



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 A Message from the Co-Executive Directors

4 Our Growth | Our Leadership

5 Our Community

7 We Testify On The Road

8 Our Impact

9 We Testify In Hollywood

10 Changing the Conversation

11 We Testify In The Media

13 Our Merch



# A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

**2023 was a year of exciting and necessary growth, transformation, and renewal for We Testify. As painful as our first full year without Roe was, the We Testify storytellers and staff turned each moment into an opportunity to double down our efforts to show up for people who have abortions in the most creative ways that we could think of and in as many places as we could go.**

From our first in-person storyteller retreat since before the pandemic to taking our storytelling and writers' rooms in Hollywood to conferences across the US and convenings in South America. We have been busy!

We believe deeply in building the leadership of abortion storytellers through innovative training methods, creative partnerships, and expansive campaigns that center our whole selves and real experiences. This year we grew our storytelling community through our programming at conferences, online trainings, and monthly storyteller-only spaces. We debuted creative new projects such as *The Mifes*, our Abortion Onscreen Awards celebrating realistic and thoughtful depictions of abortion on television and film, and our Creative Directory for people who've had abortions and make wonderful things. And, we deepened our partnership work with our friends at INeedAnA, Advocates for Youth, Harness, ANSIRH, and more. And, while we did all of that, we grew our staff by 3—including with two We Testify storytellers—to a team of 8 and transitioning to a co-director leadership model to enact our values of sustainability and shared power.

We feel so lucky to be able to do this work with such brilliant people who've had abortions supporting the most trailblazing and courageous abortion storytellers for another year. We spent this year dreaming and refining, and we can't wait to continue to deepening and expanding our work in 2024. We invite you to read We Testify's annual report and learn more about what we've been up to and how we're building a better world for people who have abortions.

In Abortion Solidarity,



Renee Nikiya

**Renee Bracey Sherman & Nikiya Natale**  
Co-Executive Directors, We Testify



# OUR GROWTH

In 2023, We Testify experienced significant growth on our team, which has further strengthened our commitment to amplifying abortion storytellers' voices. We welcomed three new staff members this year: **Sarah Lopez** as our Organizing Manager, **Tunisia** as our Operations Manager, and **Aryn** as our Press Coordinator. Both Sarah and Aryn were We Testify storytellers with our We Testify Texas and Youth Testify cohorts, respectively.



With this expansion, our organization has grown to a dynamic team of 8 dedicated individuals, **all of whom have had abortions** and each bringing their unique skills and passion to our mission. This staff growth allows us to continue our vital work of creating a supportive community for those who share their abortion stories and expanding our impact in the realm of reproductive justice.

*(Top row: Renee Bracey Sherman, Co-Executive Director and Founder; Nikiya Natale, Co-Executive Director; Emma Hernandez, Communications Manager; Middle row: Kenya Martin, Programs Manager; Carina Reyes, Communications & Development Coordinator; Bottom Row: Sarah Lopez, Organizing Manager; Tunisia, Operations Manager; Aryn, Press Coordinator.)*

# OUR LEADERSHIP

At We Testify, we embrace innovative leadership models that promote collaboration and equity. In 2023, we embarked on an exciting transition as we adopted a shared leadership approach. This transformation saw the well-deserved promotion of Nikiya Natale, JD to the role of Co-Executive Director, alongside our esteemed Founder and Executive Director, Renee Bracey Sherman. By embracing this co-leadership model, we are advancing the values of radical collaboration and inclusivity within our organization, enabling us to navigate the challenges and opportunities in the field of reproductive justice more effectively. This shift underscores our dedication to progressive leadership and ensures a strong, sustainable future for We Testify.





# OUR COMMUNITY

For the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to come together for another transformational abortion storyteller retreat. This gathering marked a poignant moment in our journey, rekindling the power of in-person connection, shared experiences, and mutual support. The retreat was a testament to the resilience and commitment of our community, as we navigated the challenges of the past years.



*Abortion Storytelling Retreat 2023*

Throughout the year, our engagement efforts have spanned both in-person and digital platforms, offering unique and indispensable spaces for individuals who have had abortions. Our in-person storyteller spaces have been a testament to the importance of carving out exclusive, safe havens for these individuals to share their experiences, find solidarity, and foster connections that transcend the barriers of stigma and isolation. Through our participation in conferences like Collective Power, Black Feminist Futures, and Abortion Care Network, we have extended our reach and broadened the dialogue around reproductive justice.





Our digital communities, such as virtual trainings and storyteller spaces, have served as vital hubs for the exchange of stories, resources, and support, uniting people from diverse backgrounds and experiences in the shared cause of centering abortion storytellers and silencing abortion stigma.

In 2023, we continued to invest in our We Testify storytellers, offering a comprehensive training series that included Abortion Storytelling 101, Media Training, and Ask Me Anything sessions that looped into various other programming and opportunities. We also took the initiative to offer personalized one-on-one sessions with our dedicated team, ensuring that each storyteller had access to the support they needed to thrive. Through this work, we have expanded our community of individuals who have had abortions and prepared them to share their experiences, whether that be publicly or to trusted friends. **Our trainings have reached over 100 abortion storytellers this year. Our commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive community remains unwavering, and we look forward to further enriching our network of storytellers in years to come.**

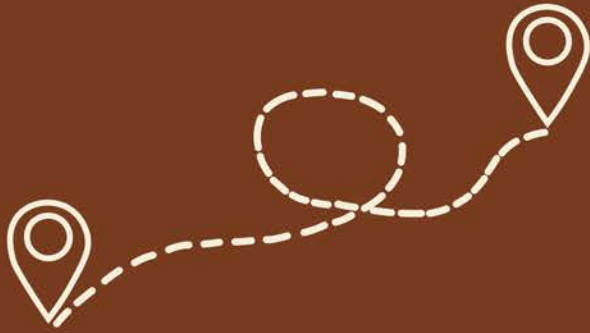


**We supported 18 storytellers to speak at conferences, on panels, and in front of Congress. Once again this year, We Testify storytellers took to the halls of Congress to share their stories. In July, storyteller Shivana Jorawar testified on a House Oversight Committee Democrats roundtable on medication abortion, while in March storyteller Stephanie Piñeiro shared her story and her work on a Congressional Pro-Choice panel on abortion rights post-Dobbs.**





# WE TESTIFY ON THE ROAD



In 2023, our work took us far and wide, as we embarked on a series of transformative conference travels. From bustling convention centers to intimate grassroots gatherings, our presence was felt, and our voices resonated. We engaged with passionate advocates, forged new alliances, and fortified existing partnerships.

Building off of our presentation in São Paulo, Brazil in 2022, we had the honor of connecting with international partners at the International Network for the Reduction of Abortion Discrimination and Stigma (inroads) Latin American and Caribbean Abortion Justice Circle, a gathering for regional members. This gathering was rooted in community, mutual learning, honoring collective wisdom, and ensuring accessibility for all participants.

We Testify's Communications Manager, Emma Hernández, was invited to travel to Bogotá, Colombia to present on the topic of narrative transformation related to self-managed abortion, as well as ethical considerations when working with abortion storytellers. This work was done in tandem with our *Embracing Latinx Abortion Stories* campaign, which included collaborations with Latinx illustrators, storytellers, and movement leaders – all of whom have had abortions. In short, it was a remarkable experience that enriched our understanding of abortion justice in the Latin American and Caribbean region, the power of our abortion stories at a global scale, and reinforced our commitment to this vital cause.



*Kaniya and Kenya at the Reimagining Policy Summit!*



*Take Rest '23*



*In D.C. for the Green Wave Gathering!*



*Saludos desde Bogotá!*





# OUR IMPACT

This year also marked a significant milestone for Youth Testify, a collaborative leadership program for young people who've had abortions created by Advocates for Youth and We Testify. We were able to come together in Washington D.C. for our first Youth Testify retreat, a fully new cohort of 10 storytellers, since the onset of the pandemic. Youth Testify continues to equip young people, aged 17-24, with the skills to share their stories with their peers, the media, and legislators, to shift the culture of stigma and center the voices and needs of young people in the fight for abortion access and reproductive justice.



Diana



Jackie



Candace



Olive



Symone



Kaniva



Sarah



Lizzie

Outside of abortion storytelling trainings, We Testify staff offer innovative trainings to partners and allied organizations. We regularly host ethical abortion storytelling trainings, workshops on supporting storytellers, and customized trainings that pull from our unique expertise and experience. This year, in partnership with the State Innovation Exchange, we created and implemented a training specifically for state legislators who have had abortions. We Testify staff also hosted trainings for physicians advocating for and working in the reproductive health field through Physicians for Reproductive Health's Leadership Training Academy and the Reproductive Health Access Project. In total, our trainings reached 336 participants.





# WE TESTIFY IN HOLLYWOOD

In 2023, We Testify continued our work engaging creatives in Hollywood to shift the narrative on how our experiences are depicted. We've worked behind the scenes to inform great abortion depictions, and this year we decided to celebrate the best abortion storytelling on screen. In March we debuted our first annual Abortion Onscreen Awards, presented in partnership with our researcher friends at the Abortion Onscreen Project at ANSIRH, to award the best abortion plotlines on television and film in 2022. We awarded some of your favorite shows like PValley, I Hate Suzie, Ramy, Station 19, and more. The Abortion Onscreen Awards represented a powerful effort to amplify the importance of accurate and nuanced representations of abortion experiences in media. Through thought-provoking content and storytelling, we explored the ways in which portrayals of abortion on-screen impact societal perceptions and reshape the narrative.



To continue our engagement with artists, our co-executive director, Renee Bracey Sherman, took part in several Harness x ACLU Artist Salons, a remarkable gathering of artists and activists to talk about the intersection between abortion access and trans justice. Harness, an organization created by America Ferrera, Ryan Piers Williams, and Wilmer Valderrama, provides an intimate space for artists and activists to gather, learn about timely social issues and make commitments to taking action. In the fall, Renee attended Harness' artist and activist retreat, a weekend filled with embodiment work, cross-movement learning, and brainstorming on how artists can use their platforms to share information and how activists can use art to spread our message. Our engagement with pop culture not only broadens the reach of our work, but also helps to end abortion stigma and encourage supportive and loving messages about people who have abortions.





# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION



In June we marked a full year without legal protection for abortion nationwide. We partnered with INeedAnA, the leading online tool for helping people find and get an abortion, to publish The Abortion Times, a limited edition newspaper marking the anniversary of the Supreme Court's disastrous decision in the Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health decision one year ago. Rather than feed into fear, we uplifted the headline that national headlines should have ran - "We Are Still Having Abortions All Across The Country." Abortion bans and restrictions are designed to shame people and make abortion hard or impossible to access. But we are powerful. And we will persist.

For the second year, we came together with Advocates For Youth to celebrate the National Day of Abortion Storytelling on October 26, 2023. This significant day provides a powerful platform for individuals to share their personal abortion experiences, offering narratives that challenge stigmas and foster understanding. Through storytelling, we continue to dismantle the barriers of shame and silence, striving for a world where everyone's autonomy is upheld, and where the power of storytelling can shape a more inclusive future.





# WE TESTIFY IN THE MEDIA

As we reflect on the milestones and accomplishments of the year gone by, we are excited to share a glimpse into the media highlights that have elevated the voices of We Testify abortion storytellers and contributed to an approximate 63% increase in direct mentions of We Testify by our storytellers/staff over last year.



## | A Texas Single Mother's Abortion Story

*"Prices have gone up on everything: diapers, formula, wipes. You can get on WIC, but you have to qualify for it. If you don't qualify, you have to buy formula. Formula is expensive. A lot of mothers can't breastfeed or don't have the time to breastfeed, because they have to still maintain their home; they have to maintain a job. If they have other children, they still have to attend to those children as well. If you can't afford formula, then you look like a bad parent because you can't afford to feed your child. It's like the system is set up to fail mothers. It's just not fair. We can't survive like this." – Alauni*



## | 'It felt like coming up for air': Abortion patients defend mifepristone access

*Larada Lee-Wallace said accessing abortion care is "like the worst game of Tetris... It's a really complicated process for so many people. So if there is an option available that will be easier or feel more comfortable to them in getting the care they need, that should be celebrated." – Larada Lee on accessing abortion in Ohio*

*"You may not feel safe in that space," said Qu'emi, who is based in Los Angeles. "I don't even want to go to the gynecologist because it feels invasive and because many of us have complicated relationships with our body. I thought self-managed options would be less invasive and feel more comfortable to me." – Jack Qu'emi on abortion and gender identity*

*"It felt like coming up for air," said Salazar, now 36 and living in Oakland, California after her DACA application was approved in 2015 and her deportation case was administratively closed. "When I found out I was pregnant, I felt like I was drowning. When I confirmed my appointments and got my medication, I felt like I could breathe again." – Layidua on abortion and immigration*





## HUFFPOST | What It's Like To Have An Abortion At Home

*"I chose, for my own mental health, to try to make it as easy as possible with as little amount of people knowing. That was the best thing for me to do in the moment. For me, I wanted to handle it the way I wanted to handle it. I knew that it was my body and no one else could tell me how to handle it."*

- Kaniya on Self-Managed Abortion

*"In my case, I have no idea what it would look like if I had to actually leave my quarantine and go to a clinic to have my abortion. At that time, everything was so uncertain and so unsafe to be outside. It was so nice to be able to do it at home where, considering everything that was going on, I felt safe. It was really nice to be able to be home, watching [a TV] series and being in more control of what was happening."*

- Isabella on Self-Managed Abortion during COVID-19

*"In a moment when my kids were asleep, I sat down on the couch and I remember looking out the window, and it was sunny outside. I just realized, 'Wow, I was blessed to have this opportunity to discontinue a pregnancy that I didn't want to continue.' A lot of people don't have this option or don't have access to this, and even in the states where it is legal, a lot of people still can't access it. I guess in that moment I was really just shocked that I was blessed to be in that position — to make a decision for myself that I felt would better myself."*

- Angel on SMA while parenting

Year	Features	Direct Mentions
2022	37	14
2023	37	23



## | Say the Word Abortion: Policy Change Can't Happen Without Culture Change

*"Historically, mainstream abortion advocates have consistently supported candidates, policies, and programs that end up harming those most impacted by the loss of abortion access—people of color. Reproductive justice—a Black feminist framework—makes it clear our liberation is interconnected. We cannot separate our struggles from those around us."*

- Jordyn Close







# OUR MERCH

This year we expanded our online store with merch, in English and Spanish, that simply declared that we had abortions, that we love someone who had abortions, and that we're working towards abortion at any time and for any reason.

Our Embracing Latinx Abortion Stories campaign, which included collaborations with Latinx illustrators, storytellers, and movement leaders – all of whom have had abortions. In short, it was a remarkable experience that enriched our understanding of abortion justice in the Latin American and Caribbean region, the power of our abortion stories at a global scale, and reinforced our commitment to this vital cause.

We continued our partnership with our friends at The Outrage, an independent shop and community hub for activism. Building on last year's launch of the *Everyone Loves Someone Who Had An Abortion* collection, we revamped our design with a critical message during our first year post-Roe: Abortion. Any Time. Any Reason. Anywhere.

This new design features common abortifacients: plants and herbs that have been used by those who came in the millennia before us—and some people today!— to self-manage their abortions.







[wetestify.org](http://wetestify.org)

We Testify is an organization dedicated to the leadership and representation of people who have abortions, increasing the spectrum of abortion storytellers in the public sphere, and shifting the way the media understands the context and complexity of accessing abortion care.