

Stories of Reproductive Justice



These stories have been transcribed from videos on the Strong Families YouTube channel. Watch these and others:

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Hillary B.

Hi, my name is Hillary and I live in Oakland, California. My immediate family is my daughter, and my best friend and her daughter. My friend and I are both single mothers by choice and so we all live together in one household. That makes us a strong family because



we can help each other out with childcare and household duties and support each other and that kind of thing.

When my daughter was born 2 years ago, she had a congenital lung defect and had to have surgery. I had just had a c-section. What made us strong, in that situation, was my chosen extended family - my friends - really came together to help us while she was in the hospital.

To be strong my family needs affordable child care, good schools, universal health care, and also support for the arts.

Aimee S.

Hi, my name is Aimee.

My strong family includes my best friend Rickey. Rickey and I became friends during that wonderful time in everybody's life when you're young, you're poor, you feel everybody is against you. . . He felt that way because he is gay and I felt that way because I was a dark skinny girl who didn't want to go to church in a very Catholic country.

Rickey and I were such best friends that we promised each other that when we turned 30 that we would marry one another if we were still single. I have all these wonderful memories of Rickey and I just shooting the breeze, fantasizing, and day dreaming about the lives we were going to have.

Rickey and I both immigrated to the US at about the same time. I went to Portland, Oregon to follow a boy. And he went to New York City to study computer programming. After a couple of years Rickey became undocumented and unemployed and he soon started

turning tricks, or doing sex work, in order to get by. And in 2002, he was diagnosed with HIV.

Rickey shared with me a couple of stories of how he has been bullied in his neighborhood - and money has been stolen from him - and how vulnerable he feels - and how lonely he feels in New York City.

And I've begged Rickey to come to Portland, Oregon so that I can take care of him and support him. And of course he has refused because in New York City he can blend in, where there is bigger, larger immigrant communities.



What my family needs is to be recognized. I need people to know that Rickey is part of my family and I want to support him and claim him and provide resources in all the ways that families do.

Adriann B.

My name is Adriann and when I was 18 I found out I was pregnant and decided to have my child. And I thought, "I'm grown, I'm 18, I'm an adult, I've graduated high school, I'm in my first year of college, and this is going to be okay." But I very soon faced a lot of discrimination and judgment on what others perceived as my ability to be a parent.



I want to say that my family is strong. I'm a single parent, a young mom of two beautiful children who are successful in the traditional ways of doing well in school, involved in sports, have lots of friends. But they're also beautiful children in that they know how

important it is to support each other, they know what it's like to grow up on a budget, they know the meaning of a dollar and that they need to take care of each other and take care of their mom. And they know that our health is important.

Having Medicaid for my children has made the difference in our lives. My son had asthma when he was small. My daughter had eye surgery when she was six. And having access to that medical care has really been important for my family.

I also know that as a single parent, how important it is that I am saving now and that I have access to ways in which I can save and try and secure my economic safety for myself and for my children.

But I also feel like my family, as strong as it is, we do need access to education, access to opportunities for my children to be able to study in whatever field that their brilliant minds may want them to. We are a strong family because we take care of each other.

Kodey Park Bambino*

Hi, my name is Kodey Park Bambino and I have a wonderful family. Some people in my family include my mom and my dad and my sister, and also a lot of people that have become my chosen family. Oh, and also my grandma on my mom's side.

One of the ways that my family is strong and also unique is that I was adopted when I was six months old from Korea. So we had a multiracial family because my parents are Italian Catholic, white folks. I grew up in a small conservative town, so it was difficult both having a multiracial family, and also later, when I came out as queer and transgender. Having that identity in a Catholic family – that was hard!



I think one of the ways that would have really helped my family would have been a lot more education about what it means to be a multiracial family in schools. Also having education about what it means to have an LGBT child, or just having an LGBT identity. I think that also having wider representation of families in the media, too, would have been great.

By the time I went to college it was really difficult, too. My parents certainly were worried if they would be able to pay for college, so having more loans and subsidized higher education so everybody can be guaranteed the right to go to college. For me, that's when our family got that kind of education and became much more supportive and accepting. We had access to that for the first time: what it means to be a multiracial family, what it means to be a LGBT family, and how to balance that with all being Catholic.

That's my strong family and I'm glad I got to share that.

* Please note that Kodey uses ze/hir as pronouns, i.e. “Ze (referring to Kodey) is eating lunch” or “Kodey and hir dog”.

Mai D.

Hi, my name is Mai D. and I live in Oakland but I'm originally from Simi Valley, California.

Interviewer: So the parental notification initiative: How do you feel about that? How do you feel like it will impact young people?

I think bottom line it's not okay to restrict access to reproductive health services or health services in general, especially for minors. So I feel adamantly against having a parental notification initiative. I think it will prevent a lot of young people from accessing services that they need. I know for me, as a young person, I accessed reproductive health services without parental notification. That was a really big thing that I needed to do because, at that time in my life, my family wasn't in a place where I could get parental notification. Sex and sexuality weren't things that my family talked about. Both my parents are immigrants and I never got a sex talk, and I was not adequately informed about sex even though public education. I think it was difficult enough to find out about things on my own. I think some might argue that requiring parental notification would make supportive networks for young people, but I don't think that's the solution. I don't think that's the way to go about creating supportive networks for young people.



Interviewer: How do you feel like we can build strong families for people around sex and around their bodies?

I think it's more than just addressing sex and sexuality with young people. I think its about educating families and parents. It's not just about framing it around sex and sexuality but, especially for immigrant families, talking about cultural differences. In reality I think it's also about making sure that families have their basic needs met and access to health care because I think a lot of the things that prevent us from talking about sexual and sexuality are our family struggles in a lot of ways.