CHAPTER FOURTEEN
Gettin’ Your Tubes Tied: Coercive Reproductive Policies

Policies of the electronic age are first controlling and then coercive in the state’s efforts to manipulate Black reproduction. Table 14.1 illustrates the efforts to control Black reproduction as both a labor force and as a reproductive force come in the form of the welfare reform debate. After years of perfecting reproductive technology through testing contraceptives and procedures in poor; Black; and Latina(o) communities, the state implements programming to subsidize long-acting birth control devices. Often, these devices place these women in dire medical situations, as the state provides subsidized implantation; yet charges exorbitant fees for the removal of the device. As a result, a significant percentage of inner city and third world women are left at the mercy of health care providers in state sponsored facilities. This sort of deceptive programming signals the state’s transition from covert methods of controlling Black and other marginalized populations’ reproduction, to efforts to actively coerce Black women into voluntarily sterilizing themselves, either through permanent surgery or through long-acting barrier and chemical sterilization procedures, such as the copper IUD, Norplant, and Depo-Provera.

Grassroots Organizing for Reproductive Freedoms

Unsupported by White women’s liberation movements in the struggles against these violations, Black women are forced to form organizations of their own to help safeguard against sterilization of black women. Though Black and White women’s organizations make efforts to ban

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together politically in the 1970s—their agendas are so disparate that Black women remain leery of White women’s historic reproductive rights struggles:

The failure of the abortion rights campaign to conduct a historical self-evaluation led to a dangerously superficial appraisal of Black people’s suspicious attitudes toward birth control in general. Granted, when some Black people unhesitatingly equated birth control with genocide, it did appear to be an exaggerated—even paranoiac—reaction. Yet white abortion rights activists missed a profound message, for underlying these cries of genocide were important clues about the history of the birth control movement. This movement, for example, had been known to advocate involuntary sterilization—a racist form of mass “birth control.”

### Welfare Reform in the Neoliberal Era

With the media so closely associating Black women with the frightful drug and poverty “epidemics” sweeping the nation, the disdain for Black reproduction reaches astounding new heights in the late 1980s, as illustrated in table 14.2. The climate is ripe for a new approach to welfare reform. This new assessment of an old issue moves beyond identifying Black women as the problem and blaming Black women for their...