

SUBJECT: Important Context and Messaging Information on the Supreme Court's Abortion Access Case
DATE: February 29, 2016

Dear UU Clergy,

On Wednesday March 2, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, one of the most important cases on the availability of abortion in decades. We hope you will take a minute to read the important info below about context and messaging related to the case.

The core issue is that some of the mainstream analysis and communications about the case minimizes (or totally ignores) how the fight for legal access to abortion leaves out many of the larger obstacles faced by low-income people and people of color. As with the marriage equality Supreme Court case, we believe that it is critical to view the *Whole Women's Health* decision as one piece of a much larger struggle. We've included links to more info, but of course you should feel free to contact Rob or Shaya if you want more.

In Faith,

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CONTEXT and MESSAGING

- 1. The long-term struggle is about access.** *Whole Woman's Health v. Cole* is about two provisions of a Texas law that decrease the availability of abortion. As with most restrictions on access to abortion (and services generally), these laws have a massively disproportionate impact on low-income people and people of color. What's critical to keep in mind is that the long-term struggle is not simply to make abortion care "available" in a legal or medical sense. The long-term struggle is to make quality abortion care truly ACCESSIBLE to all people, regardless of income, race, geography, age, immigration status, or other factors. As the 2015 UUA Statement of Conscience on Reproductive Justice states: "In our vision, everyone has access to accurate information about sexuality and family planning, and safe, healthy, and culturally sensitive reproductive health services" (P 2).
- 2. The long-term struggle is about more than abortion.** Although abortion access is incredibly important and thus worth fighting for, some organizations and activists have a tendency to deify it. According to the woman of color-led reproductive justice framework, which the UUA endorsed with the 2015 Statement of Conscience, the right to not have children must be accompanied by the right to have children, to parent the children one has in healthy

environments and to safeguard bodily autonomy and to express one's sexuality freely. As the statement of Conscience reads:

“Such liberation requires not only accurate information about sexuality and reproduction and control of personal reproductive decisions, but also living wages, safe and supported housing, high quality and comprehensive medical and reproductive health care, access to voting and the political process, affordable legal representation, fair immigration policies, paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and the absence of individual and institutional violence.” (P. 2).

In sum, if you plan to preach, write, or otherwise talk about this case, I urge you to (1) consider access to abortion as not just a legal issue but as a justice issue in a much larger context, and (2) name abortion access as just one of the many important reproductive and other concerns that warrant our attention. At a time when media and other organizations will be narrowly focused on the availability of abortion, let's be strong and faithful voices for a larger goal that includes the needs and stated desires of low-income people and people of color.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
<http://www.blackrj.org/>

UUA Statement of Conscience FINAL as adopted
http://bit.ly/UUA_RJ_STATEMENT

Two Things Every UU Should Know About Reproductive Justice
http://bit.ly/UUA_RJ_2THINGS

“What is reproductive justice?” in UU World by Darcy Baxter
<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/what-is-reproductive-justice%3F>