

2009

Network for REPRODUCTIVE Options

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*Empowering communities
with abortion access,
grassroots health education
and reproductive options*

Remembering George Tiller and the Search for Common Ground

Just as our newsletter was ready to go to press we received the horrible news that Dr. George Tiller had been shot and killed on the morning of May 31, 2009. The NRO Board and Staff immediately sought to honor Dr. Tiller in our newsletter for tremendous work he had done for women and for the enormous contributions he made to the reproductive justice movement as an outspoken advocate of women and as a doctor. As supporters of reproductive freedom from around the country gather to honor and remember the life and work of Dr. Tiller, it seems the piece I had originally written on President Obama's 'common ground' agenda has taken on new significance.

In Dr. Tiller's words, the struggle for abortion rights is fundamentally a struggle for women's human rights. The work he did, providing compassionate care to women who were often in crisis, exemplified in many ways the importance of abortion access to women's lives. His detractors, his killers, vilified him for the unborn lives he ended, but fundamentally, Dr. Tiller saved lives. He saved the lives of thousands of women so that they could live up to their fullest potential as human beings. For this we honor him.

Anti-abortion activists have been quick to distance themselves from the 'lone lunatic' who shot and killed Dr. Tiller. And they are fearful that this tragedy will galvanize the reproductive justice movement

and push these anti-abortion extremists even further to the margins. Indeed, the national conversation on late-term abortions seems to have shifted slightly to focus on women's stories and the difference between choosing an abortion at 12 weeks and ending a pregnancy at 28 weeks.

More than ever, it is important to critically examine this 'common ground' called for by President Obama. Yes, it is time to end the 'culture war' on abortion. Indeed, it is long past time. The casualties are too high. Although Dr. Tiller and his family and loved ones are the immediate victims of this heinous crime, this and other attacks on doctors and clinics that provide abortions amount to a terror campaign against all women. These attacks say that we do not have the right to control our bodies, our sexuality or our lives. Instead, we are told, we must submit to the patriarchal ideology that says our only worth is as sexual objects and bearers of children; and if we will not submit we, and the people who help us, will be killed.

The only legitimate way to end the so-called 'culture war' on the issue of abortion is for us, as a country and as a culture, to affirm that women are human beings. Women have the right to determine the course of their own lives and abortion is a safe medical procedure that gives women control over when and whether they bear children.

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"Make no mistake, this battle is about self-determination by women of the direction and course of their lives and their family's lives. Abortion is about women's hopes and dreams. Abortion is a matter of survival for women." Dr. George Tiller, 2001

On the Hotline in Hard Economic Times

It began at the end of last summer, an increase in the number of weekly calls and an increase in the number of women stating that they or their partner had lost their job. As you can imagine, low income women and their families were already feeling the effects of the recession that was to take hold in the fall. The number of calls kept increasing, but our funding capabilities could not keep pace with the growing need. Along with other funds across the country, NRO has received a dramatic increase in requests for funding, which has strained our resources as well as the resources of other assistance programs. Oregon has been one of the hardest hit states in terms of industry loss and unemployment. As a result, many Oregon women have faced the tough question of whether they can afford to start or grow their families in these difficult times.

The increase in calls on the NRO hotline has been felt deeply and dramatically by our volunteer advocates. Our advocates have risen to the challenge: doing more case management, more educating, and more difficult intake interviews than ever before. Making decisions about funding has become more difficult as resources limit the exceptions advocates have been able to make, while women's individual stories have become more compelling. Sometimes there just isn't enough money to give. That being said, it has also been a time of profound learning and amazement at the human spirit for the hotline advocates. It is an honor to assist women making difficult decisions with such dignity as they take care of themselves and their families in the small ways that we can.

As the NRO hotline advocates continue to work with each individual woman to find ways to meet her needs, we've also begun looking for ways to make the money we can give go further. We've started working more closely with another abortion

fund that works regionally in the Pacific Northwest and has been a collaborator of ours in Oregon since we were founded in 2002. The Community Abortion Information and Resource Project (or CAIR Project) serves women from Washington, Idaho, Alaska and Oregon and has worked informally with NRO since our founding in 2002. However, the recent changes in the economy, clinic referral patterns, and Oregon Health Plan accessibility have led the two organizations to recognize the need for more communication and more formal collaboration.

We held a meeting in early May and have developed some priorities in terms of advocate communication. In the coming months we will be implementing new procedures for regular communication between volunteers on both hotlines, developing a joint brochure for the clinics to explain how our different funds work, who qualifies for funding, and the best ways for women to apply for our funds. Our work together is exciting and promises to ease the workload for all of our advocates and to better serve the women calling our hotlines. The NRO hotline advocates will continue to build on this work and meet quarterly to troubleshoot our own hotline's particular needs and provide support and information for each other as we continue to feel the expansion of the need for the vital services we provide. We will be reconvening with the CAIR Project in mid-June at the National Network of Abortion Funds' annual organizing summit and look forward to continuing our collaboration.

-KW



My Story

It was back in the 60's and I was only 19 years old. I came from an upper middle class home in the greater Los Angeles California area. Back then women couldn't easily get birth control pills if you weren't married, and no one promoted using condoms. My short-lived marriage had not worked out, but my hormones were still raging and I found myself pregnant after an irresponsible one-night-stand with my hairdresser. Of course when I told him I was pregnant he denied that he was responsible and wouldn't help me out. I don't blame him..... it was such a brief encounter.

Before abortions were legalized, girls who found themselves in my position had about 3 options to consider: You could have the baby and keep it and

forever bring shame on your family; you could be sent away to a secret place to have your baby and then give it up for adoption, or you could find someone who did illegal abortions. For me option #1 would never do because my mother would have none of that – her reputation in the community would be forever damaged, option #2 was nothing that I would consider – I've never wanted to be pregnant or be a mother. So, option #3 was my only viable route to take.

My mother somehow found an abortionist in Tijuana, Mexico. After a long and tense drive from Los Angeles we crossed the border and hoped that

continued on next page

My Story (continued)

no one was following us. It was night by the time we got there and we had been given directions to park in a dark parking lot in a seedy part of town. After waiting there for what seemed like forever, a man knocked on the car window and indicated that we were to follow him on foot. We walked for blocks, trailing behind this unknown man, not really knowing what we were getting into.

After finally arriving at a house we were admitted into the living room – there were 3 or 4 other pregnant girls and their parents waiting there too. I remember the place being shabby and filthy even though the lighting was very dim. The men chose another girl to go first and indicated she should use the bathroom before going into the room where the procedure would be done. After a bit she came back out sobbing hysterically and her parents left with her.

Then it was my turn. I went into a small filthy bathroom. It is this room I remember most vividly. The toilet, tub and floor were as dirty as I'd ever seen a bathroom.... but it was the sink that stands out most clearly in my mind. It hadn't been cleaned in who knows how long; you couldn't tell it had ever been white. Piled in it were several metal surgical pans and surgical instruments – they were covered in blood – and there were, of

course, flies crawling over all of it. I will never be able to erase those images or the smells of that room from my mind.

After I had used the bathroom, and as if in a trance, I was led into a darkened bedroom. The “surgeon” indicated that I should disrobe from the waist down and get on the table. They strapped my feet into stirrups and tied a broom handle to hold my legs apart. I remember one man who was keeping watch at the window, peeking through the curtains, to make sure that the place wasn't going to be raided. I'm sure that if the police had come in the middle of the procedure, they would have had no problem leaving me on that table while they made their escape.

After the abortion was done we were given directions on how to walk back to where our car was parked and we drove home. I don't know how I walked so far after going through this. It was so late at night and I was so scared. My mother and I never again discussed this trip or the ramifications of it. We just pretended that it had never happened.

I've personally never wanted to be a mother – I knew that early in life, I'm just not the motherly type. Though my choice to have an abortion is not the right choice for everyone, I've never been sorry I had an abortion. I'm glad I don't have a

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2008 Women In Need Statistics

Hotline Totals

Total Hotline Calls	699
Total Info/Referral Calls	392
Total WIN recipients	307
Average gift per woman	\$177
Total amount given for 2008	\$54,337

Pacific Northwest Region: 13

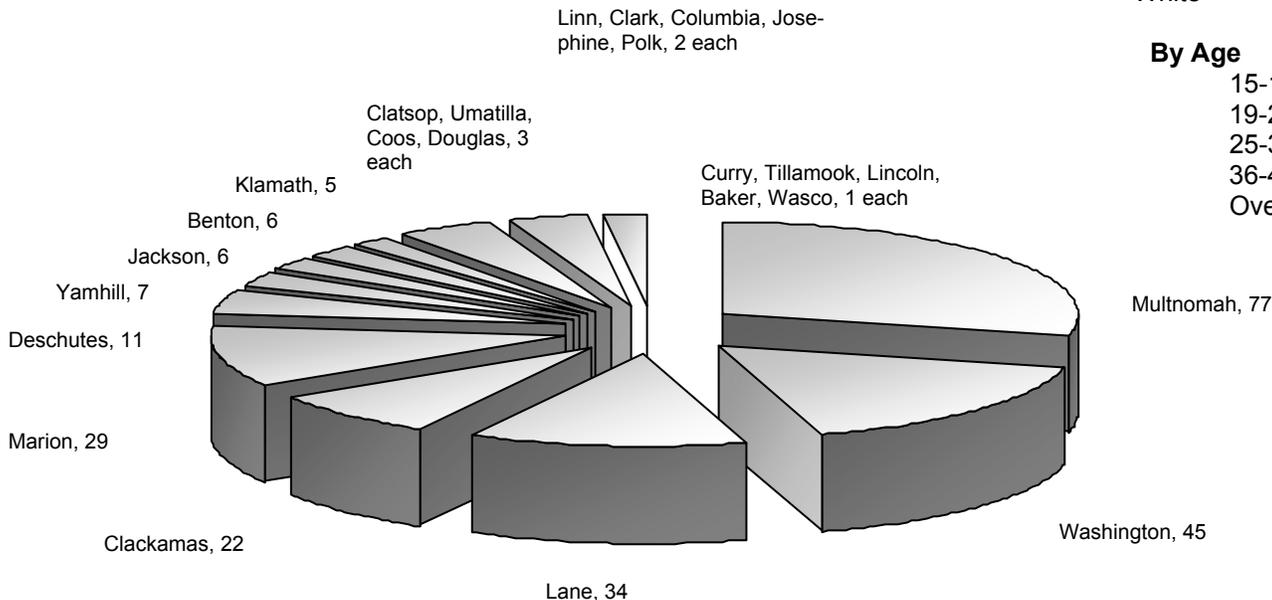
Women whose primary language is not English	70
Spanish speaking	58

Among those reporting Ethnic Identity:

African American	14
Asian American	8
Latina	69
Native American	5
Mixed	5
Other	13
White	135

By Age

15-18	43
19-24	131
25-35	9
36-45	31
Over 45	1



The State of Reproductive Justice

The past year has been interesting with its ups and downs in the world of reproductive justice, from fighting an all out ban on abortions in South Dakota to defeating “personhood” legislation in at least two states to finally electing a president committed to keeping abortion legal. Here’s a brief rundown on some of the highlights over the past year.

Plan B

In April 2009 the Food and Drug Administration announced that it will allow 17-year old women to access emergency contraception without a doctor’s prescription. The decision came after a federal court ruled that the FDA’s previous decision to require a prescription for women under 18 was unreasonable. The court stated that the decision to deny young women access to the contraception marked a significant departure from previous FDA procedures, apparently under pressure from the Bush Administration.

North Dakota

While the state thankfully rejected a personhood bill earlier this year, in May 2009 the state created a new requirement that women view an ultrasound before being allowed to have an abortion and that doctors in the one clinic in the state must tell women that an abortion ends the life of a unique human being.

2008 Ballot Measures

There was more victory than just Obama winning the White House in November. Colorado defeated the first constitutional amendment to define a fertilized egg as a person. Sadly, this issue has not gone away as several state legislatures are considering defining personhood starting at conception. In March 2009, the Colorado legislature passed the “Birth Control Protection Act” partially to clearly define contraception as “a medically acceptable drug, device, or procedure used to prevent pregnancy.” Their hope is to make it clear that birth control is not an abortion.

California, for the third time, defeated a parental notification law that would have required teens to notify their parents before seeking an abortion. (Let’s hope third time’s the charm.)

South Dakota, once again, defeated an abortion ban that would have essentially made abortion illegal in that state. Unfortunately, last June a federal court upheld the South Dakota law that requires doctors to tell women that an abortion ends a human life, along with providing other medically irrelevant information prior to an abortion procedure.



New York

New York is poised to become the fifth state, joining California, Illinois, Vermont and New Mexico in prohibiting the shackling of women prisoners while in labor. Most states, including Oregon, have no policy with regards to restraining women while in labor, leaving the decision to the discretion of the guards on duty. Despite condemnation by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Public Health Association, the barbaric practice was ruled not a violation of a woman’s constitutional rights by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals last year.

Department of Health and Human Services Regulation

Late in 2008, the Bush administration proposed a new regulation for the US Department of Health and Human Services that would ensure that health care services and organizations cannot “discriminate” against care providers who refuse to dispense birth control or perform abortions for “reasons of conscience.” The regulation went so far as to define abortion as anything that interferes with the developing life of a fertilized egg, jeopardizing women’s access to many forms of contraception. Fortunately, this last-ditch attack on women’s reproductive rights was reversed by the Obama administration.

While on the national front, President Obama is committed to upholding reproductive rights for women, state legislatures around the country continue to introduce restrictions, such as forcing women to view ultrasounds, 24 hour waiting periods, mandatory counseling statements that include medically irrelevant and sometimes inaccurate information.

Fun With Fundraising!

House Party Fundraising Success!

At the end of April, Network for Reproductive Options and the National Network of Abortion Funds had the great honor of having local supporters host house parties in Portland in a joint fundraising effort. NRO has been a member of the National Network since 2003, and has enjoyed great support from being a part of a national organization comprised of local funds like NRO.

The house parties took place at a time when the National Abortion Federation was holding their national conference in Portland, and there was great pro-choice energy throughout the city because of its presence.

Combined the two house parties raised \$6000 for the two organizations to assist women in Oregon and nationally. The parties were an amazing avenue to share the work of NRO and the funds throughout the U.S., and raised the awareness of the need for this type of work to our local supporters, abortion providers, and other local and national ally groups.

NRO would like to extend very special thanks to our friends who hosted the parties.

Please contact our office if you have interest in hosting a house party to support the work of NRO. We have a packet of information to assist with the planning and are excited to help you figure out the best way for you to be involved in our work.

-KW

Great donors and delicious wines make for a wonderful event!

In October 2008, NRO hosted our first wine tasting and silent auction event. It was our most successful fundraiser of the year! About forty of us gathered to learn about Pinot Noir of the Willamette Valley. Our wine expert, Rick Ross, led us on a virtual tour of local wineries and the effects of climate change on our Oregon grapes. It was informative as well as entertaining. Later in the evening, we (silently) fought over who would take home a knit bonnet, artwork and wine accessories. Of course, throughout all of this we thoroughly enjoyed getting to know one another better.

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child out there “somewhere.” As caretakers of our bodies we must not be blocked from making this decision for ourselves. And the doctors who help us also have to be safe and supported in performing these procedures.

I absolutely do not believe in abortion as a means of birth control. But no girl should have to go through what I had to go through. No one should be able to tell a woman with an unwanted pregnancy that she cannot have the abortion she desires and needs because it does not conform to ‘their’ standards and beliefs. Sometimes “accidents” do happen – even if you are taking birth control pregnancy can happen. If abortion is a woman’s choice it needs to be done with proper counseling, compassion, and in a clean, hospital environment with a qualified surgeon. As women we should have dominion over our

A special thanks to Sue Dockstader and Steen Mitchell for hosting the event in their home. Many thanks to everyone who donated to our silent auction, including Good Clean Love and many local artists and crafts-people. Also, a round of applause for Bethel Heights Winery, Sineann Winery and Secret House Winery for donating wine to support our event.

Save the date! On September 13th 2009 we will be hosting another wine tasting and silent auction event. This year we will focus on white wines such as Pinot Gris, Gewurztraminer and Chardonnay from Oregon wineries. We will be mailing invitations a month in advance of the event to addresses in and around Eugene. If you live more than 30 minutes from Eugene and you would like to receive an invitation please let us know!

We would love your help to make this next event a success! Contact us as soon as possible. We need:

- Silent auction items
- Contacts at Oregonian wineries
- Tents
- Volunteers to help bring food or set up tables
- A volunteer who has a OLCC server’s license
- A back yard
- You and your pro-choice friends at the event!

-SS

Wow!

We wish to extend appreciation to our wonderful supporters who have hung in there with us over the last year. We know that it has not always been easy to continue giving to others in this difficult economic climate. Many of you are so committed to reproductive justice, however, that you have sometimes made personal sacrifices so that disadvantaged women can have access to abortion services. We give special recognition to the retired donor who is sending her social security stimulus payment to help support NRO’s Women in Need Fund and the disabled veteran who discontinued yard service to do his own yard work so he can make his annual contribution.

-MB

bodies and no one should be able to dictate to us that we MUST have a child. It is our absolute right to have access to proper medical care. Keeping elective abortions legal is absolutely imperative!!

I beg you all to please, please.....do not allow others, in the name of God or Politics, take this right away from you! Do not allow others with their own agendas to force women to go back in time 40+ years to filthy, dark, un-sterile situations with questionable “doctors” who would again perform procedures in clandestine filthy conditions. Protect yourselves, protect your daughters, and protect the doctors who have the courage to assist you.

-VV

What Roe v. Wade Should Have Said, by JM Balkin

Wandering through the 342 section of the Eugene Public Library, my eye stopped on an intriguing title: What Roe v. Wade Should Have Said. How, I wondered, might a different approach to the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in the US have made any difference in 2009? Thinking I might find answers, I read the book.

First a little history is in order. When the Supreme Court took on the question of abortion beginning in December 1971, it was for the purpose of ruling on the constitutionality of two state laws against abortion. Texas' 1854 abortion statute prohibited all abortions except those in which the life of the mother was judged to be in serious danger. Texas' law held doctors liable for performing abortions but not pregnant women for having them. Georgia's 1968 statute allowed 3 exceptions: the mother's life would be endangered or her health seriously impaired, the fetus is shown to have an untreatable mental or physical defect, or the pregnancy resulted from rape. Georgia's law required, however, that abortions be performed in a hospital and be approved not only by the hospital's abortion committee but also by three independently examining physicians.

Norma McCorvey challenged Texas' statue under the name Jane Roe, while Sandra Bensing brought suit against Georgia's law as Mary Doe. Their "opponents" were Henry Wade, District Attorney of Dallas County Texas and Arthur Bolton, Georgia Attorney General. When the Supreme Court made its ruling 13 months after December 1971, the decision became known as Roe v. Wade.

The central idea of the book was conceived by Jack Balkin, Professor of Constitutional Law at Yale University. Balkin asked 16 law professors how they would have written the Roe opinion in light of subsequent abortion history. Although most American legal academics are strongly pro-choice in their orientation, he purposely divided his requests equally between supporters and critics of the Court's decision. Eleven professors accepted the

challenge, 7 supporters and 4 critics, somewhat akin to the 7-2 split in Roe itself.

The book itself suffers from two major problems. First is the fact that the actual Supreme Court decision never appears. This is excusable on the basis of the fact that the decision took 30 pages which, if printed in a book of this size, would likely require twice that many pages. The other difficulty with the book is that Balkin wrote his own opinion and then asked the respondents to comment on what he had written as well as responding to the 1973 decision itself. The resulting replies create a confusing and unnecessary complexity of responses.

If you were hoping for clear, concise answers to the book's title, you will be frustrated in the attempt. However, there were some general ideas that emerged. Opponents of abortion condemned the decision as wrong, one even stating that the decision "is the most awful human atrocity inflicted by the Court in our nation's history." (This same professor supplied eleven photos of developing fetuses in his chapter.)

One dissenter argued that Texas' and Georgia's laws had been forged through the constitutionally recognized processes of their citizens and should not be changed by the unelected members of the Court.

Since the original US Constitution made no mention of abortion, many pages of this book are devoted to second-guessing what original framers of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights would have said regarding the subject. Present-day interpretation necessarily varies widely. One professor argues that the Court may have come to regret making a decision because, having taken sides in a highly polarized and closely divided national debate, it had better be confident that it can justify its decision in the most convincing constitutional terms.



BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS!

Our library continues to grow, thanks to the generous donations from the Oregon Country Fair Board of Directors, and contributions from community members. As always, we would welcome donations of (current or classically important) films and books in good condition on any of the following subjects:

- Reproductive Justice and freedom, including History of Reproductive Rights
- Women's Health (What the heck? It is a community library, so Men's Health, too, especially related to sexuality, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, etc)
- Midwifery and Prenatal Care
- Herbal, Chinese, and other Alternative Medicine
- Contraception and Abortion Literature
- Healthy Sexuality
- Lesbian, Gay, Transgender Health Issues
- Feminist Fiction
- Books in Spanish on any of the above topics

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as well as being a registered
Cause!
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Several supporters of abortion rights wrote that in the rapidly liberalizing political climate of the early 1970s, the Supreme Court, by legalizing abortion actually stopped a political process that, had it progressed on its own without the Court's involvement would have prevented or at least diminished the conservative backlash that has characterized the abortion question since then.

One professor suggested that the Court could have used abortion as the central case to articulate the nature of sexual equality and in this way could have changed our understanding of the right to abortion and to women's equal protection under the law.

Another felt that the Court, rather than making an outright decision, should have articulated clear principles to be followed, and allowed states to decide abortion rights on the basis of these principles.

The best feature of the book was the numerous eloquent defenses of abortion rights:

- Why is it that no US abortion law has ever offered assistance to pregnant women in coping with the consequences of gestating and raising children that the state has forced them to bear?
- When male soldiers have been drafted – deprived of their liberty to protect others' lives – government often furnishes them with educational and other benefits after their term of service has ended. But when pregnant women are asked to disrupt their education and careers in order to protect unborn life, government has not showered comparable benefits upon them. Why is there no Mother's Bill of Rights akin to the G.I. Bill of Rights?
- Laws against abortion are typically overbroad because they equate the value of embryonic life immediately after conception with the worth of life immediately before birth.
- The right to abortion paired with a ban on government subsidy for abortions is as meaningless for the poorest women as the right to vote paired with a poll tax was for the poorest Alabama sharecroppers.
- The ability to choose abortion is so fundamental that no governmental restrictions erecting prohibitive barriers to abortion can be justified. There is no compelling reason to permit roadblocks to equality and decisional privacy for pregnant women.

-GM

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Abortion is a legitimate and moral choice. The 'abortion reduction' agenda is only viable if it affirms this for all women. No woman should be stigmatized for choosing an abortion. There is **no need** to reduce the number of abortions performed in this country. There **is a need** to end the violence against women, to reduce the poverty that causes many women to feel they cannot adequately care for a child, to reduce unintended pregnancy, and to end the obstacles to obtaining access to adequate health care for women and children. This is the common ground we should strive for.

Dr. George Tiller was a champion of women's rights who helped many, many women to realize their dreams. He was killed for his work for and for his belief in the rights of women. President Obama's wish to end this stale and destructive debate is a laudable one. However, justice will not be served for Dr. Tiller or the women of this country by capitulating to a vocal minority who oppose the fundamental human rights of women.

-JW

Dedicated in memoriam, with gratitude,
to George Tiller, MD

Obstetrician Murdered by Terrorist in Amherst, New York

By Judith Arcana

The doctor went into the kitchen
where if you can't stand the heat
you don't stand by the window
and he stood there, he came in
to maybe drink a glass of water,
and there was a window in the kitchen
with no blinds, no shade, no curtains
closed in front of the doctor
while he drank his glass of water
while the man outside pulled the trigger.

In the newspaper, on television
the police chief said he thinks
that shooting was the doctor's fault
the doctor was not careful
the chief had told him not to
stand there in the kitchen
by the window, not to put butter
on bread, no strawberry jam, no soup
in front of the window
with no shades or blinds or curtains.

All the doctors who want a glass of water
were told not to stand, they were told
to pull the shades
shut the curtains
close the blinds
but maybe the doctor wanted –
maybe he wanted to live
his own life, as long as he had it –
he wanted his life to stand:
he wanted to stand in his own life.

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*Empowering communities with
abortion access, grassroots health
education and reproductive options.*

Thank you for supporting reproductive justice!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The Network for Reproductive Options gratefully acknowledges that our work providing reproductive options to women in Oregon would not be possible without all of you who generously support our programs!

NRO also extends appreciation to the following foundations for grants awarded in 2008- 2009:

The Jarvey-McCord Foundation
The Brenner Foundation
100th Monkey
The McGeady Family Foundation
The Campbell-Oxholm Foundation
The Gradison Foundation
The North Star Foundation
The Isis Foundation
Eugene and Layton Borkan Family Foundation
Spirit Mountain Community Fund

**Support reproductive justice
in your lifetime and beyond.**

Designating Network for Reproductive Options as a beneficiary in your will, life insurance policy, retirement plan, or IRA is a great way to provide long-term support for NRO's mission. Planned giving is an important decision for any person. Contact an attorney or financial advisor for guidance since many of these options offer some tax deductions or other tax advantages.