

Mapping the Intersections

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By working with Lift Louisiana, I've come to consider the relationship between politics and reproductive justice—and the ways in which our political system both uplifts and constricts reproductive rights—more deeply and more critically. This semester, I've spent the bulk of my time with Lift creating legislator profiles depicting the voting histories of various Louisiana representatives from prominent parishes, highlighting their decisions in terms of sexual education, abortion, and economic justice bills during the past five years. The results are incredibly sobering to say the least. They indubitably reflect the sheer power our representatives hold

over our access to reproductive healthcare, they also suggest a clear path toward improving reproductive healthcare access for folks in Louisiana, in other states, and in the United States more generally. Through advocacy efforts, activism, and voter turnout, we hold considerable power to demand that our needs be met and our rights be codified into laws that benefit women and gender minorities. And while the voting histories contained within these legislator profiles may prove sobering, this fact isn't (thankfully).

Although creating hundreds of legislator profiles has been incredibly taxing and time-consuming, it definitely proves worth it. Not only have I learned a great deal about Louisiana representatives, various reproductive justice bills that have been presented before the Louisiana legislature, and the Louisiana political system more generally, but these profiles will have a meaningful impact in Louisiana communities. Since these profiles will be passed out at community meetings, advocacy trainings, and other programming, they will provide voters and activists with information pertaining to their legislators, which will lead to more informed decisions in the voting booth. And that reality alone is well worth hours spent entering data in Microsoft Publisher!

I've also started working on a project with Sister Heart, a local thrift store established by and for formerly incarcerated persons to facilitate re-entry and economic independence. Entitled 'Prison Gourmet', the program will include formerly incarcerated folks recreating commissary recipes to initiate a conversation about mass incarceration, the prison-industrial complex, and systemic disparities in the criminal justice system. By engaging in this event planning, I've come to draw more nuanced connection between the reproductive justice and criminal justice reform movements—two causes that are very dear to my heart.