



LESSON PLAN GRADES: 11-12th

“On The Divide” Lesson Plan: **What is Reproductive Justice?**



OVERVIEW

On The Divide takes a journey through three different walks of life surrounding the decades long argument: Are you “pro-choice” or “pro-life”? Filmmakers Maya Cueva and Leah Galant

provide insight on how the topic of abortion impacts the lives of many people – beyond how we perceive the issue. This lesson plan was created by Cathy Torress – Organizing Manager of the Frontera Fund. The Frontera Fund’s Mission is: “To make abortion accessible in the Rio Grande Valley by providing financial and practical support regardless of immigration status, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, race, class, age, or religious affiliation and to build grassroots organizing power at intersecting issues across our region to shift the culture of shame and stigma.”

This lesson explains the realities of the need for accessible abortion care and how the pro-life movement has used various strategies to enforce opposition to abortion, primarily through the development of crisis pregnancy centers.

With the guidance of clips from *On The Divide*, the lesson lays out the different ways that restrictions to reproductive healthcare greatly impact our communities. Students will learn that access to abortion care goes beyond being “pro-choice” vs. “pro-life”. The lesson encourages students to see access to abortion through a reproductive justice lens.

A Note from Curriculum Creator, Cathryn Torres

In 2014, when I started college, I was introduced to different progressive issues and social justice movements, including the abortion rights movement. I’ve always supported abortion access, in fact, when I was a teenager, I naively thought being “pro-choice” was a no-brainer and that there wasn’t even an opposition. It was when I learned about abortion restrictions and saw how they impacted people very close to me that I felt compelled to do something about it. Since then I committed to learning more and more about abortion access and dug even further into the reproductive justice movement.

This film highlights the work that activists like South Texans for Reproductive Justice have done to work towards achieving RJ in border communities. From defending the clinic from protesters, to telling pro-life politicians like it is, this is the grassroots work that builds the foundation for our moment. The activists involved with South Texans for Reproductive

Justice are some of my closest friends and I am proud to be co-conspirators with them fighting back against harmful abortion restrictions.

Today, Texans are facing the most hostile abortion restrictions in the country, but we are doing everything we can to organize against these laws and ensure abortion is accessible to everyone in our community. While we remain resilient in this constant battle to keep abortion legal, we must understand the foundation of why abortion should be accessible and how it impacts each person's experience through life. This lesson provides a framework for an introduction to reproductive justice and why we must view access to abortion through an intersectional lens.

Subject Areas

- Women and Gender Studies
- Social Studies
- Sociology
- Political Science
- Current Events

Grade Levels: 11-12

Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- Understand reproductive justice through an intersectional framework
- Learn about the impact of abortion restrictions on historically marginalized communities
- Discuss the purpose of crisis pregnancy centers

Materials

- White board

- Notebooks
- Writing utensils
- Film clips
- Equipment to project the film clips
- Anna North, [What Crisis Pregnancy Centers Really Do](#), March 2, 2020
- Carrie N. Baker and Juliet Schulman-Hall, [Feminists Fight Fake Abortion Clinics: 'No One Should Be Lied To'](#), August, 8, 2021
- Abigail Abrams, ['We Are Grabbing Our Own Microphones': How Advocates of Reproductive Justice Stepped Into the Spotlight](#), November, 21, 2019
- Sister Song, [Reproductive Justice](#), March 31, 2022
- Kimberle Crenshaw, [The Urgency of Intersectionality](#), December 7, 2016
- Jane Coaston, [The Intersectionality Wars](#), May 28, 2019
- National Council of Jewish Women, [Understanding Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice](#), December, 2012

Time Needed

Two to four 50-minute class periods with homework assignments in between

FILM CLIPS

Clip 1: Crisis Pregnancy Centers (3:43 min)

The clip begins at 9:27 minutes from the start of the film with an image of McAllen Pregnancy Center and ends at 13:10 minutes with Mercedes pushing a stroller.

We learn that McAllen Pregnancy Center has purchased the building 3 doors down from Whole Woman's Health. We take a look inside McAllen Pregnancy Center where Yolanda Chapa, the owner, explains what MPC is through their lens. During this interaction, we see the relationship between Yolanda and Mercedes at a more interpersonal level. Mercedes provides an example of how they promote MPC to the public in spite of the realities WWH clinic escorts have detailed through experience.

Clip 2: A Look Inside McAllen Pregnancy Center (2:28 min)

The clip begins at 44:17 minutes at Mercedes' and Gabriel's apartment and ends at 46:40 minutes with an image of McAllen Pregnancy Center.

Mercedes and Gabriel talk about her need to head to McAllen Pregnancy Center, in spite of slight reluctance from Gabriel. Mercedes is attending as a patient, and goes through the intake process with Yolanda Chapa, who explains to Mercedes that she needs to vote Republican. Yolanda then speaks to Gabriel separately about religion and Mercedes' Christian journey and ultimately reveals to Mercedes that she is not pregnant, where Mercedes becomes emotional.

Clip 3: Beyond Abortion (2:34 min)

The clip begins at 59:06 minutes with Mercedes walking to WWH and ends with Mercedes crying in a vehicle at 1:02:40 minutes.

Mercedes heads to WWH to pray at the clinic. She discusses how Catholics view birth control and how her religion impacts her daily life. Mercedes discusses the turmoil in her relationship and how it is making her doubt her beliefs. She then begins to question even her own views on sexual health and abortion because she realizes that access to reproductive healthcare is important.

Clip 4: Rosie Jimenez Was One of Us (2:46 min)

The clip begins at 1:12:29 minutes with a table full of books and ends at 1:15:16 minutes with the image of Rosie Jimenez's gravestone.

Denisse is studying to be a nurse and midwife to change the culture surrounding birth, especially in the Valley. She mentions how she passes by the cemetery to visit Rosie Jimenez's grave. Denisse shares Rosie Jimenez's tragic story and how her story resonates with many people in the valley, including Denisse herself.

Clip 5: Abortion is Essential (1:40 min)

The clip begins at 1:15:25 outside of WWH and ends at 1:17:05 in a clinic exam room.

Anti-abortion people are holding their annual "March for Life" while pro-abortion activists are defending the clinic in a counter-protest. We see a glimpse of the true divide in views of abortion from McAllen to SCOTUS in Washington, DC. In a voiceover, Denisse explains the importance of abortion access, why people seek abortion care, and the definition of

reproductive justice.

ACTIVITIES

Day One: Reproductive Justice and Intersectionality 101

Step One: *Open dialogue and discussion*

Prior to the activities following, introduce the students to the film, “On the Divide”. Show them [this trailer](#) as a broad introduction. Advise students that this film will be referenced throughout the lesson to allow for better discussion.

Read out loud the definition of [Reproductive Justice](#) as developed by Sister Song as a class.

- Keep note of how often abortion access is brought up and how it ties with social justice and human rights.
- Allow for students to ask questions about the connections and guide a discussion about intersectionality.
- Following the discussion, watch Kimberle Crenshaw’s Ted Talk on [“The Urgency of Intersectionality”](#).
- Encourage students to take notes to prepare for the next steps of the activity.

Step Two: *Understanding the difference between reproductive health, rights, and justice*

Provide the students with a deeper understanding of abortion and reproductive justice by identifying the difference between abortion itself, abortion access, and policy affecting abortion.

- On the white board, create a chart with 3 sections, with each column labeled as, “Reproductive Health”, “Reproductive Rights”, and lastly, “Reproductive Justice”.
- Refer back to [this PDF](#) to help navigate this activity.
- Define each and write each definition under its respective column.

Discussion: Watch clips #3-#5 to show the implications of the attacks on reproductive healthcare and why achieving reproductive justice is important. Begin asking students to provide examples of the three.

- Ask the students, "What about abortion? How would it fall within these terms?"
- Responses along these lines are what is looked for:
 - Reproductive health - the abortion procedure itself
 - Reproductive rights - legalization of abortion and fighting restrictive policies
 - Reproductive justice - organizing to address the barriers to abortion access

Step Three: *Applying reproductive justice and intersectionality to everyday life*

With the guidance of notes previously taken from the first two steps, and with reference to the chart discussed in step two, ask the students to create their own definition of reproductive justice.

- Emphasize that there is no single definition of reproductive justice, rather it is an understanding of concepts that go beyond abortion care.
- Students are encouraged to utilize personal experiences if they feel comfortable doing so.
- Students are also encouraged to share what they've come up with to allow other students to have a broadened understanding of different perspectives on reproductive justice.

For homework: Pass out copies of the [Vox article](#) for students to read at home and annotate. Ask students to pay close attention to how CPC's can interfere with what was just discussed in order to prepare for next period's lesson.

Day Two: Putting the Understanding of Reproductive Justice into Practice

Step Four: *Discuss the opposing view and how Crisis Pregnancy Centers are impacting access to abortion care*

Begin the class by explaining what CPC's are and their purpose.

- Briefly go over the Vox article and watch clips #1 and #2 from On the Divide.
- Guide a discussion around how they think CPC's are impacting abortion access (10-15 minutes).
 - Guiding questions: Are CPC's real clinics? What is the purpose of McAllen Pregnancy Center? How did they impact Mercedes? Do you think that CPCs are spreading wrong information? How do CPCs affect communities who are trying to achieve reproductive justice?

Step Five: *Wrap up with a discussion on the clips shown in class. Students may choose a clip that stood out the most to them and expand on their reasoning.*

- Encourage the students to write notes that touch on topics discussed in the lesson
 - Students should look out for:
 - Examples of reproductive justice, rights, and health
 - Examples of intersectionality
 - How CPCs are affecting abortion access
 - Different ways that people are trying to protect abortion access
 - The impact of social justice movements
- Finally, assign students to write a five paragraph essay with the following prompt:
 - In On The Divide, the directors showcased two particular stories, Denisse and Mercedes, and how they were both impacted by restrictions to reproductive healthcare, particularly access to abortion care. Write an essay comparing and contrasting their experiences and how intersectionality plays a major role in both of their situations. Use examples from the film and apply what was learned from the past lessons about reproductive justice.

EXTENSIONS

“Problem Tree” activity

- Draw a tree on the white board, specifically including the roots, trunk, and leaves.
 - **Roots:** What are the underlying historical, social, and economic root causes of these problems? Why do these structures or policies exist?
 - **Trunk:** What structures, practices, and policies institutionalize the problems?
 - **Leaves:** What problems do you see facing your community?
- Have the students fill out each section of the tree. The topic can be specifically on abortion, or it can be about any other social justice movement so students can develop a deeper understanding of intersectionality.

RESOURCES

South Texans for Reproductive Justice

<https://www.facebook.com/sotx4rj>

South Texans for Reproductive Justice (STRJ) is a nonprofit organization serving the Rio Grande Valley and surrounding counties on the border. STRJ organizes and advocates for reproductive justice on a local, state, and national level. They currently offer free emergency contraception through their volunteer-run program.

Request free Plan B at <http://www.bit.ly/sotx4rj>

Where to Get an Abortion in Texas

<https://needabortion.org/>

A website cultivated to serve as a resource for Texans seeking abortions in and outside of Texas.

National Abortion Federation

<https://prochoice.org/patients/naf-hotline/>

The National Abortion Federation (NAF) provides limited financial assistance to help callers afford the cost of care and travel related expenses. The Hotline is free and offers services to everyone, regardless of your individual situation.

NAF Hotline: 1-800-772-9100

Frontera Fund

<https://fronterafundrgv.org/>

Frontera Fund provides financial and practical support for those from the Rio Grande Valley and/or traveling to the Rio Grande Valley for abortion care.

Get funded at 956-887-0706. Hablamos espanol.

West Fund

<https://www.westfund.org/>

West Fund is a volunteer-led 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and is affiliated with the National Network of Abortion Funds. West Fund supports callers from Texas border communities, West Texas and New Mexico.

Helpline: 915-213-4535 or 915-213-4578. Hablamos espanol.

Fund Texas Choice

<https://fundtexaschoice.org/>

Fund Texas Choice (formerly Fund Texas Women) is a non-profit organization that pays for Texans' travel to abortion clinics.

Helpline: 1-844-900-8908

Lilith Fund

<https://www.lilithfund.org/>

The Lilith Fund is the oldest abortion fund in Texas, serving the central and southern regions of our state with direct financial assistance for abortions.

Helpline: 1-877-659-4304 or 1-877-355-1461. Hablamos espanol.

Texas Equal Access Fund

<https://teafund.org/>

Texas Equal Access Fund provides funding to low-income people in the northern region of Texas who are seeking an abortion and cannot afford it, while simultaneously working to end barriers to abortion access through community education and shifting the current culture toward reproductive justice.

Helpline: 1-888-854-4852

Fondo Maria

<https://www.fondomaria.org/>

Fondo Maria is the first abortion fund in Latin American and is a member of the National Network of Abortion Funds in the US. Fondo Maria provides financial, emotional, and logistical support to those who do not have sufficient resources to access legal abortion services available in CDMX.

Helpline: 1-800-832-7311 or 55 52 43 50 54. Hablamos español.

Jane's Due Process

<https://janesdueprocess.org/>

Jane's Due Process helps young people in Texas navigate parental consent laws and confidentially access abortion and birth control. We provide free legal support, 1-on-1 case management, and stigma-free information on sexual and reproductive health.

Helpline: 1-866-999-5263

The Bridge Collective

<https://thebridgecollective.org/>

Our mission is to ensure that all Texans have equal access to abortion care. We fulfill this mission by providing information, transportation, accommodation, and abortion doula services, and by helping clients navigate resources in Texas.

Helpline: 512-524-9822

The Afiya Center

<https://www.theafiyacenter.org/>

The Afiya Center (TAC) was established in response to the increasing disparities between HIV incidences worldwide and the extraordinary prevalence of HIV among Black women and girls in Texas. TAC is unique in that it is the only Reproductive Justice (RJ) organization in North Texas founded and directed by Black women. Our mission is to serve Black women and girls by transforming their relationship with their sexual and reproductive health through addressing the consequences of reproductive oppression.

Helpline: 972-629-9266

Clinic Access Support Network (CASN)

<https://www.clinicaccess.org/>

We believe that everyone deserves access to reproductive healthcare, regardless of income, socioeconomic status, living situation, race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. We understand that one's legal right to have an abortion is meaningless without real access, and that a lack of transportation often presents a barrier to accessing the abortion one needs.

Helpline: 281-947-2276

Standards

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2](#)

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9](#)

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1](#)

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2](#)

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5](#)

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathryn Torres (she/her/hers/ella), 26, has a Bachelor's of Arts in Sociology with a minor in Biology from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Cathy is an Advocates for Youth alumnus who participated in Young Women of Color for Reproductive Justice for a span of 4 years. She now serves as a member of Advocates for Youth's Board of Directors. She has 7 years experience in community organizing with a focus on social and reproductive justice. Cathy has been a volunteer with Frontera Fund, the Rio Grande Valley's sole abortion fund, since 2016 and joined the Frontera Fund Board of Directors in 2019 where she worked as the lead helpline volunteer and event planner. She has since come on as full-time staff with Frontera Fund as the Organizing Manager. She also serves on the Board of Directors of South Texans for Reproductive Justice, a community organization advocating for Reproductive Justice in the Rio Grande Valley. Cathryn previously worked as a Youth Medical Case Manager for 2.5 years at the Valley AIDS Council, aiding youth living with HIV in her community.

