



# OUR BODIES OURSELVES TODAY

AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

## Birth Control September 2024

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### A Note from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It's a truism within the women's health, reproductive rights, and public health spaces that women, and all people capable of pregnancy, should have access to "the complete range of contraceptive options." This range of choices is the standard of care for every woman seeking birth control, at every fertile point in her life. It is also a human right.



This is in part because each of us is the ultimate expert on what works best for our bodies and psyches, in our current and foreseen relationship statuses, with our particular families, and in our financial situations. A healthcare provider is simply not qualified to make such an important, life-altering decision for us. It is also because the ability to control the number and spacing of our children (if we choose to have any) is core to our autonomy and quality of life as women and human beings.

Unfortunately, this right is fulfilled unevenly at best and is violated widely at worst. Patriarchal institutions and individuals are working hard to deny our right to contraception just as they've denied our right to abortion. Fortunately, feminists are still on the front lines, defending our bodies and our lives.

In this issue of the newsletter, you'll read about women's struggle for two forms of birth control: young women seeking sterilization from patronizing physicians, and a long and hard-won victory that brings over the counter birth control pills to the United States. You'll meet our wonderful writer Jonese Austin, and the late, great, co-author of "Our Bodies, Ourselves," Pamela Berger. We also invite you to two brilliant events including a celebration of our new website reveal on September 26.

We hope you can join us and bring a friend (or two).

Onward!

Amy

Support Our Work--Donate Now!

## Explore Our Resources

### OTC Birth Control Pill: Global Access Around the World

Access to oral contraceptives varies worldwide. This interactive map identifies which countries require prescriptions for birth control pills and which allow people to access oral contraceptives over the counter. In March of this year, the United States joined the more than 100 countries that provide birth control pills over the counter, thanks to the work and advocacy of the Free The Pill Coalition.



[View the interactive map](#)  
And [check out our other birth control resources](#)

## Who We Are: Q&A



### Jonese Austin, Our Bodies Ourselves Today Content Developer and Writer

This month, we spoke with **Jonese Austin** (she/her), who is a writer, editor, and general content developer for the Our Bodies Ourselves Today website as well as this newsletter and our social media accounts. She's also a womanist minister, a feminist ethnographer, and a doctoral candidate in anthropology at Duke University.

**What brought you to Our Bodies Ourselves Today? What do you value most about this work?**

After I graduated from Emory with my Master of Divinity, I was looking for part-time work that focused on girls and women. Coming out of seminary as a womanist minister, I understood my call as one of promoting health, wellness, and wholeness for all people but especially Black women who may have experienced harm in the church whether through messages such as purity culture, messages that highlight the “sin of homosexuality,” or through instances of sexism and racism. I was excited by the opportunity to work for an organization that was committed to the health and sexuality of girls, women, and gender-expansive people. And I was becoming more interested in reproductive justice as a part of my broader work at the intersections of faith, race, gender, and sexuality.

**Tell us about your current research. Are there ways it connects to, or**

## complements, Our Bodies Ourselves?

My doctoral dissertation is about how Black women in the U.S. South come to understand their bodies and sexuality through dance. I look at dance in two spaces: the religious space of the Black Church and the non-religious spiritual space of the pole dance studio. In challenging the sacred/profane dichotomy or binary, I argue that both the pole dance studio and the Christian church are places where Black women dancers in the U.S. South can encounter the sacred through dance in their relationships with their own bodies, their relationships with the divine, and their relationships with others. My research focuses on holistic health and wellness, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. In doing so, it touches on topics covered by OBOS Today such as mental health, gender-based violence, aging, sexualities, and relationships.

### What's a crucial issue related to health and sexuality that you hope our website makes more understandable?

As a minister and a scholar, I hope that our website makes abortion more understandable. I've been in religious spaces that see abortion as "killing babies." The ways that abortion has become politicized in religious spaces has led to misinformation. I hope that our website makes clear not only what abortion is but what's at stake when abortions are restricted. In this regard, it works alongside progressive faith-based reproductive rights and reproductive justice organizations that are also working to combat misinformation in religious spaces.

### What gives you hope?

One thing that gives me hope is my generation and the next generation. As the oldest of the Gen Zers, I am inspired by the ways that young people are willing to challenge the status quo and advocate for freedom, liberation, and justice for all people. They remain steadfast in the face of opposition from their universities, politicians, and others.

### [More about Jonese Austin](#)

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## Obstacles to Voluntary Sterilization

### Dealing with Anti-Youth Bias When Seeking Sterilization

As adults, we have the right to choose the birth control options that work best for us. Sometimes, however, healthcare providers put up roadblocks to young people who seek to get our tubes tied or have a tubal ligation/tubal removal. We are too often denied the procedure by healthcare providers who cite our age and the possibility of regret as reasons to deny us the permanent contraception we seek. This article highlights the personal stories of young people, including the author, navigating barriers to sterilization as a birth control method.



## Remembering Pamela Berger, Our Bodies Ourselves Founder



With great sadness, we note the passing of Our Bodies Ourselves (OBOS) founder, Pamela Berger, at age 84, on August 31.

As a young wife and mother, Pam was one of the women who met at a workshop on "Women and their Bodies" during a **Female Liberation Conference in Boston in 1969**. The group continued to meet to share their personal experiences and information, eventually forming the Boston Women's Health Book Collective together, and writing the revolutionary feminist book, "Our Bodies, Ourselves."

Pam's work for OBOS applied her many wonderful qualities: her talent for close reading, intellectual curiosity, honesty, warmth, compassion, and creativity. She was both fierce and gentle, able to compromise without losing her strong moral compass.

Founder **Wendy Sanford** remembers how "Pam played a big role in our publishing decisions and in developing legal safeguards to make sure the book wasn't sexualized or trivialized. Pam was both cogent and fierce in our dealings with publishers, helping us guarantee that our book would respect women and usefully inform them."

Deeply committed to OBOS from the start, Pam balanced that role with equally deep commitments to her professional life, to her husband Alan, her children, and her extended family.

A medieval art historian and professor at Boston College (1974–2021), she wrote books including "The Goddess Obscured." In her 40s, she learned filmmaking in order to create "Sorceress." She later wrote, directed, and produced two other films, adapting one of them ("The Imported Bridegroom") into a stage musical.

Pam's wisdom, friendship, and guidance are sorely missed. A tribute to her, written by the OBOS founders, is in the making.

[More about Pamela Berger](#)

[More about OBOS history](#)



Pictured: [Paula Doress-Worters](#), [Joan Ditzion](#), [Judy Norsigian](#), [Pamela Berger](#), and [Nancy Miriam Hawley](#), 2018. Courtesy of Judy Norsigian.

## Organizing for Change: Birth Control



### Free the Pill Coalition

The Free the Pill coalition is a group of more than 200 reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations, research and advocacy groups, youth activists, health care providers, prominent medical and health professional associations, and others who share a commitment to ensuring more equitable access to safe, effective, and affordable birth control to people of all ages, backgrounds, and identities in the United States. Coalition members support over-the-counter (OTC) birth control pills that are affordable, fully covered by insurance, and available to people of all ages. To express their commitment, coalition members sign on to Free the Pill's statement of purpose.

[More about Free the Pill](#)

## News and Events

*"A vital contribution to women's history." —Edith Becker*

**How Women's Liberation Transformed America 1963-1973**

**The Movement**

AUTHOR OF  
*WITNESS TO THE REVOLUTION*

**Clara Bingham**

Harvard Book Store | Live In-Person | CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

# Clara Bingham in Conversation with Our Bodies Ourselves Founders at the Cambridge Public Library

Monday, September 23, 2024  
6:00pm EDT  
Cambridge Public Library  
449 Broadway  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Harvard Book Store and the Cambridge Public Library welcome Clara Bingham—award-winning journalist and the author of "Witness to the Revolution" and "Women on the Hill"—for a discussion of her new book "The Movement: How Women's Liberation Transformed America 1963–1973." She will be in conversation with Our Bodies Ourselves founders Judy Norsigian, Joan Ditzion, Jane Pincus, and Norma Swenson—co-authors of the groundbreaking book "Our Bodies, Ourselves."

RSVP for this free event or choose the "Book-Included" ticket to reserve a copy of "The Movement" to pick up at the event. A book signing will follow the presentation.

[Register to Attend the Conversation](#)

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## Celebrating Our New Website!

Our fully redesigned Our Bodies Ourselves website is now more accessible and more easily searchable, with added features and a whole new look. We're celebrating at a hybrid New Website Reveal party on:

Thursday, September 26th  
5pm–7:30pm EST  
Suffolk University, Boston, Massachusetts  
~ and remotely via Zoom ~

Please visit our completely redesigned website at:

<http://ourbodiesourselves.org>.

And join the remote livestream on our Facebook & Instagram!  
If you'd like an invitation to celebrate with us, just email us at  
[contact@ourbodiesourselfestoday.org](mailto:contact@ourbodiesourselfestoday.org)

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Please share this newsletter with a friend!

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## □ What are you reading? □

Click here to recommend a book to  
us

Do you have book recommendations on the health and sexuality of women and gender-expansive people? We are planning to start a books feature in this newsletter and would love to hear from you about what you are reading! We are interested in fiction as well as non-fiction. Please tell us about your latest favorite books, the ones that you see sparking conversation and deepening understanding of reproductive justice, maternal health, feminist activism, and other OBOS Today related topics.

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*Your accurate and inclusive  
guide to health, sexuality, and  
reproductive justice*



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