



## **Community-Based Abortion Funds: Help Make Health Care a Right not a Privilege**

*During “Rose’s\*” first pregnancy, she discovered a serious heart condition that got increasingly worse as her pregnancy progressed. After being hospitalized for several weeks, Rose had a healthy baby. Her doctor, however, advised her not to get pregnant again until her condition improved. Despite taking precautions, Rose got pregnant. Rose and her doctor knew that she could not carry the pregnancy to term without risking her health, and her doctor recommended that she get an abortion. Rose relied on Medicaid for her health care needs, but Medicaid – which covers the cost of prenatal care, including the extensive hospitalization required by her first pregnancy – would not cover the cost of her abortion. As a full-time college student with a child to support, Rose couldn’t afford the abortion. Fortunately, she found a clinic that helped her raise the money for the procedure and she was able to get the health care she needed.*

Access to the full range of reproductive health services should not be a privilege reserved for those who can afford it. Yet Medicaid, the federally funded health services program for the poor, severely limits abortion coverage, while funding other pregnancy-related care. Across the country, many states fail to meet the needs of women, like Rose, who are denied Medicaid coverage for abortions unless their pregnancies are the result of rape or incest or if their lives are in jeopardy. These restrictive policies discriminate against women seeking abortions who depend on the government for their health care and deny them the ability even to obtain abortions they need for their health.

### **Take Action – Start or Support an Abortion Fund**

Community-based abortion funds provide much-needed financial support to women who otherwise cannot afford the cost of an abortion. By donating to a fund in your community, you can help alleviate the suffering of women like “Rose.” The National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF), an association of abortion funds throughout the U.S., can help you find an abortion fund to contribute to in your area.

If you live in a state or county that doesn’t already have an abortion fund, start one. Hold a meeting in your community to help build awareness about the difficulty poor women have getting abortions. Distribute the attached ACLU fact sheet, *Public Funding for Abortion* (also available online at:

<http://www.aclu.org/ReproductiveRights/ReproductiveRights.cfm?ID=9039&c=146>).

And to help put a face on the issue; show the film, *Legal but out of reach: Six women’s abortion stories* (2000, directed by Janet Goldwater and Barbara Attie, 24 minutes), which highlights the stories of six poor women who faced numerous challenges in their efforts to obtain abortions. This film and a discussion guide about the film are distributed by NNAF at <http://www.nnaf.org/legalvideo.html>. NNAF can also provide additional support and assistance, including an organizing guide, to help you start a new abortion

fund in your community. For more information, go to the NNAF website:  
<http://www.nnaf.org/>, and for a copy of the organizing guide, go to:  
<http://www.nnaf.org/baaf.html>.

\*Rose is a pseudonym.