National Women’ Liberation Speakout Kit
Women are the Experts: National Week of Action for Abortion and Birth Control
June 3 - 10, 2016
womensliberation.org
#thisoppresseswomen #notmyclinic #shoutyourabortion

Welcome
We are so excited you are participating in this week of action for abortion and birth control.

In May, the Supreme Court decided Zubik v. Burwell and is expected to decide Whole Women’s Health v. Hellerstedt in June. Whatever the outcome, the Court will change women’s access to abortion and birth control—while we’re expected to passively wait and see how our lives will be affected.

Enough already! We demand control over our reproduction. Join us for a week of action where women will speak out about our experiences needing birth control and abortion.

We encourage feminists to read our call to action on our website and take action together around the country. NWL chapters will hold speakouts in Florida, Friday, June 3rd, and in New York City, Friday, June 10th. In Florida, women will gather at an event to testify about their abortions and birth control. We are also doing a social media campaign, #notmyclinic, in protest of Florida’s recently passed “TRAP” law. The law will block all federal Medicaid money from going to any health clinic that provides or is in any way connected to abortion services. The Florida law closely mirrors the Texas bill currently at issue in the Whole Woman’s Health Supreme Court case and is designed to shut down all abortion clinics. In New York, we are organizing a table in Union Square, where women can speak out by sharing testimony on cards on a large poster board. Alongside this testimony will be blown up tweets from the viral #shoutyourabortion campaign and testimony from women lawyers who filed a brief in Whole Woman’s Health speaking from their experience of how abortion access affected their careers and lives.

Below are materials that NWL has used to fight for access to birth control and abortion. We hope they will help you create your own speakout or other feminist action. For your event, please include a statement that your local event is in coordination with this national week of action. Email us about your event and we can publicize it. We’d love to see your video, audio, or photographs from your event.

We have included a list of readings at the end of the packet on the radical history of winning abortion in this country and examples of fliers and events using consciousness-raising organizing. We hope this will spark your ideas and strengthen our case for using women’s experience to develop activist theory and put it into action. As Redstockings Archives for Action says, “Building on What’s Been Won by Knowing What’s Been Done.”

This packet is also online at:
http://womensliberation.org/index.php/events/324-june-2016-call-to-action

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I. Why Speak Out

A speakout is a public form of consciousness-raising (CR). Through CR we examine the root of the problems we face as women, the truth about our lives, why we do certain things, figure out what it is we want to change and look at who benefits and how they get away with it, so we know where to aim our feminist forces. We give some examples of consciousness-raising questions below that you can use to hold CR in a meeting or in a public speakout.

CR has deep political organizing roots; it was used in the Chinese Revolution and in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in the United States.

In NWL, our experience has been that feminist consciousness-raising is still the most powerful tool we have to combat lies about women and to develop strategies to organize. NWL has compiled two packets with examples of consciousness-raising meetings and public organizing campaigns we developed from them.

At the end of this packet, the packets are included as recommended reading. Original source materials on consciousness-raising are also recommended reading from the Redstockings Women’s Liberation Archives for Action and in Redstockings’ book Feminist Revolution.

Below are sample CR questions and links to materials from NWL speakouts. Your local event should be tailored to your goals and group’s capacity, including such considerations as whether to invite the press.

Speakout video:

This 2013 video shows one of several NWL organizers who testified in a speakout for the Morning-After Pill; birth control which can prevent pregnancy if taken within 120 hours of sex. The speakout was held in front of the office of Health and Human Services in New York City. The speaker is Annie Tummino, the lead plaintiff in the case, Tummino v. Hamburg, a lawsuit filed with nine NWL leaders as plaintiffs against the Food and Drug Administration. In 2013 the lawsuit was decided in our favor, allowing women of all ages to get Plan B, the brand name version of the morning after pill, over-the-counter, without a prescription:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkaVKwsTIPw
II. Take Action

Sample questions to use for a Speakout or Consciousness-Raising Meeting:

1. a. Have you ever needed an abortion or birth control? Where did you get it? How did you pay for it? What restrictions or obstacles did you face, if any? What role did the guy play?

   b. Are these restrictions/obstacles acceptable to me? Why?

2. Where did you go for reproductive health care? Why? What restrictions or obstacles have you faced, if any? What role did the guy play?

Flier examples

See sample fliers in the recommended reading packets below and on our webpage at: http://www.womensliberation.org/index.php/priorities/abortion-and-birth-control/actions

Logistics for a Speakout:

Overall Planning

1. Choose Location
   a. Inside vs. outside
   b. Consider convenience and high traffic
   c. Do you need a permit?

2. Consider sound
   a. Amplification vs. people’s mic

3. Podium
   a. Often people are more comfortable if they can stand behind something
   b. Podium can also be used to post CR questions

4. Recording
   a. Can include a recorder on a podium. Consider asking each speaker if they want their testimony recorded.

5. Advertising
   a. Flier
   b. Email blast. Social Media. Community calendars
   c. Press release
   d. Editorials

Ideas for Statements on Signs

- Abortion and Birth Control Should be Free
- Self-Determination for Women
- No Forced Pregnancy
- Birth Control is All Women’s Civil Right! (Lucinda Cisler’s sign, Time Magazine, August 1968)
Roles

1. Testifiers
   a. Likely need at least 4-6 testifiers set up ahead of time in case audience needs to warm up

2. Emcee to introduce the event and wrap up
   a. Explain the purpose, including possible demands, and how the speak out will work (explain timing, testimony content, etc.)
   b. Wrap up the event and remind people of demands and to get involved with your organization, announce next steps, and thank people for coming out

3. Event facilitator
   a. Help organize testifiers and other volunteers from the audience
   b. Keep people on track and within a time limit

4. Press person
   a. Someone who is clear on talking points and the message
   b. All press should be pointed towards this person
   c. Press will also likely want to talk to testifiers too, but it’s important to make sure that someone is representing your group and the message of your event is clear

5. Photographer and Recorder
   a. If you are photographing, filming or keeping an audio recording

6. Crowd sign-ups
   a. if you’re trying to get women to organize with you, assign a person to gather contact info

Plan for the Day of the Event

45 -30 minutes before event: arrival and set up
   ● Set up and test sound
   ● Set up podium with clear sign for organization
   ● Hand out fliers to foot traffic

15 minutes before event: testifiers arrive and debrief
   ● Make sure the testifiers you have set up ahead of time arrive early and give them a quick rundown of the event—remind them how a speakout works, remind them of demands/political points, let them know in what order they will speak, remind them how much time they have to speak,
   ● Discuss that press will most likely try to talk to testifiers—if they are willing to give their full names and have pieces of their testimony published, they will probably be used—remind them to point the press to the press person as well and go over basic talking points and demands
   ● If a crowd is gathering, make sure someone is circulating with clipboard

5 minutes before event: everyone in place
   ● Everyone knows their job and is ready
   ● If anyone didn’t show up, make adjustments according to what is most important
**III. Recommended Reading:**

Many of these readings are available at: [http://womensliberation.org/index.php/events/324-june-2016-call-to-action](http://womensliberation.org/index.php/events/324-june-2016-call-to-action)

1. **Abortion Without Apology: The demand for abortion has had the most success when it’s been free of preemptive compromise**, by Jenny Brown & Erin Mahoney.
   - Article by two NWL organizers summing up lessons from the role of the 1960s radical feminist movement in the abortion struggle. Published in Jacobin Magazine, December 31, 2015.

2. **Women are the Experts flier**, Redstockings, January 1969.
   - Flier From the feminist disruption of the New York State Legislative Hearing on abortion reform.

   - Article by the founding chair of the National Organization for Women Taskforce on Reproduction and Its Control (1969-1971) and founder and first secretary of the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws, now the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL).


   - NWL organizer and lead plaintiff in *Tummino v. Hamburg*.

7. Visit [www.redstockings.org](http://www.redstockings.org) to access:
   - To download PDF, create an electronic library card on the website.

8. Visit [www.womensliberation.org](http://www.womensliberation.org) to access:
   - More on how NWL uses consciousness raising
Annie Tummino, National Women’s Liberation organizer and lead plaintiff in *Tummino v. Hamburg*, speaks out about why she has needed the Morning-After Pill, for herself and for women’s self-determination, at the Health and Human Services office in New York City on the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, January 2012. The Morning-After Pill became available to all women over the counter in 2013, when NWL and the other plaintiffs won this lawsuit against the Food and Drug Administration after a ten-year grassroots organizing campaign.