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Devalued, Turned Away, and Refused Health Care: What Happens to Women of Color When Religion Dictates Patient Care

By Elizabeth Boylan
May 24, 2018

[Details about this program may be found at the National Women's Law Center page, here](#)

Columbia Law School's Law, Rights, and Religion Project, and the National Women's Law Center hosted a Capitol Hill Briefing at 10:15 am on Thursday, May 24th to discuss the impact of religious health care refusals on women of color. The event, entitled [*Devalued, Turned Away, and Refused Health Care: What Happens to Women of Color When Religion Dictates Patient Care*](#), was presented *in cooperation with* Senator Kamala Harris and Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman.

Pregnant women of color, particularly black and Latina women, are at greater risk of being deprived of a range of reproductive health services in many U.S. states as a result of their disproportionate use of Catholic hospitals, according to the report [*Bearing Faith: The Limits of Catholic Health Care for Women of Color*](#). The report, which was published in 2018 by the Law, Rights, and Religion Project, in partnership with Public Health Solutions, analyzes racial disparities in birth rates at hospitals that place religious restrictions on health care. The Trump Administration's consistent efforts to expand religious health care refusals threaten to exacerbate the impact of these refusals on the health and well-being of women of color.

The briefing included remarks from experts in the field of reproductive justice, racial justice, and public health, including Kira Shepherd, Director of the Racial Justice Program with the Law, Rights, and Religion Project, Professor Lori Freedman of the University of California, San Francisco; Naomi Washington-Leapheart, Faith Work Director for of the National LGBTQ Task Force; Toni Bond Leonard, a Reproductive Justice expert and Religious Scholar; Candace Gibson, Staff Attorney with the National Health Law Program, and Fatima Goss Graves, President and CEO of the National Women's Law Center.