Remembering Dr. Varnishung and Reflecting on the State of Louisiana Providers

By Amy Irvin, Clinic Manager

In a city with three abortion clinics, women of New Orleans seeking to terminate an unplanned pregnancy should expect to get the healthcare they want. But with the unexpected death of another abortion provider in New Orleans in December, access to abortion care past the first trimester has become desperately scarce.

Professionals refer to it as the graying of providers --- physicians trained and licensed in Louisiana to provide abortion care who either retire or, in the case of Dr. Kiat Varnishung of Midtown Medical Center, die. Since 1974 Dr. Varnishung served this community as a physician specializing in obstetrics and gynecology. He was also one of a few doctors in New Orleans still doing second trimester abortions. He was 68 years old.

Women wanting abortions in the city simply experience the shortage of doctors as another obstacle to overcome. Louisiana already is one of the most restrictive states in the country, requiring mandatory waiting periods, biased counseling requirements and parental consent. Regulations issued by the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) make operating a clinic even more prohibitive. Clinics have always employed trained physicians who performed the duties required of a medical director. Yet, in October, DHH issued a new ruling requiring clinics to have a registered nurse on staff, an additional cost that will invariably be passed onto patients in the form of increased fees. As the 2013 legislative session approaches more restrictive laws and regulations are expected.

While we grieve Dr. Varnishung’s death, clinics are preparing for evermore patients seeking services. Here, at the clinic where I work, we are already referring women seeking second trimester abortions to clinics outside the city. As they anticipate the cost of travel and hotel expenses, an increasing number are asking about financial assistance and payment plans. Helping women secure the monies to pay for the abortions they want has always been important work of funds across the country --- suddenly, the need is immediate in New Orleans.
**Roe v. Wade at 40**

*By Jessie Nieblas*

The 1973 Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion in every state in the US. However, as we know, it did not solve every problem related to abortion access, and created some issues of its own. Below are some reading suggestions, though they do not represent all the beliefs of NOAF.

**Background**

Court Cases: *Roe v. Wade*

National Abortion Federation


*A Question of Choice: By the Woman Who Won Roe v. Wade*

By Sarah Weddington

What Would Happen if Roe Were Overturned?

State Policies in Brief: Abortion Policy in the Absence of Roe

Guttmacher Institute


One Perspective on Roe and Other Civil Rights Struggles

The Personal Is Political: That’s the Challenge: *Roe v. Wade and a Black Nationalist Womanist Writer*

By Akiba Solomon


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**Eat at Fresco Cafe, Support NOAF!**

On January 22nd, in honor of the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, Fresco Cafe will generously donate 10% of proceeds from NOAF supporters! All you have to do is mention NOAF when placing your order, then enjoy their delicious cuisine. **That’s it!**

No matter how you order (delivery, take-out, or inside the restaurant), just say "New Orleans Abortion Fund" and they'll give 10% to us, where it will benefit women in our community.

Fresco Cafe

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504-862-6363

Tell your friends, spread the word, and dine at Fresco on January 22nd!

**NOAF’s Resolutions for 2013**

- Educate ourselves on the root causes of health disparities, poor pregnancy outcomes, and inequalities in abortion access
- Work with our allies on shared goals
- Work ourselves out of a job: end Hyde!
- In the New Year, begin providing funds for women in our communities who cannot afford the full cost of an abortion.