

Re-grounded and Recentered Through Talking About Sex

Tue, 09/27/2022 - 00:00

|

Daija Yisrael newcomb@tulane.edu

[View PDF](#)



Last week I went to Dallas, Texas to attend the largest reproductive justice (RJ) conference in the nation and my first professional conference. Sister Song (an Atlanta-based RJ organization that amplifies the collective voices of indigenous women and women of color) supported by the Afiya Center (a Dallas-based RJ organization that focuses on Black womxn living with HIV) hosted the fifth annual Let's Talk About Sex conference! And it embodied every aspect of the reproductive justice framework.

A reproductive justice framework is one of radical liberation. It upholds each individual's right to self-governance and provides access to whatever is necessary to execute that autonomy. It supports beneficial acts from sleeping in after an emotionally taxing night of research, to performing a self-managed abortion in a post-Roe America.

Let's Talk About Sex used this framework to organize speakers, performances, and workshops in a manner that upholds RJ values. Meals and childcare services were available daily at the conference location, expanding access to include various family structures. Live streams of general conference activities paired with virtual workshops allowed folks who couldn't make it to Dallas to participate from home. There were over 30 workshops led by RJ activists from different professional fields across the nation. Each session addressed the dynamic nuances of intersectional identities and how those experiences shape our ability to exercise bodily autonomy through a specific lens. Facilitators approached reproductive justice through discussions of music, academic research, sex work, editorial writing, technological security, entertainment, spirituality and more.

Last weekend reassured me of my value in this daunting cultural movement. I felt an overwhelming relief being in community with people who share these values of radical well-being. Over the three-day conference I learned how to be a "strategic disrupter" through radical self-love. Taking care of myself allows me to show up to class and work fully present as a Black, queer woman living by a liberatory framework. My community of activists reminded me that this is enough. My presence in academic and professional spaces that were intended for wealthy white men disrupts hegemonic norms. Being in the room, challenging assertions, demanding further investments in answering the questions "why" and "why not" is strategic disruption. I found myself exchanging ideas with formerly incarcerated women working to support Black women returning "citizens," with sex workers who are frustrated with by the lack recognition as valid workers while simultaneously witnessing the appropriation of sex work by the entertainment industry, and with mothers teaching their 12 year-old children the principles of community organizing. I was "poured into." We used this phrase throughout the conference in reference to the love, education, patience, accountability, and care with which we intentionally navigated conversations. After being poured into, I am rejuvenated and inspired to remain vocal about bringing the values of self-governance to my personal relationships and professional work.