



How is Immigration a Matter of Reproductive Justice?

THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN IS PROFOUNDLY AFFECTED BY IMMIGRATION POLICY.

- ❁ Female immigrants are often forced to work in industries that are undervalued, underpaid, hazardous to one's health, lack basic worker protections and offer no benefits. Not surprisingly, a majority of female immigrants do not have health care coverage.
- ❁ The federal government has denied basic health care to low-income immigrants for over 10 years. Despite the fact that immigrants pay taxes and contribute to the prosperity of our country, immigrants who have lived in the United States for five years or less are denied access to federal Medicaid for the most basic preventative health services, including prenatal care. Undocumented immigrants who lack health insurance have coverage *only* for emergency services, which includes labor and delivery but not prenatal care.
- ❁ State legislatures continue to introduce legislation that would restrict non-citizens' access to basic public health programs, including prenatal care. For example, in 2005, 80 bills were introduced in 20 states that would restrict immigrants' access to health care or other social services. In some states, governors have proposed cutting pregnant immigrant women and children from state Medicaid programs in order to reduce costs.
- ❁ Immigrant women are less likely to receive adequate reproductive health care, including cervical and breast cancer screening and treatment, family planning services, HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, accurate sex education and culturally and linguistically competent services.

THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT MOVEMENT SEEKS TO CONTROL IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES.

- ❁ Anti-immigrant activists base many of their arguments on xenophobic fears about needing to control a population deemed too ethnic or "un-American." In the media, anti-immigrant pundits have vilified immigrant women by spreading the image of a pregnant immigrant woman who comes to America to have babies and exploit American resources.
- ❁ The reproductive decisions of Latina immigrants are under intense scrutiny in the immigration debate. The focus of many of the policy proposals has been finding ways to curb the reproduction of immigrant women. Legislators have discussed ways to dissuade immigrants from having children, including denying citizenship status to children born in the U.S. to undocumented women.



**REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CLINICS PROVIDE
ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO IMMIGRANTS.**

- ⊛ Many immigrants seek essential services at clinics that provide free or low-cost reproductive health care.
- ⊛ Clinics are affected by the policies requiring citizenship documentation, limited funding for medical interpretation services and the restrictions on Medicaid reimbursements for care provided to undocumented immigrants.

**REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AND IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ADVOCATES
SHARE A COMMON OPPOSITION.**

- ⊛ Many of the individuals who want to criminalize immigrants are the same ones who support restrictions on women's access to abortion and family planning services. These policy-makers are constantly restricting access to reproductive health services for women and immigrants. Moreover, anti-immigrant advocates typically use anti-choice language when discussing policies related to immigrant women and their "unborn citizen babies."
- ⊛ Federal policy-makers have even created a health care funding scheme that simultaneously denies immigrant women's health needs and undermines the right to abortion. Since 2002, states may use federal funds to provide prenatal care to women not otherwise eligible for Medicaid, including undocumented immigrants. The expansion was made possible by redefining the definition of child in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to include an "unborn child." By creating another precedent for fetal personhood, the SCHIP option undermines the holding of *Roe v. Wade*. The fact that the federal government specifically denies health care coverage for pregnant immigrant women reflects the low value placed on the lives of immigrant women.

**OUR MOVEMENTS ARE ADVOCATING FOR MANY OF THE
SAME BASIC RIGHTS AND VALUES.**

- ⊛ Advocates of fair immigration reform are demanding the right to live in our society without fearing deportation and discrimination, and to work with basic protections and benefits, including health care coverage. Reproductive justice activists are similarly fighting for a world in which women have an equal opportunity to fully participate in society, the freedom to determine the course of their lives, and the right and ability to access basic reproductive health services free of discrimination, harassment and shame.
- ⊛ Both movements are advocating for self-determination and the freedom to live our lives with dignity and justice.

For more information on the reproductive health of Latina immigrants, visit www.latinainstitute.org.