

## **Session: Aligning with Our Communities**

**Speaker: David Ward, Legal and Legislative Counsel, Legal Voice**

**Community: Gender Justice including women's healthcare and LGBT issues**

**1. Briefly describe the work you and your organization do to advocate for this population/issue.**

Legal Voice is a progressive feminist organization that uses the power of the law to make change in the Northwest. We use that power structure to dismantle sexism and oppression, specifically advocating for our region's most marginalized communities: women of color, lesbians, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, immigrants, people with disabilities, low-income women, and others affected by gender oppression and injustice.

Legal Voice works to make change through impact litigation, legislative and policy advocacy, and education about legal rights. In addition to the work of our staff, volunteers contribute over \$1 million worth of pro bono services to Legal Voice each year.

**2. What challenges is this population/issue experiencing? Have these challenges changed over the last year with the election and new administration? If so, how?**

The challenges include:

- Discrimination in employment, housing, education, public accommodations, health care, and the legal system
- Barriers to reproductive justice
- Access to health care
- Gender-based violence
- Economic inequality and poverty
- Intersecting oppressions

With the new administration, challenges are growing in a number of areas, including:

- Increased efforts to use religion as a basis for discrimination against women and LGBTQ people
- Threats to women and LGBTQ people who are immigrants
- Growing efforts to eliminate or restrict access to health care, including reproductive health care and transition-related care for transgender people
- Rollbacks in protections for LGBTQ people

**3. How has your organization been responding to the challenges you describe above?**

We seek to use every tool we have as an organization to respond to these challenges, including:

- Strategic, high-impact litigation and amicus briefs, often in partnership with allies

- State-based legislative advocacy, including successful efforts in 2017 to pass bills in Washington to improve protections for sexual assault survivors, to create new workplace protections for pregnant people, and to increase contraceptive access
- Increasing volunteer capacity
- Strengthening and broadening our coalitions and partnerships
- Education about legal rights

**4. In your opinion, how is this population/issue and related challenges similar to the other issues represented on the panel?**

Women and LGBTQ people are part of every community. As a result, we would expect that nearly every issue represented on this panel would impact gender justice and/or reproductive justice.

**5. Are there other resources you would recommend to the audience members to help us deepen our understanding of this population/issue beyond the information you provided in the panel? (articles, books, trainings, movies, etc)**

There are so many outstanding resources; here are just a few suggestions for further reading:

- SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collaborative, “What is Reproductive Justice,” available at <http://sistersong.net/reproductive-justice/>
- If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice, available at <http://www.ifwhenhow.org/>
- National Center for Transgender Equality, “National Transgender Discrimination Survey” (2016), available at <http://www.transequality.org/issues/national-transgender-discrimination-survey>
- The Daily Beast, *Why a Seattle-Area Mosque Barred Anti-Trans Activists* (March 2, 2017), available at <http://www.thedailybeast.com/why-a-seattle-area-mosque-barred-anti-trans-activists>
- Washington Supreme Court Gender & Justice Commission, *Washington State Domestic Violence Manual for Judges* (2016), available at <https://www.courts.wa.gov/index.cfm?fa=home.contentDisplay&location=manuals/domViol/index>
- Evan Stark, *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life* (2007)
- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985)