they are thankful that birth control allows them or their partner to decide when or if they wish to be pregnant—in 2020, 94 percent said the same. Further, 84 percent appreciate birth control that allows them to work toward educational or professional goals—compared to 57 percent in 2019. This and other survey findings were released on 11/18 from Power to Decide on its eighth annual Thanks, Birth Control Day.

As we all know and are grateful for, birth control makes opportunities possible that didn't even exist years ago. For example:

- birth control has contributed to the 30 percent rise in women's wage gains between the 1960s and the 1990s;
- between 1970 and 2017, the proportion of women age 25 and older with at least a high school diploma increased from 55 percent to 90 percent and the proportion with at least a bachelor's degree increased from eight percent to 35 percent;
- women who have access to contraception between the ages of 18-21 make five percent more per hour and 11 percent more per year by the time they are in their 40s.

SCOTUS & the Senate

On November 10, the Supreme Court once again heard arguments challenging the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), including access to contraception.

Recently confirmed Amy Coney Barrett has publicly criticized the ACA—though it provides access to affordable contraception and lifesaving health care coverage to 20 million Americans. The biggest challenge going forward will no doubt be the mark that the current administration has left on the nation's courts. Trump and the GOP Senate filled lower-court vacancies at a furious pace, leaving a legacy that could conceivably last for 20+ years or more. Further, if the Senate remains in GOP hands, it may be difficult for President-elect Biden to leave a large mark. Administration regulations have meant that the Title X network will have served fewer than 250,000 patients in California this year, a reduction of almost 75 percent. Biden is expected to take action immediately on reproductive health programs including ones that allowed more employers to opt out of the ACA's contraception mandate and that banned the use of federal family planning dollars for domestic and foreign organizations that provide or promote abortions.

The attack on contraception coverage is very unpopular. A recent survey by the Center for Biological Diversity found that 80 percent of respondents agree that all types of birth control should be legal, free, and easily accessible. Currently, students who need birth control receive it at no-cost through the ACA. Other recipients—low-income and marginalized communities need this coverage most due to systemic racism, poverty and sexism. Overall, 19 million people are in need of publicly funded contraception—95 percent of them live in areas that lack health centers offering a full range of contraceptive methods, known as contraceptive deserts.

The 2020 Election

As we cast our votes in November, COVID-19 job losses meant that an estimated four million women face the loss of employer-sponsored insurance. Continued gridlock in Congress and the potential weakening or repeal of the ACA in 2021 by the Supreme Court could leave more people vulnerable. ***Existing current members of Congress have not devised any health care backup plan if the ACA is rescinded.***

- One of the first things President-Elect Biden may do is rescind the Mexico City Policy, also called the global gag rule that 70 percent of Americans favor ending. This has long been a political football depending upon which party is in control. This harmful policy undermines access to contraception, HIV/AIDS services and maternal health care, contributing to unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions.
- Domestically, Biden may roll back the current administration's Title X rule, which undermines that program by solely promoting natural family planning over any other contraceptive methods. Discredited abstinence-only messages block funding for adolescents and for clinics that provide, refer or discuss abortion services. ***Under this "domestic gag rule," reproductive health care services in low-income communities across the country have decreased by half.*** Reinstating a comprehensive Title X program could, once again, increase the availability of important health services for those who need them.

Thank you to Gillian Sealy of Power to Decide and Kelley Dennings of the Center for Biological Diversity for the information used in the writing of this article.



Stay Informed! Keep up on public policy by visiting: www.citizensforchoice.org/home/policy-activism/

LATEST REPRODUCTIVE BILLS

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE WINS!

By Elaine Sierra, Public Policy Director

2020: A YEAR TO REMEMBER.

None of us will soon forget how COVID-19 has impacted our lives. The impacts spread to our Sacramento legislature, affecting how we conducted our reproductive health and justice advocacy. COVID curtailed the legislative calendar and the number of bills that became law. But, thankfully, we succeeded in advancing key priorities.

New laws in 2021 will include those that:

- Protect workers from losing their jobs when they take family leave (SB 1383)
- Ensure that women in prisons and jails have access to good prenatal and newborn care (AB 732)
- Provide women with fuller information about hazardous ingredients in cosmetics and personal care products sold in California (SB 312)

- Strengthen procedures at colleges and universities to prevent and respond to sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and assault (SB 493)

- Increase access to certified nurse midwives, to help fill the current shortage of OBGYN providers and address maternal and child health disparities (SB 1237).

These new laws will help remedy injustices that women face and would continue to face without our advocacy and those of other proponents of reproductive justice. COVID-19 has presented new threats. But, together, we are maintaining our focus, working and succeeding in improving the health and lives of Californians, including our most vulnerable. Thank you for standing with Citizens for Choice and supporting our ongoing pro-choice advocacy.



CALIFORNIA HIGH COURT TO HEAR CASE OF STILLBORN DEATH AS A CRIME

This year, we extended our advocacy into a new arena: the criminal law. We participated by joining in several briefs in a case involving an addicted mother who gave birth to a stillborn child. The mother was charged with murder (Becker v. California). She remains in jail in pre-trial detention.

We joined in several court briefs to agree with criminal justice advocates from the Drug Policy Alliance, first, that the law was not intended to cover such a situation, and second, that a better, more effective and humane approach to a murder prosecution under these circumstances is to provide treatment for the underlying drug addiction.

The California Supreme Court has agreed to hear the appeal of the case.



Voices for Choice

TELEMEDICINE ABORTION COMING TO *THE CLINIC!*

Telemedicine abortion is being offered all across the country after a federal court in July temporarily suspended FDA restrictions on distribution of the abortion pill during the pandemic. Patients are seen via video, telephone or text and can receive a no-touch medication abortion (which uses medication to end a pregnancy). The medications are then mailed to the patient. This removes many barriers to receiving services, including for those living in rural areas where abortion services are unavailable.



Currently, Women's Health Specialists are in the process of establishing telemedicine abortion services for all of their clinics, including *The Clinic!* Watch here for future notices about these services being offered agency wide.

SOME GOOD NEWS

In Colorado, Proposition 115 which would have forced health providers to wait until the pregnant person was dying to perform an abortion, went down to defeat on November 3 with 59.1 percent of voters voting "no" on a proposition that would have restricted abortions after a fetus reached 22 weeks except when absolutely required to save the life of a pregnant woman. The proposition did not include exceptions for rape or incest, would have imposed \$5,000 fines on anyone who performed an abortion procedure and would have suspended the medical license of any physician who violated the measure. This "no" decision allowed Colorado to remain as one of only seven states without gestational limits on abortions and is increasingly important as the appointment of Justice Amy Coney Barrett puts *Roe v. Wade* at risk, thereby putting abortion rights into the hands of individual states.

Sources: *New York Times* 11/4/20, *Vox* 11/3/20, *CBS Denver* 11/3/20, *Feminist Newswire* 10/29/20.

WE TAKE GOOD NEWS WHERE WE FIND IT!

For the first time in more than two decades, Texas' Board of Education voted Friday to make major changes to the state's sex education standards, expanding the teaching of birth control beyond abstinence-only education for middle school students. Public school teachers will be allowed to teach students in seventh and eighth grades about birth control methods such as condoms and other contraceptives and about their effectiveness in preventing pregnancy, S.T.D.s and S.T.I.s. These revisions will go into effect in August 2022.

Previous standards, in place since 1997, only allowed abstinence-only to be taught about birth control. Health advocates were critical, pointing out the state's rate of teenage pregnancy, one of the highest in the nation, according to the CDC. Texas' board of education wields significant influence over public school curriculums both for in Texas and outside the state. Textbook companies look to Texas to set their standards for the rest of the country

because the state is such a large purchaser of textbooks.

Before November 20, amendments previously proposed--to require that teaching of sex education define legal and affirmative consent, gender identity and sexual orientation--had been defeated by the 15-member board. Ricardo Martinez, the chief executive of Equality Texas, an LGBTQIA advocacy group, testified many times ahead of the vote, saying that excluding language about gender identity, sexual orientation and consent hindered students' ability to navigate the world. A public opinion poll conducted by the nonpartisan group, The Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, found that about 75 percent of respondents supported education that covered not only abstinence but also contraceptives. Still, the Texas legislature and the state board of education continue to exist as big stumbling blocks.

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Nevada County
Citizens for Choice

OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS!

Xochitl Husted And Syenna Velasquez



Syenna Velasquez and Xochitl Husted, both lifelong Nevada County residents, are the newest addition to the Citizens For Choice volunteer team. Graduating from Nevada Union High School in 2019 and 2018 respectively, they have moved on to college and are pursuing their passions of social justice, women's studies, and saving the environment.

Since July Syenna and Xochitl have been developing twice weekly Instagram posts to address the issues and questions that relate to Citizens For Choice and *The Clinic!* We recently caught up with them during their busy college schedules for an interview. Below are excerpts from those interviews

Syenna Velasquez

What college are you attending and what is your major/career goal(s)?

I'm in my first year at UC Berkeley (distance learning) with a major in Society and Environment. I'm considering pursuing a law degree in the future.

What are your passions/interests outside of college?

I'm in a sorority, Pi Beta Phi, that emphasizes improving literacy among young girls and women. I'm also active in the ACLU club as a member of the Gender Equity Committee. As a Surfrider Club member, I make presentations (currently on Zoom) to elementary school students, teaching them about climate change.

What interested you in becoming involved with Citizens For Choice?

I was excited to get my foot in the door to pursue advocacy for women and social justice issues. Having a local impact, where I grew up, is very rewarding. I'm also very interested in influencing the quality of sex education in our local high schools.

The Instagram posts that Xochitl and I are doing are having a very positive impact and we get new followers all the time with lots of positive feedback and questions.

Xochitl Husted

What college are you attending and what is your major/career goal(s)?

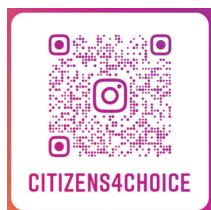
I'm in my third year at Pitzer College in Claremont, California. I'm pursuing a double major in Political Studies and Sociology. Sociology is really my greatest passion and I love research. I've just received a Fellowship to research how women of color are marginalized in discussion based classroom spaces.

What are your passions/interests outside of college?

I've always loved to dance and I've recently gotten back into that with a group of other dancers who are home from college because of Covid and distance learning.

What interested you in becoming involved with Citizens For Choice?

Growing up I didn't learn very much about sex ed and my body. The instruction we received in high school was very minimal and mostly tried to scare us. I wrote my college essay about changing sex education in the schools so when I had the opportunity to become involved with Citizens For Choice I jumped at the chance. I'm really enjoying developing the Instagram posts to help educate people in our community.



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Voices for Choice

POLAND'S WOMEN RISE UP

Poland's right-wing government and its Constitutional Tribunal ruled on October 22 that terminating pregnancies for fetal abnormalities—one of three justifications for legal abortions and virtually the only type performed in the country—violated the Constitution. Poland's women rose up and said, "no way!" For two weeks, the largest protests Poland experienced since the collapse of communism in 1989 took place, igniting a furor on the streets of both large cities and small towns. Ignoring Covid-19 dangers amid increasing cases, hundreds of thousands of women (and some men) turned out, holding banners that read, "I wish I could abort my government" and "This is war." Protesters disrupted church services and confronted priests, challenging the Catholic Church, which holds a special place in Poland's society after supporting the struggle against communism. But Poland is a Catholic country, and the church is a close ally of the governing party.

These demonstrations led to the Polish government indefinitely delaying the publication of the court's ruling and preventing it from going into legal effect. Most legal abortions—1,074 of 1,100 performed in Poland in 2019 resulted from fetal abnormalities. These abortions, however, represent only a small fraction of those obtained by Polish women, who seek terminations abroad if they can afford it or undergo risky illegal procedures. Three out of four Poles are against tightening the laws on abortion and against the Tribunal's ruling, and over 60% are in favor of further liberalizing Poland's abortion laws. Time will tell whether Poland's far right government closely allied with the Catholic church, or Poland's women will prevail. But Polish women say, "We will continue to protest, and we will fight to the end."

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Thank you!

You help us provide services at *The Clinic!*, education programs and advocacy for us all.



E-scrip Contributions—They Really Help!

Thank you! Contributions may be made to Citizens for Choice through e-scrip at Safeway, Save-Mart, and SPD Market.



Remember to shop at **smile.amazon.com**. When you #StartWithaSmile, Amazon donates to Nevada County Citizens for Choice.

IMPORTANT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH POLICY DECISIONS FROM THE GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE PLANNING FOR 2021

Despite the election of a new president and vice-president, advocates must hold the incoming administration and congressional lawmakers accountable in order to undo the harms of the last four years—push for progressive and equitable policies, and make 2021 a turning point for sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice, as well as staying vigilant for any harmful and/or restrictive policies that could be enacted during the lame duck period between the election and Inauguration Day, according to the latest report from the Guttmacher Institute.

Who Will Be Impacted? Anyone who uses public health insurance programs or the Affordable Care Act.

Though conservative lawmakers continue to attempt to weaken Medicaid, most states have expanded eligibility for full-benefit coverage including family planning services. More than 20 percent of all women and nearly half of low-income women aged 15-44 rely on Medicaid and other public health insurance programs for coverage. To move forward: we must halt and reverse the current administration's attempts to undermine Medicaid and the ACA, incentivize states to expand Medicaid if they haven't

already done so and affirm Medicaid enrollees' right to see the provider of their choice. Congress must increase access to affordable, comprehensive insurance in all states, i.e. approve Biden's plan for a public health insurance option and take any steps necessary to preserve the ACA if the Supreme Court strikes it down in whole or part.

Contraception

Forty-three million women in the U. S. are sexually active and do not want to become pregnant. Title X focuses its services on underserved populations. As of 2019, one-quarter of its patients are Black, one-third are Hispanic, and two-thirds have incomes at or below the federal poverty level. The upcoming administration should close loopholes in the ACA's contraceptive coverage guarantee, eliminate sweeping religious and moral exemptions to the guarantee and repair the Title X program by reversing the domestic gag rule and rebuilding the network by allowing long-standing providers back into the program.

Anyone seeking an abortion

Six in ten women live in states with policies that are hostile toward abortion rights and federal bans block insurance coverage of

abortion to millions of people who obtain health coverage through federal programs including Medicaid and Medicare enrollees, federal employees, military personnel and veterans, federal prisoners and detainees, Native Americans, Peace Corps volunteers and low-income residents of the District of Columbia. The administration must vocalize a clear commitment to abortion rights and equitable access and review the U. S. Food and Drug Administration restrictions that limit access to medication abortion, including through telehealth. Congress must pass the Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance Act (EACH Woman) and restore public insurance coverage of abortion and the Women's Health Protection Act to create a federal statutory right to access abortion without medically unnecessary restrictions.

Maternal Health Care

The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate among developed countries, with large racial disparities that are preventable. Black and Indigenous women's mortality rates are two to three times the rate as those of White women and four to five times as high among older age groups. This is preventable and is caused by systemic racism and

Continued on next page....

Thank you to participating condom fairy locations throughout Nevada County!

Asylum Down | Behind Closed Doors Fantasy Boutique | BriarPatch Co-op
Classic Tattoo | Clock Tower Records | Common Goals | Community Beyond Violence | Cooper's
CoRR (Community Recovery Resources) | Crazy Horse Saloon and Grill
Foggy Mountain Music | FoxHound Espresso & Coffee Roaster
Gary's Place Saloon | Goodtimes Boardstore | Mine Shaft Saloon | Nevada Club
N.S.J.-Sierra Family Medical Clinic | Sierra Care Physicians (PV) | Sierra College Health Center
Spirit Farmer Acupuncture | The Open Book | Tribal Weaver
Valentina's Organic Bistro and Bakery

Canastas de Informacion :Deseamos expresar nuestro agradecimiento a los siguientes negocios por su apoyo y ser anfitriones de estas canastas de informacion.



Continued from previous page....

provider bias. The administration must address racism as a public health crisis and allow states to expand the Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage to at least 12 months postpartum. Congress should pass the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act and increase funding for the Title V maternal and child health services block grant.

Immigrants

The administration must repeal the expanded public charge rule and regulations excluding DACA recipients from benefits under the ACA. The administration must also prohibit the U. S. Department of Homeland Security from detaining pregnant or postpartum women and require protection of detainees against reproductive coercion. Congress should pass the HEAL for Immigrant Women and Families Act.

Adolescents and Young Adults

The administration must support congressional efforts to redirect abstinence-only funding to comprehensive and other sex education programs. Congress should pass the Real Education for Health Youth Act to end federal funding of abstinence-only education and fund comprehensive sex ed programs. Congress must also pass the Youth Access to Sexual Health Services Act to support access for marginalized young people, eliminate abstinence-only sex education programs and re-direct the money to the Personal Responsibility Education Program and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program.

LGBTQIA Community

The administration must fully restore the ACA's antidiscrimination protections, reverse the refusal of care rule, and ensure

that all federally funded sex education is LGBTQIA inclusive.

Black, Indigenous and Other People of Color

The maternal mortality rate for Black women nationally is 3.2 times the rate of White women and racist policies like the Hyde Amendment are designed to target people with low incomes—particularly people of color—for harmful and discriminatory treatment. The administration must acknowledge racism as a cause of health disparities, address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color and bar the U. S. Department of Justice from criminalizing self-managed abortion and substance use during pregnancy. Congress must eliminate the Hyde Amendment and expand access to affordable health insurance coverage.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PROTECTING RBG'S LEGACY

The young woman who calls *The Clinic!* to make an appointment to discuss her reproductive choices is not thinking of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. When she arrives at *The Clinic!*, she is confident that she will be treated with dignity and care, and that the medical professionals she will see will not judge her and she will be safe. If she needs blood tests or a pelvic exam she knows she will not be humiliated. And even though she may not know it, she can thank Ruth Bader Ginsburg for fighting for, writing and guiding the passage of laws which ensure her rights to the safe treatment she seeks and receives.

For twenty-seven years as a Supreme Court Justice, "RBG" never stopped supporting

a woman's autonomy to determine her own future as an equal member of society, including the right to decide whether or not to bear a child.

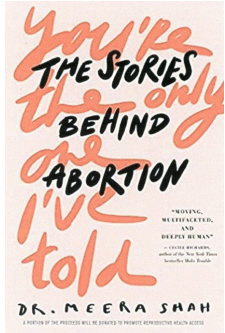
The death of RBG in last September created a chasm in the Supreme Court that severely threatens equality for women in this country. It is ironic that the championing of one woman for the rights of all women can be so shaken by her absence. We all feel it. We all know that if women are to remain equal citizens of this country, we must firmly grasp the baton that RBG has handed off to us and fight to keep the laws that protect our rights.

The young woman who seeks medical services at *The Clinic!* is a member of a generation that takes their equal rights status for granted. In her lifetime, she has had ready access to birth control and abortion care.

She has never had to protest the abjuration of her rights. She has been confident that she will receive whatever medication and treatment she needs without having to resort to illegal means to obtain them. She can openly declare her right to make her own decisions about her body.

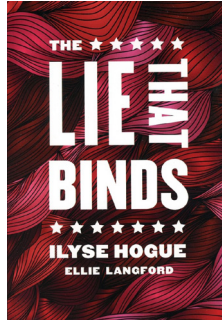
As champion and guardian of equality for women, Ruth Bader Ginsburg quietly and continually held the Supreme Court to its highest standard of equality. Without her perseverance, those of us who remember a country without laws that guarantee equality for women must honor her work by reminding our descendants that equality must be protected. Our daughters and granddaughters must guard Ruth Bader Ginsburg's legacy as fiercely as she fought for the rights they enjoy now.

READERS CORNER



The days grow shorter and stay darker longer. A perfect time to curl up with good books that both entertain and educate. Here are two new ones. You're the Only One I've Told: The Stories Behind

Abortion by Dr. Meera Shah, published by Chicago Review Press, is an intense, intimate examination of real women's lives, "powerfully breaking the silence around abortion." Shah covers a wide range of women's stories in their social, legal and political contexts in a clear-eyed and shame-free way from her front-line view. The stories are heartbreakingly personal, moving and absolutely necessary to break the silence—especially among women. Shah's book paints a deeply human picture of abortion, blending it with her medical expertise, listening with an educated and empathetic ear to women who have felt isolated or stigmatized talking about their own abortions. Shah makes it clear that abortion is not—and should not be—a political tool. It is health care and, as such, reveals the connections between reproductive justice, gender justice, racial justice and economic justice. Dr. Shah is a family medicine physician who knows whereof she speaks. She currently serves as the chief medical officer of Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic in New York, is a Fellow with Physicians for Reproductive Health and, in 2018, was awarded Woman of Distinction by New York State Senator Brad Hoylman. Her heart for justice is eloquently reflected in each poignant account.



The Lie That Binds by Ilyse Hogue and Ellie Langford, published by Strong Arm Press is a "brilliant, systematic takedown of the extremist, hypocritical forces that seek to control women's bodies," says Stacey Abrams

of this book. The Lie That Binds recounts how the formerly non-partisan, back-burner issue of abortion rights was reinvented as the sharp point of the spear for a much larger reactionary movement intent on maintaining control, especially over women, in a rapidly changing world. Regardless of whether or not support for reproductive rights in the United States is at an all-time high, Hogue and Langford explain in a deeply researched manner, how "conservative political operatives intentionally targeted abortion as their rallying cry for their followers" as other prejudices fell from favor and lost their power to control. Abortion was (is) a Trojan horse used to move a deeply unpopular, regressive policy agenda. Hogue and Langford make the following suggestions to take back control of the debate and unmask the complete ideology of the anti-choice movement:

- Call the movement what it is. It has always been about achieving and holding on to power by a ruling class of white Christian men. We can overcome fears of speaking out against this ideology while not allowing ourselves to be accused of attacking faith. The voices of Christian leaders who understand and disagree with the right wing's twisted use of religion must be heard loud and clear to support Americans who hold many spiritual views.

- Embrace the values conversation. We stand for freedom, diversity of opinion and equal opportunity. They stand for control and oppression. Say it loudly so the hypocritical noise is drowned out.
- Claim the language and use it. We must refuse to repeat their language. Inaccurate terms such as "heartbeat bills" appeal to emotion. Let's use such terms as "forced pregnancy laws."
- Confront disinformation and hypocrisy head on. Ask the first question. Don't wait to respond to their claims. Such questions as "why do they distrust their constituents' opinions? How do they propose to enforce draconian restrictions they're proposing? Why don't they use science and public health data to guide their policy-making? Force them on the record.
- Fight together by connecting our issues and efforts. We are fighting for such things as freedom, dignity and equity. Do not allow them to use techniques to separate us from each other.
- Recognize that democracy is at the heart of our fight. Make fighting against voter suppression efforts core to every strategy. It's time that the majority is no longer controlled by a minority.

Hogue and Langford encourage readers to speak up, call the bluff of the Radical Right and hold those accountable who use racism and misogyny as weapons against the truth. "Victory is our charge and the truth is our tool," write Hogue and Langford. This book is a must resource for those who wish to understand the history and methods of the right wing repression of women's governance over their own bodies.