

How to talk about abortion in AAPI communities

Attacks on reproductive freedom is a direct assault on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. Although many in our community don't openly talk about it, [7 of 10](#) Asian Americans and [85%](#) of AAPI women support abortion access. [1 in 3 AAPI pregnancies end in abortion](#), showing the necessity of this care in our community. [The path to abortion is arduous for the AAPI community](#) — filled with language barriers, cultural stigmas, and low rates of insurance coverage for our most vulnerable members.

Many people are only tuning into this fight now, and that's alright. These ongoing threats to our rights present opportunities for us to meet the moment and bring our people into the movement.

That's why we must do the most important work: hold open conversations with people in our communities about abortion. These conversations need to happen both online and in real-life, person-to-person. This is a long-term strategy: it's not going to turn back the SCOTUS decision, but it *will* build our power for [reproductive justice](#) in our lifelong fights. While people across the country are forming their opinions based on fear-mongering, biased news, and misinformation, we need to help them think critically about their values and why each person should get to make the decisions best for themselves and their families. The more we engage community members on this issue, the more we will destigmatize abortion.

Who to talk with

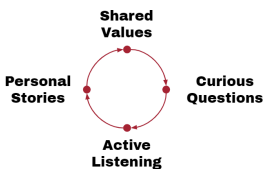
Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I feel safe? (If yes, continue to Q2)
2. Can I build power? (If yes, continue to Q3)
3. What do I hope the outcome of this conversation is?

How to have this conversation

When you have a conversation about abortion with someone whose opinion you don't yet know, you want to weave these 4 elements throughout the conversation:

- Shared Values
- Curious Questions
- Active Listening
- Personal Stories



You'll implement these in different orders, often starting and returning to shared values. It's important to recognize your & others' humanity to respond to people's worries & beliefs.

Find your shared values

Reproductive Justice = having the agency to make our own decisions about our lives, families, and communities. It's the human right to:

- Have children
- Not have children
- Raise your children in safe & sustainable communities
- Bodily autonomy

People care about their friends & family – we just have to make this issue personal to them.

Ask curious questions

To move people, we have to be curious about their underlying **beliefs, experiences, and feelings**. When they feel heard, they're more likely to talk with us about their actual experiences that underlie those beliefs, and we can start challenging those beliefs without the person shutting down. Sample questions:

- Do you know anyone who's had or wanted an abortion?
- How did you first learn about abortion?
- How does it feel when someone makes a decision *for* you?

Share personal stories

We share personal stories because they're the most powerful tools we have. They're an avenue through which

Listen actively without judging

We want to create & model a non-judgmental space of trust & empathy, meaning we don't ask leading questions like

we can talk about our own experiences and relationships. You should practice a few personal stories you can pull out that relate to different aspects of abortion access. For example:

- How you've been hearing or not hearing about abortion in your life
- Difficult relationships or pregnancies
- Just not the right time of life
- Balancing responsibilities / life goals
- Seeing the barriers to actually accessing abortion (ex. [fake clinics](#)). Check our NAPAWF's resources here: www.napawf.org/abortionssolidarity

“you support abortion, don't you?” Instead, we say things like “what are your thoughts on abortion?” Some phrases to indicate your non-judgmental openness to their thoughts & to model the empathy you want them to have for others:

1. I understand where you're coming from. We all care about children. I have (whatever is relatable) and I just want them to have the best life possible.
2. I hear you care about life, and so do I! That's why I want all people to be able to enjoy a safe, healthy, happy life—parents & children both. That's why I believe it's so important that...
3. I can feel how much you love your family. If this were your family member, you'd do everything you could to get them the healthcare they need, right?

Practice!

We practice because we owe it to ourselves, and to our community who will be impacted by these abortion bans, to get better and better at having conversations that move people towards supporting abortion and supporting our ability to make decisions over our own bodies and lives.

Grab a friend and practice having a conversation about abortion. When you're roleplaying as the “recipient” of the conversation, try to embody someone in your life whose thought process you can guess. A couple options:

- Grew up religious & was taught that abortion is wrong; doesn't know anyone who has had an abortion
- Hasn't heard about the SCOTUS decision of June 2022; supports abortion but is worried about showing public support due to thinking it's a “political” topic & having been socialized not to rock the boat

Debrief with your friend after you practice: What worked really well? What do you want to try saying next time?

Tips

Because the social norm is talking *around* abortion instead of *about* abortion, our opposition has been able to own the narrative around abortion. We have to take it back. A few ways of doing so:

- Just say the word “abortion.” Using euphemisms like “reproductive healthcare” continues the stigma. See here for abortion-related phrases in various AAPI languages: napawf.org/abortionlanguage
- Talk about “decisions.” Don't fall into the pro-choice/pro-life framework that makes it seem like a binary choice. Decisions are much more complex and interwoven with other parts of our lives (decision to take a job, get married, or move to a new state are understood as complicated decisions, not choices)
- Don't fall for the abortion vs contraception binary. We want access to both and don't want to continue the stigma
- Remember you may not be able to move people in one conversation, but every conversation is a building block. With every block, we can build the foundation to build the support we need to build power

As a 501(c)(3) or other nonprofit organization - [resource from movement lawyer here](#)

An organization will be regarded as “attempting to influence legislation” if it contacts, or urges the public to contact, legislators for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, or if the organization advocates the adoption or rejection of legislation. “Legislation” means bills that have been introduced and may be voted on by legislators (or the public, in the case of ballot initiatives or referenda).

Organizations may involve themselves in issues of public policy without the activity being considered as lobbying. For example, organizations may conduct educational meetings, prepare and distribute educational materials, or otherwise consider public policy issues in an educational manner without jeopardizing their tax-exempt status. Organizations may also take a position with the public about legislation and not have a “call to action.” Calls to action means any communication to ask people to contact their legislators.

TLDR: without reference to a specific piece of legislation and call to action, 501(c)(3) organizations do not need to count this communication as part of their designated lobbying hours.

Many thanks to AVOW for their “[Let's Talk about Abortion](#)” Toolkit and to the many other organizations & movements who have created and shared their resources as we fight together for reproductive justice.