

Racial and Reproductive Justice

“I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits” – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Racial Justice Defined

Racial justice advocates for and reinforces policies and practices that promote racial equity, address structural racism, and heal racial injuries. A racial justice framework views racism and other forms of oppression as structural issues, which require structural solutions.

Reproductive Justice Defined

Reproductive justice is a broader reproductive health agenda, which seeks to promote the health and wellness of women, families, and communities. Applying a reproductive justice framework involves combating systems that serve to control our bodies, labor, sexuality, and reproduction.

Both racial justice and reproductive justice frameworks incorporate the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality describes the inherent connection between oppressive systems (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, etc), thereby requiring an analysis that examines and addresses these issues simultaneously.

Importance

Deploying both a racial and reproductive justice framework is vital in serving marginalized populations. These frameworks provide the platform to empower communities, acknowledge structural barriers to justice, and develop comprehensive services and advocacy. If we fail to recognize the operation of systems, then we fail to understand the myriad ways in which systems impact the communities we are apart of and serve.

Organizations in DC that utilize racial and reproductive justice frameworks include:

- [ACLU of the Nation's Capital](#)
- [Advancement Project](#)
- [BYP100](#)
- [The Equal Rights Center](#)
- [Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity \(URGE\)](#)

Connection to Harm Reduction

Harm reduction as a philosophy of non-judgmental services is also applied to HIPS' advocacy efforts. Meeting clients where they are requires that we understand complex structural oppression that impacts their day-to-day lives. We also strive to center the voices of those who are living and breathing it.

For decades, the District of Columbia has been a predominately Black city. Gentrification in recent years has led to a decrease in the Black population in DC, resulting in the displacement of native Washingtonians and a widened racial and socioeconomic gap. Gentrification also greatly impacts

the lives of folks engaging in drug use and the sex trade. DC also has the largest LGBTQ population in the country, per capita. Housing and employment discrimination, racial profiling and police harassment, poverty and homelessness, are just a few issues that our clients face. These issues are not recent occurrences—they are representative of a history of disenfranchisement and oppression.

Although the District has strong anti-discrimination laws and resources are being allocated to address homelessness, there is a lot of work to be done. By utilizing a racial and reproductive justice framework, HIPS is able to engage with a diverse client base. It is both empowering and crucial that our clients speak and represent themselves. An intersectional lens provides us with the opportunity to not only center the voices of our clients but also advocate for broader structural change in the District.



HIPS is a harm reduction service provider and advocacy organization providing support to persons impacted by sexual exchange and/or drug use in the District of Columbia. For more information about HIPS, visit www.hips.org.