



# Michigan Religious Coalition

## for Reproductive Choice

Spring 2009

### Celebrating the Promise of Hope: 36 Years after Roe v. Wade



"While it is a time to rejoice for women and women's health, we must not forget that we all have a part to do. That part is protecting the freedoms that our grandmothers and mothers didn't have, and ensuring that our sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, nieces, nephews, and their friends never feel shame, fear and desperation when they need help," Jessica Hamel, MI-RCRC board member, (pictured left) reminded the audience at the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Roe v. Wade Commemoration.



The evening began with a reception where attendees were able to learn about different pro-choice organizations in the area as well as participate in different activities. The main activity was to design a magnet square for the promise quilt.



Shannon Nobles, producer  
Roe Monologues



Roe performers clockwise from right: Krysta Michorzyk, Joe Felix, Jennie Smallman, Amanda Dubey, and Kelley Nobles in center.

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### Letter from the Director

Today is a new day. It is a day when women around the world have family planning services and health care because President Obama repealed the Global Gag Rule. While we celebrate the inauguration of President Barak Obama, we must not become complacent or quiet.

Having a religious and pro-choice president does not automatically guarantee funding and increased access to reproductive health services. A week after the President repealed the Global Gag Rule, he agreed to drop funding for family planning from the economic stimulus plan due to political pressure. While there are times to sacrifice for the greater good, I still wonder, why? Why do we continue to allow this to happen?

Then I saw the *Detroit News* article about the new archbishop, Allen Vigneron, of Detroit. The paper reported that Vigneron expressed disappointment with Obama's position on abortion and said the Catholic Church must seek political alliances to counter policies such as giving foreign aid to agencies that provide abortion services. The article continued with a quotation from a Catholic scholar about needing to send messages to Catholic legislators to protect the unborn.

Those who seek to deny women and men information and health care services that allow them to be responsible are not quiet. We must not shy away from reminding people that being religious and pro-choice is morally right. We must do this to protect the rights of men and women to make their own moral decisions.

Today is a day of hope and opportunity to educate and protect. Today is a day to speak.

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Attendees wrote their promises to uphold reproductive justice and then all magnets were displayed throughout the evening.

The MSU Medical Students for Choice (MSFC) talked to people about different contraception options and dispelling myths about emergency contraception and medical abortion.

Hamel began the evening's program by celebrating the inauguration of President Obama, a pro-choice, religious president. She outlined what policy possibilities for reproductive justice lie ahead.

After Nicole Szell, from MSU MSFC, delivered the invocation, MI-RCRC board member Shannon Nobles presented the Roe Monologues. Nobles compiled and adapted true stories of 4 women who had abortions for different reasons to illustrate the importance of keeping abortion safe and legal. The fifth monologue performed was one of a doctor who worked in a hospital prior to the legalization of abortion and saw the results of desperate measures to terminate a pregnancy.

Judy Karandjeff, executive director of the Michigan Women's Commission, provided a legislative update at the federal and state level. The legislative update reminded us of the opportunities and work that lie ahead.

While we celebrated the Roe and its promise of hope for women, with that promise comes responsibility to ensure reproductive justice for today and tomorrow.



Representative Barbara Byrum with MSU Medical Students for Choice Katie Krive, Ashley Brandt, Robert Marcotte, and Nicole Szell.



Promise quilt of magnets by attendees



Judy Karandjeff, executive director, MI Women's Commission gives a legislative update

**MI-RCRC New Board Members & Officers**

The MI-RCRC board welcomed new members and elected officers. Rabbi Amy Bigman succeeds Reverend Robert Frederick as board chair. We thank him for all of the work, passion, and commitment he provided. Joining continuing members Marina Brown, Sue Grubb, and Margo Smith, secretary, are:  
 Nell Corkin  
 Anna Graham, treasurer  
 Jessica Hamel  
 Shannon Nobles  
 Erin Skene-Pratt

**The Birds, Bees, Parents & God**

It's often difficult for parents to talk to children about sexuality issues regardless of their age. Parents may need assistance talking about facts, feelings, and values. And where does God fit into the mix? Join parents and experienced sexuality educators Julie Thomas-Beckett, NP,MSN, and Joy Whitten to learn facts, tips, and techniques for providing age-appropriate, medically accurate, comprehensive sexuality education. Join us in Lansing on April 21, 2009, 6:00-7:30 pm. Contact [mircrc@mircrc.org](mailto:mircrc@mircrc.org) to register.

**Thank You**

We greatly appreciate your commitment to dispel stereotypes about being pro-choice and religious by engaging pro-choice clergy and providing programs to students and the community. Your financial contributions ensure a pro-choice voice in the faith community to protect the health of women, men, and teens.

## Legislative Update

### The Good

**SB 64** (Jacobs and Switalski) — requires contraceptive equity.

### Global Gag Rule

Repealed by President Obama to eliminate restrictions about abortion for family planning funding allowing millions of women around the world to receive health care.

### Prevention First Package

Introduced at the federal level would:

- Increase family planning funds
- Expand Medicaid family planning
- Provide contraceptive equity
- Raise awareness about emergency contraception (EC)
- Provide EC in the ER to sexual assault victims
- Provide funding for comprehensive sexuality education and reducing teen pregnancy.

### The Bad

**SB 3** (Jansen) defines a fetus as a natural person.

**SB 147** (Brown) prohibits certain abortion procedures.

**SB 148** (Pappageorge) criminal penalties for doctors performing banned procedures.

### Abstinence Only grants

Michigan accepted \$1.4 million in grants for schools to provide abstinence only education even though studies report these programs are ineffective at reducing teen pregnancy. Half of the states in the US refuse these federal grants.

### Refusal provisions

Last minute regulation changes of the Bush administration went into effect on January 20th. In the guise of protecting religious liberty they honor the personal objections of some health care providers above the needs of women, which, through the denial of services, will force beliefs on women who do not share them. Lawsuits have been filed to block the regulations.

### Family Planning cuts

Buckling to political pressure, President Obama cut family planning funding from the



## Talking About Choice with a Religious Voice

Think of those things that anti-choice people say that really make you mad. Many of them include something related to religion. The goal when confronted with extreme religious rhetoric is not to “win” but instead to focus on reassuring, informing, and redirecting.

Consider the following:

For example, “I’m not pro-choice. Abortion is against my religion but if other people want to have one, that’s up to them.”

Reminding people that being pro-choice means letting people decide for themselves and reassuring people that one can be both pro-choice and religious can make a big difference.

Or, “God says abortion is murder. I believe it should never happen.”

A possible response is, “There is no religious consensus on abortion. I do agree that we should prevent unintended pregnancies, the main reason for abortions, through education and better access to health care.”

### Religion as a cover

Religion may also be used as an excuse or to cover up other issues when talking about reproductive health.

Uninformed – People may be unaware of contraception options or what really is involved in the abortion procedure.

Financial -- Others may not be able to afford reproductive health services.

Fear – A woman may be afraid of being ostracized by her family and community. She may also be in a relationship where she cannot negotiate issues related to sexuality and child bearing.

Using religion as a cover may save face or just be easier than addressing a deeper issue.

Some things may be misattributed to religion. Female circumcision often is associated with Islam but it is not an Islamic or religious tradition.



### Looking ahead

**March 10** — National Abortion Provider Appreciation Day and International Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness day.

**April** — the anniversary of the 2004 March for Women’s Lives.

**May** — National Teen Pregnancy Prevention. States that have comprehensive sexuality education programs in their schools have a lower teen pregnancy rate. May is often when high schools have their proms. In many schools, even though underage consumption of alcohol is illegal, students learn about the dangers of drinking and driving and how to be safe. Yet, in Michigan, where the age of consent is 16, sexual activity among peers is legal, how many school districts offer prevention and safety programs related to sexual activity?

The Michigan Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice works to ensure reproductive choice through the moral power of religious communities. The Coalition seeks to be a representative of people of all faiths and beliefs and to give a clear voice to the reproductive issues of people of color, those living in poverty, youth, and underserved populations.

Let’s be friends—  
Check us out on MySpace and FaceBook or visit us online at [www.mircrc.org](http://www.mircrc.org)

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