Greetings.
In this first edition of *Femme Fertile*, I thought it worthwhile to share with you some of the story of my life’s work with reproductive health.” My passion for women’s health and fertility began early on. At age 23, I trained to become a natural family planning (NFP) teacher. At the same time, I was active in a woman’s consciousness raising group and other organizations that advocated reproductive health freedom. I was deeply grateful for and inspired by what I learned through the NFP group, but I soon found myself at odds with its Roman Catholic proscriptions regarding sexual and contraceptive practices. So, I struck out on my own.

I developed a private fertility awareness practice and began a midwifery apprenticeship. I continued to take NFP training, including a program at a well-reputed institute for studies in human reproduction. As this institute was Catholic, I found it necessary to veil my feminist leanings, and remained veiled until the week before I was to write final exams. A “spy couple”, ostensibly seeking abortion counseling, was sent by the program director to my clinic to investigate my politics. Thus was discovered my practices of teaching about condom use with fertility awareness, sexual practices alternative to intercourse, abortion counseling, and teaching single “fornicating” women how to use fertility awareness. I was called before the director and his board for “reassessment”. I knew that this meeting was to be fateful; I earnestly wanted to write the exams and earn my credentials.

In preparation for what was to come, I picked a Tarot card with the hopes of encountering some image to hold me during the trial. I drew the card of Justisse (old French for Justice), and realized I was facing an issue of justice. I was strengthened by the image.

I was dismissed from the program. No credentials for me. No hope for a fruitful collegial connection. I held on to my card of justice and pursued the creation of a women’s sexual and reproductive health program. Justisse was born. Its birth cry insisted on the justice of individual women having personal authority to decide on the course of their reproductive and sexual health care.

I continued to develop my skills as a reproductive health care practitioner and educator, and midwife (yes, sometimes still veiled). My recent completion of graduate work in counseling psychology, with an emphasis on depth psychology, has greatly furthered my understanding of the psyche-soma connection, which my clinical work has shown me to be central to reproductive health and well-being.

Advocacy for a woman’s right to informed and independent choices around reproductive health care is gaining ground in mainstream North American culture. Yet, there still is misinformation, misrepresentation, commodification of the female body and violation of reproductive rights. Increasingly, I am moved to invite and engage women in dialogue – women whose bodies and souls bear the burden and privilege of carrying the archetype of creatoress, whose bodies are the carrier of the blood mysteries at all ages. Justisse Healthworks for Women and *Femme Fertile* invites young women to reach out to understand their bodies and souls and the choices ahead of them, invites mature women to continue to explore their generative capacity and to gather around them young woman with whom to share their wisdom – Woman to Woman.

Geraldine Matus is the Director of Justisse Healthworks for Woman

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