

Freedom to Exhale



The newsletter of Exhale Issue #4 Summer 2004

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www.4exhale.org

"I had an abortion about a year ago and I never really knew what to feel about it. It's like a numb kind of feeling, like I'm ashamed to have made the right choice for me. I'm ashamed to feel good about that choice. And then I read...your home page...Thank you!!...I did make the right choice for me, and I'm sick and tired of feeling ashamed for making a good decision."—Anonymous

Shame looks different for everyone. For some, like the woman who emailed Exhale above, shame comes from deciding to take care of yourself in a culture that questions your actions. For others, shame comes from disappointing oneself, like the women who call Exhale feeling ashamed they were not "strong enough" to have another child.

These are the stories we know. There are many waiting to be told.

To ensure that all women who have abortions, and their significant others, have the opportunity to share their story without fear of judgment or criticism, Exhale works to increase access to non-judgmental emotional support, resources and information.

From conducting public education to end the stigma of abortion and training healthcare providers on after-abortion counseling to increasing language access on the talkline and exploring the possibility of expanding the service area, Exhale promotes post-abortion emotional health.

In order to keep the focus of the newsletter on after-abortion resources and community perspectives, Exhale offers a variety of reports that describe many of our specific activities. If you are interested in learning more about the exploratory meeting on post-abortion emotional health we co-sponsored with the Abortion Conversation Project last November or would like to view the results of our survey of Bay Area abortion providers that documents attitudes and practices towards after-abortion emotional issues, please check out our section on "Reports Available" and request a copy today!

I want to thank all the women and men who have called Exhale and told their story. I also want to thank all the people, businesses and foundations who have provided the time, energy, resources and donations that have allowed Exhale to create a truly non-judgmental, supportive space for women and their significant others, after an abortion.

Please look over the names on the back page. If you are on this list, I thank you. If you are not yet on this list, I hope you will join us.

Aspen Baker
Executive Director

AFTER-ABORTION TALKLINE

1-866-4 EXHALE
Monday – Friday
5 p.m. – 10 p.m.
Spanish counseling is available
Wednesdays 5 p.m. – 10 p.m. and
upon request.

REPORTS AVAILABLE

(email reports@4exhale.org
with requests):

- Exhale 2003 Annual Report
- Exhale 2003 Call Data
- Working With Patients After Abortion: A Survey of Bay Area Abortion Providers
- Exploratory Meeting on Post-Abortion Emotional Health

LEADERSHIP

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Aspen Baker, *Executive Director*
Culebra De Robertis, *Program Director*

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IN THE MEDIA

- Free Radio Santa Cruz, "Eye of the Storm," live and locally-aired on December 3, 2003.
- Your Call with Laura Flanders "A Forum for Women's Abortion Stories," live and nationally-aired on January 22.

PRESENTING

- Executive Director, Aspen Baker, was a panelist at the UC Berkeley Women's Rights Conference in a workshop on "Reproductive Freedom: Abortion and the Law," February 28.
- Program Director, Culebra De Robertis, and Volunteer After-Abortion Counselor, Carolina Gonzalez-Villar attended the New Leadership Networking Initiative (NLNI) meeting at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. Together they facilitated a check-in space that followed an Abortion Speak-Out and a roundtable discussion on Talking About Abortion, After the Fact at the conference on reproductive freedom that followed the NLNI meeting, April 2-4.
- Aspen Baker, was a panelist on "Hot Topics" at the Gloria Steinem Leadership Institute at Cal State Fullerton, April 17.
- Aspen Baker, and volunteer, Kelly Cleland, a member of Exhale's Learning and Evaluation Committee, traveled to New Orleans to present a scientific paper on Exhale's survey of the attitudes of Bay Area abortion providers towards after after-abortion emotional issues at the annual conference of the National Abortion Federation, April 19-20.
- Culebra De Robertis, and Board Member, Lisa Lepson, facilitated a workshop on providing non-judgmental support to friends after an abortion at the youth convergence on women's health in Washington D.C. on April 24.

COLLABORATING

Exhale moderated an online forum, the first in a series focused on reproductive health topics concerning young people, hosted by the Pro-Choice Public Education Project. Exhale Board Member, Sarah Bardeen, facilitated the live, online chat on the personal experiences of abortion, titled "The Political is Personal, Too" on February 4.

WELCOME!

Culebra De Robertis, Exhale co-founder, counselor trainer and long-time leader of Exhale, as Exhale's new Program Director, our agency's second full-time staff position! Exhale would also like to extend Culebra our warmest blessings on her legal marriage to her wife, Pamela Harris, at San Francisco City Hall in February.

AFTER-ABORTION RESOURCES

FOR PROVIDERS

(email culebra@4exhale.org to request trainings or more information):

IN THE SF BAY AREA:

After-Abortion Resource Kit (Free): Posters, brochures and wallet cards in English & Spanish.

Presentation (Free): Thirty minutes or an hour in-service presentation on the Exhale talkline.

Half Day Training (Fee): Increase the capacity of staff to meet clients after-abortion needs.

NATIONWIDE:

Brochures: For Significant Others After the Abortion: First 50 available for Free!

Training Guide: This \$50 guide includes three, one-hour trainings, plus handouts.

FOR INDIVIDUALS

IN THE SF BAY AREA:

Ceremony for Children Who Have Died: Ceremony and ritual in the Buddhist practice for men and women. *Yvonne Rand, 415/388-5572, www.goatintheroad.com*

Exhale, After-Abortion Counseling Talkline: Trained peer counselors provide non-judgmental emotional support, resources and information to women and their significant others after an abortion, with respect for reproductive freedom.

Call Toll-Free: 1-866-4 EXHALE, M - F, 5 p.m. - 10 p.m., English & Spanish

Healing Support After an Abortion: Workshops, support groups and private sessions for women. *Terra Wise, 415/987-3920, www.terrawise.net*

SAND: Support After Neo-Natal Death: Support group for parents who have lost a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, death during or after birth, or genetic abortion. *Mark Claycomb, 415/522-7400*

Individual Therapy/Counseling
Contact Exhale at 510/446-7900 for screened referrals.

NATIONWIDE

Pregnancy Options Workbook,
<http://www.ferre.org/workbook/>

Hope Clinic Publications, www.hopeclinic.com/publications/

The Healing Choice: Your Guide to Emotional Recovery after an Abortion, by Candace De Puy and Dana Dovitch, Simon & Schuster, 1997.

Peace after Abortion, by Ava Torre-Bueno, Pimpernel Press, 1997.

Experiencing Abortion: A Weaving of Women's Words, by Eve Kushner, Harrington Park Press, 1997.

Community Perspectives

Exhale is pleased to present our third installment of our Community Perspectives column. This column is used to showcase a variety of viewpoints, issues and health care strategies on after-abortion needs.

LATINAS: BUILDING SUPPORT WITHIN THE CULTURE

BY CRISTINA CORREA

Cristina Correa is the center manager of Choice Medical Group in Sacramento, California and has been a counselor on the Exhale talkline for two years.

Family. Community. Religion.

These are key components of Latino culture. These are elements that bring us together, that offer us support, that provide strength. They can let us know we are never alone, that we are always welcome.

Growing up as a Latina in California, I experienced a sense of pride when I watched members of my family and community rally around young, unmarried women to insure Latino children are raised in a caring and loving environment. For young women making decisions about pregnancy and parenting, the ability to count on one's family to play an active role in raising a child, is significant.

It wasn't until I was much older that I learned how many Latinas make the decision to have an abortion. Unlike the decision to bear a child, this decision was often made en secreto. Because abortion remains taboo and because many of our families, communities and churches tend to be anti-abortion, Latinas who have abortions often feel they must repress their feelings, "act normal," and never discuss having had one. As a result, Latinas who have always looked to these important elements of our culture as places to receive love and support, all too often feel isolated from them.

I began working in the reproductive and sexual health field because I wanted to work with Latinas to create safe places to talk about and make decisions about traditionally taboo subjects, like abortion.

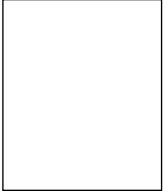
The Latinas who have told me their story of abortion, whether in my work with Promotoras, providing abortion services or as a volunteer on the Exhale talkline, have talked about the silence and lack of support after an abortion and how this hurt them emotionally. They told me how the myths and social reactions to an abortion can make the process more difficult.

The silence around abortion has not stopped Latinas from having the procedure. It has also not stopped them from going to church and needing the support of their families and communities.

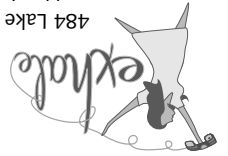
As a caller to the Exhale talkline once described, "The abortion was the best decision I could make. It was hard to not tell my family. It will always be mi secreto and I will always have mi familia, mi comunidad, mi espiritualidad."

The same culture that makes the decision of abortion so difficult can also be the place of comfort and support to break the silence.

It is crucial that all of us work to create safe places, in our families, in our communities and in our places of worship, so that all women and girls who have abortions can know that their culture is a source of love and unconditional support.



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