

Guided by Love, Abortion Care Providers Are Voices For Their Communities [Op-Ed]

On Abortion Provider Appreciation Day, Whole Woman's Health's Marva Sadler shares what guides her mission to provide quality, compassionate abortion care.

Marva Sadler (/writers/marva-sadler) | MAR 10, 2019 9:03AM EDT



Marva Sadler, director of clinical services for Whole Woman's Health in Texas.

Photo: Courtesy of Abortion Care Network

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I have been an abortion care provider in Texas for 10 years, and for my entire career, I have been driven by my faith. Whether it's the Christian tradition I grew up with or the Rastafarian beliefs I practice now, at the core of my work as an abortion provider is the unwavering love and humanity I feel for my patients, my colleagues and my community.

My deeply held belief that each of us should be able to control our lives and destinies is rooted in my upbringing in Waco, Texas. Growing up in a Christian household of all women—my grandmother, mother and two sisters—we went to church, read the Bible and didn't talk much about abortion. But I knew that my mother was pro-choice because she instilled in me the notion that we should all be able to make our own decisions and not pass judgement on one another.

In the years since, my career has led me to Whole Woman's Health (<https://wholewomanshealth.com/>) in Texas, and my spiritual practice has evolved. For the last eight years, I have practiced the Rastafarian faith, which shares the same guiding principles that I grew up with. Today, in the face of uncertainty when it comes to abortion care in the United States, I find myself now more than ever leaning on my faith and my natural positivity to get me through the hard times.

Independent abortion care providers operate the only remaining clinics in four states (<https://www.abortioncarenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/communities-need-clinics-FINAL-2018.pdf>): Kentucky, Mississippi, North Dakota and West Virginia. In four others—Arkansas, Oklahoma, Georgia and Nevada—they are the only providers of in-clinic abortion care. Without these courageous providers across the

country, abortion access in the South and center of the country would be nearly nonexistent (<https://www.abortioncarenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/communities-need-clinics-FINAL-2018.pdf>).

Not three years after our Whole Woman's Health team sued the state of Texas and won a landmark Supreme Court victory (<https://www.oyez.org/cases/2015/15-274>) to protect abortion access nationwide, state politicians continue their attacks, emboldened by the current federal administration and shift on the U.S. Supreme Court.

But abortion providers continue to put their love for their patients and communities first, and I can think of no better models for this love than my friends in Louisiana at the Hope Medical Group for Women (<https://thinkprogress.org/only-one-hope-clinic-left-louisiana-abortion-admitting-law-roe-v-wade-9c621c77f8d3/>). Just last week, the Hope staff waited with bated breath for the Supreme Court to block a law that would have left their clinic the only operating abortion provider in the state. Ultimately, the Supreme Court stepped in (<https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/07/politics/supreme-court-louisiana-abortion-kavanaugh-roberts/index.html>), allowing the other providers in the state to stay open. Still, the Hope Medical Group was prepared to open its doors to women from all over Louisiana.

In my work as an abortion provider, I bring that same type of love into every patient encounter. It's important to me that every person who walks through our doors knows they are in a safe, nonjudgmental place and that they are loved. I am humbled by the strength and resilience of the people who, despite everything stacked against them, come to us for compassionate and nonjudgmental care. My respect and support for them is rooted in my firm belief in the inalienable human dignity of each of us, a key tenet of my Rastafarian faith that I hold dear.

A big part of our work as independent abortion providers is meeting people where they are, making them feel supported in their decision and ensuring that they experience health care with dignity. The love and dignity that I bring to my work is reflected by independent abortion providers across the country. We are a voice for patients and our communities. It's who we are, it's who we've always been and who we'll always be. We're driven by our faith—whatever our belief system or spiritual practice—and an unwavering commitment to provide quality, compassionate abortion care.

Marva Sadler is the director of clinical services for Whole Woman's Health (<http://wholewomanshealth.com>), a privately-owned, feminist organization committed to providing holistic care for women. The org tweets @WholeWomans (<https://twitter.com/wholewomans?lang=en>).

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