

MY BODY

MY RIGHTS

FALL 2016

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Dear Human Rights Activist,

Thank you for your interest in our My Body, My Rights (MBMR) work! If you're new to Amnesty International USA's work around sexual and reproductive rights, we welcome you to the team and we look forward to working with you! If you've been engaged and active in this work already, we really appreciate all that you do—you are the true leaders behind this work.

At the heart of the MBMR work is the idea that **we all have the right to make decisions about our own health, body, sexuality, and reproductive life.**

The MBMR Global Campaign launched two and half years ago. As a priority campaign for the global movement, MBMR focused on decriminalizing abortion, repealing discriminatory laws, and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services around the world. Find out more about the work we did over the course of the campaign at www.amnestyusa.org/mbmr.

MBMR is no longer a global priority campaign, but our work at AIUSA on this campaign and sexual and reproductive rights is as important as ever— and we are still going strong! We're still working with other countries on continuing issues, and we'll continue to update you with that work at www.amnestyusa.org/mybodymyrights. We're also working with partners here in the US to help make sexual and reproductive rights a reality at home. **We've implemented a sexual and reproductive rights human rights education program, which places Sexual and Reproductive Rights Advocate Trainers across the United States (learn more about this in the toolkit!) so we can ALL access our rights!**

In this toolkit you'll find:

- information about sexual and reproductive rights and what's happening in the US;
- info on the Sexual and Reproductive Rights Advocate Trainers and how to connect with them;
- and ideas for action to promote sexual and reproductive rights in your own community.

It is your life, your health, your body, your sexuality, your identity, and your reproductive life! Together we can defend all of our rights to live free from fear, coercion, violence, or discrimination.

Thanks for joining the fight!

In solidarity,

Kaitlyn Denzler

Women's Rights Campaigner
Identity and Discrimination Unit
Amnesty International USA
kdenzler@aiusa.org
Pronouns: she/her/hers



SOME BASICS ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

We all have the right to make decisions about **our own health, body, sexuality and reproductive life, without fear, coercion, violence or discrimination**. But all over the world, people's freedom to make these decisions is often controlled by the state, medical professionals, and even their own families. Criminal law and punitive sanctions are frequently used to control such choices. In the end, many people are prevented from making any choice at all.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (SRR) MEANS YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Make decisions about your own health, body, sexual life, and identity without fear, coercion, criminalization, or discrimination.
- Access sexual and reproductive related health services, including contraception.
- Have access to fact-based, comprehensive sex education.
- Decide if you want to have children, when you want have them, and how many.
- Access safe abortion services at a minimum in cases of rape, incest, when the life or health of the pregnant person is at risk, or when there is severe or fatal fetal impairment.
- Choose your intimate partner and if you want to marry and when.
- Live free from violence, including rape and other sexual violence (e.g. female genital mutilation/cutting, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization and forced marriage).
- Live free from discrimination based on your sex, gender, sexuality, or perceived identity.

LET'S GET NERDY! Where are SRR guarantees in International Law?

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS, COVENANTS, DECLARATIONS, & TREATIES

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

REGIONAL DOCUMENTS

- American Convention on Human Rights
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention on Belem do Para)
- European Convention on Human Rights
- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)
- African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Banjul Charter)
- Protocol Additional to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in the Rights of Women in Africa (African Women's Protocol)
- Arab Charter on Human Rights

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE UNITED STATES?

BRINGING HUMAN RIGHTS HOME

The United States is failing to uphold its sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) obligations. With, for example, increased hostility towards SRR and family planning services across the country, as well as a number of state-level discriminatory bills against LGBTQ communities, it's not difficult to notice how the US can do better.

At the core of the MBMR campaign is the idea that **we ALL have the right to make decisions about our own health, body, sexuality, and reproductive life.** However, many of these rights are being challenged or not fulfilled across the US. This section of the toolkit helps to highlight the broad range of SRR issues taking place throughout the country (this list is not an exhaustive list, by any means!). This section will also help you and your group identify how and where you might like to engage in this work, and will hopefully inspire you to take action (see pages 6-7 for some more guidance around this and always feel free to reach out to me at kdenzler@aiusa.org).

Here are just **SOME** examples of SRR nonfulfillment in the US:

- **Congress has attempted to eliminate Title X and defund Planned Parenthood (which helps to provide crucial and preventive SRR health services).** While the Obama administration has been attempting to protect Planned Parenthood, at least 14 states have made legislative moves against the organization.
- Even though in June 2016 the Supreme Court shut down the Texas law (HB 2) that necessarily regulated abortion clinics (in an effort to close them), the impact of HB 2 prior to the decision had dire consequences for patients and doctors—**half of the state's clinics shut down.**
- **Sexual education in the US is often inaccurate and biased, and sometimes not required at all.** Sex education in general is only mandated in 24 states. When sex education is provided, it only has to be medically accurate in 13 states, culturally appropriate and unbiased in 8, and cannot promote religious ideals in 2.
- While studies have consistently shown that abstinence until marriage is not an effective education strategy, 26 states require that it be stressed. **The topic of sexual orientation is only required in 13 states; and in 4 out of those 13, only negative information is required.**
- Across the country, there are numerous **bills and proposed legislation that discriminate against LGBT people in every aspect of their lives.**
- **The US continues to withhold federal funding for abortion access** both domestically and internationally through the Hyde and Helms Amendments—with no exceptions for rape, incest, or event death of the pregnant person.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE U.S. CONTINUED...

- In Indiana, a woman (Purvi Patel) was **prosecuted and sentenced to 20 years in prison for allegedly inducing an abortion and was convicted of feticide and child neglect** (check out Purvi Patel's case as an example)
- As the dangers presented by the Zika virus continue to build, **Congress continues to falter in passing a Zika funding bill**, which would fund things like vaccine research, mosquito abatement, and prevention education.
- **Sexual assault on college campuses against individuals of all genders and sexual orientations are often inadequately handled and/or ignored altogether.** Among undergraduate students approximately, 1 in 5 women, 1 in 19 men, and 1 in 4 LGBTQ individuals will experience sexual assault during their time at college, yet most assaults go unreported.
- **There are huge racial and socioeconomic disparities in access to SRR services** — women of color, for example, are much less likely to receive regular Pap smears, which is a crucial screening process for cervical cancer.
- **Rape culture and victim blaming is pervasive throughout the US** and creates an environment that disregards survivors and their rights to safety, justice, and dignity.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? HERE ARE SOME GREAT PLACES TO START:

Advocates for Youth.....<https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/>

American Civil Liberties Union.....<https://www.aclu.org/>

Campus Pride.....<https://www.campuspride.org/>

Center for Reproductive Rights..... <http://www.reproductiverights.org/>

Equality Federation..... <http://www.equalityfederation.org/>

GLAD..... <http://www.glad.org/>

Guttmacher Institute.....<https://www.guttmacher.org/>

Planned Parenthood..... <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

Population Institute Report Cards....<https://www.populationinstitute.org/resources/reports/reportcard/>

Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network.....<https://www.rainn.org/>

Strong Families.....<http://strongfamiliesmovement.org/>

Trust Black Women.....<https://www.trustblackwomen.org/>

Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity..... <http://urge.org/>

TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Have you ever had awkward conversations with your family (or anyone!) about sex or had a difficult time accessing information or sexual health services? Have you felt like you had to explain your gender identity to your friends or even to complete strangers? Have you felt like you had to justify or defend your gender expression/presentation? Have you felt frustrated or constrained by the binary gender norms that society forces upon us? Have you felt uncomfortable or experienced backlash for breaking or dismantling gender norms?

Sexual and reproductive rights can be immensely personal, and also controversial. For many people, sexuality and gender are spaces of strong emotional connections and firmly held beliefs. **The act of questioning our assumptions or challenging those of others can feel dangerous and exhausting while still being exhilarating and inspiring (and you may not want to stop the conversation!).**

START THE CONVERSATION! WORK WITH AIUSA'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ADVOCATE TRAINERS!

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (SRR) ADVOCATE TRAINERS are human rights advocates who volunteer to facilitate SRR human rights education activities/workshops in their states and/or regions. SRR Advocate Trainers can work with your groups to start or continue participatory discussions around sexual and reproductive rights. These workshops can lead to empowering conversations, where everyone learns from each other and walks away with knowledge and skills to lead campaigns, activism, and advocacy for their sexual and reproductive rights. For many of us, talking about gender and sexuality is socially taboo, but it can also be really fun and you may find it difficult to stop after the first workshop!

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SRR ADVOCATE TRAINERS ON THE NEXT PAGE!

MY LIFE
MY HEALTH
MY EDUCATION
MY CHOICE
MY BODY
MY RIGHTS

WORKING WITH SRR ADVOCATE TRAINERS AND OTHER IDEAS FOR ACTION

If you want to partner with SRR Advocate Trainer(s), you can reach out directly to the trainers in your region (contact info below). Be sure cc' the Women's Human Rights Campaigner (kdenzler@aiusa.org) and the respective Field Organizer (find your field organizer here: <http://bit.ly/1IG7Ned>).

The way you partner with the SRR Advocate Trainer can vary and will depend on what your group decides. You could, for example, partner with the SRR Advocate Trainer(s) for just one, 2-hour participatory workshop that is tailored for your group. Or you could form a longer-term partnership with them and have the trainer(s) come to you and work through various activities throughout a semester or academic year for a more holistic learning process. **It's completely up to you and what works for your group/community!**

The SRR Advocate Trainers will be working from Amnesty's human rights education module, Respect My Rights, Respect My Dignity—Sexual and Reproductive Rights Are Human Rights, and everything can be modified to fit your needs. **They're really excited to partner with you, so don't forget to reach out!**

OTHER IDEAS FOR ACTION!

1. Receive updates on our MBMR work —> Email kdenzler@aiusa.org to join now! Also **join the Women's Human Rights Action Network**. Sign up at: <http://eepurl.com/lCr3H>, and be sure to follow us on Facebook [AIUSAWomen'sHumanRightsNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/AIUSAWomen'sHumanRightsNetwork) and Twitter [@AmnestyWomenRts!](https://twitter.com/AmnestyWomenRts)
2. **Connect with a Sexual and Reproductive Rights Advocate Trainer (see above)!** Work with a trainer(s) in your region to host a participatory workshop/discussion with your group and/or invite other groups on campus to attend.
3. Partner with other groups on campus or local groups to **host an event** like a film screening and short discussion —> E.g. concerned about sexual assault on campus? Host a screening of the documentary, *The Hunting Ground*. Check out the one-pager on campus sexual assault at www.amnestyusa.org/mbmr
4. **Table** at farmers' markets, fairs, festivals, on campus — reach out to more people and get them involved in your MBMR activities.
5. **Publish an op-ed** in your local newspaper or publish a **blog post** about why protecting sexual and reproductive rights is important to you and/or your group.
6. Arts and Activism —> Bring the use of visual art into your activism through mural making, poster designs that send powerful messages, music (e.g. JAMnesty), poetry through the use of spoken word, book readings, and theater (e.g. work with your local theater group and collaborate on a 5-10 minute screenplay that will educate, engage, and inspire!).

If you're planning MBMR activity/event, email Kaitlyn at kdenzler@aiusa.org to get stickers, and pins!

WHO AND WHERE ARE THE 2016-2017 SRR ADVOCATE TRAINERS?

MID-ATLANTIC REGION

Francesca Caramazza goes to school in Philadelphia. Contact her at francesca.caramazza27@gmail.com.

Laura Yang joined Amnesty in 2015 as a college freshman in her school's chapter, located outside of Philadelphia, and has been a board member since. She is passionate about promoting gender equality, protecting human rights, and fighting against excessive use of force. She is originally from New Jersey, or rather North Jersey, but goes to Arcadia University majoring in Psychology in hopes to pursue a career in Neuroscience Research. Contact her at lyang@arcadia.edu.

Sammy Simmons is a student at Arcadia University in Philadelphia. Contact here at ssimmons@arcadia.edu.

Sophia DeLevie-Orey currently works on the Secretariat for the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition in DC, which is a global partnership of organizations dedicated to ensuring that all people in low- and middle-income countries can access and use affordable, high-quality supplies to ensure their better reproductive health. She studied the history of sexual and reproductive rights throughout her college career, and in addition to the academic focus was highly involved in Eve Ensler's The Vagina Monologues. In her senior year, Sophia co-directed a new production created by students, As Told by Vaginas. Sophia is passionate about and committed to working towards sexual and reproductive rights for all populations. Contact her at sdelevieorey@gmail.com.

MIDWEST REGION

Addy Soderberg is one of two SRR trainers in Michigan. She is a sophomore at the Utica Academy for International Studies. Addy has been interested in sexual and reproductive rights for quite some time and looks forward to meeting everyone soon! Contact her at soderberga@stu.uticak12.org.

Vibha Venkatesha is a Detroit-based activist, organizing in online and local spaces such as facilitating a community space for LGBTQ South Asian women. She has been long interested in Amnesty International, coordinates events for her university's chapter, is involved with the regional Midwest and local Detroit chapters. She is a Class of 2016 graduate of Wayne State University in Political Science and Sociology with University and departmental honors. She plans to study Human Right and Civil Rights Law and International Law. Contact her at vibha.venkatesha@gmail.com.

NORTHEAST REGION

Eva Melnikova moved to United States 5 years ago from the North Caucasus in order to pursue her passion for human rights. She is a rape survivor who works toward making this world a safe space for all. Her particular interests are in the Middle East region, including wars and conflicts, and cases involving torture and, of course, women's rights. Eva hopes to provide trainings and workshops for communities across college campuses about what reproductive rights are and how to exercise them. Contact her at nidzeeva@gmail.com.

Johanna DeBari is passionate about sexual violence prevention, education, and female empowerment. Johanna also currently serves as the Trainer/Adult Educator for the Women's Center of Greater Danbury, an organization providing services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Contact her at johanna.debari@gmail.com.

Rachael Jennings focuses on gender studies and sexuality education as an SRR Advocate Trainer. Rachael is the English Department Chair at Dublin School, where she teaches literature and Self, Sexuality, and Society and runs sexuality education workshops. She is an advisor, dorm head, and newsletter editor. Contact her at rjennings@dublinschool.org.

Maia Elisa Berlow is student at Columbia University where she is co-President of her school's Amnesty International chapter and studies Human Rights and Ethnicity and Race studies with special focuses on Mass Incarceration and Ecology and Environmental Biology. She previously served as a Student Activist Coordinator for AI in the New York City Area. Maia is passionate about finding people-centered, sustainable solutions to human rights issues. **Contact her at meb2265@columbia.edu.**

Goldie (Gigi) Raznick attends New York University. Contact her at goldieraznick@gmail.com.

Jaynice Del Rosario attends Columbia University. Contact her at jd3239@columbia.edu.

Jasmine (Phillips) Sankofa is an attorney in New York, who works at the intersections of race, gender, and criminalization. She graduated from UCLA School of Law in 2015 with specializations in Critical Race Studies and Public Interest Law and Policy. She has published articles in the UCLA Law Review and the Howard Law Journal and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Sex Workers Outreach Project-USA. Contact her at phillipsj2015@lawnet.ucla.edu.

Sammie Ibrahim has been a longtime member leader with AIUSA, serving in multiple leadership positions at the high school and college level, and as Vermont's Student Activist Coordinator from 2013-2015. Sammie graduated from the University of Vermont with a degree in Geography. She is currently a 2016-2017 Fulbright Scholar in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where she is conducting research on labor migration and gender. Contact her at sammieibr@gmail.com.

SOUTHERN REGION

Elizabeth (Zabe) Evans lives and goes to school in Arkansas. Contact her at lizevans731@gmail.com.

WESTERN REGION

Anne Olsen is currently living in Salt Lake City, Utah. Her academic interests include sexual and reproduction rights, sociology, politics, and gender. She is finishing up her undergrad while working full-time at SLUG Magazine, and hopes to continue her journey through higher-ed once that's finished. She loves Leslie Knope, museums, and doing cool stuff. Contact her at annevirginiaolsen@gmail.com.

Cecelia Gonzalez is currently working on obtaining her master's degree in criminal justice at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). She hopes to do research and policy change around prison reform and college sexual assault. When she is not protesting on the front lines for something she is passionate about, she enjoys traveling around the world. She also loves spending time with her family, especially her little brother. She enjoys hiking every weekend to reset her mind before a busy week begins. She also enjoys being an advocate on a hotline dedicated to campus sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking at UNLV. She firmly believes everyone has a right to an education free from violence. Contact her at cecelia.gonzalez28@gmail.com.

Hannah Bond lives and goes to school in Colorado. Contact her at hanbond0014@yahoo.com.



MY BODY

MY RIGHTS

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



www.amnestyusa.org/mybodymyrights