



## All Choked Up

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Hearing of Justice Ginsberg's death choked me up in more ways than one.

We had just spent the last ten days in smoke quarantine, unable to go outside because the air quality from nearby wildfires had made the very air, we needed to breathe, toxic.

Even before the smoke invaded, it had become harder and harder to breathe as the poisonous fumes of racism, greed, voter suppression, and a constant stream of misinformation about the pandemic created a toxic mixture that threatened to choke out hope. Freedom. Dignity. Agency.

Earlier in the week, the story broke about the alleged forced sterilization of women in private detention centers. With that story, my heart and hope broke as well. When we fight for reproductive freedom for women, and when we support reproductive justice, we are fighting for the right of people choose to bear children they want to have, and for the ability to be informed about and consent to medical intervention and procedures that affect that right. Reproductive justice is just that: justice for people to make decisions about reproduction in their bodies.

Our history of recognizing and protecting that right for female people in our country is inconsistent at best, and downright unconscionable when it comes to women of color. The fact that the people in power in this country still think politicians should legislate whether or not a woman's body can bear children is archaic, irresponsible, and dehumanizing for us all.

Ruth Bader Ginsberg was a woman who resolutely tread where women had not been allowed before. One of her [first lawsuits](#) involved a black woman who had been involuntarily sterilized as part of a state eugenics program in 1965. Throughout her life, Justice Ginsberg steadfastly lifted up the dignity of women and persistently reflected to her colleagues and our nation the innumerable ways in which male privilege shows up in our laws and practices. She did so with grace

and grit.

To lose her voice now, when the need for reproductive justice for all women is so intensified, is devastating.

So, when the torrential downpour began and continued outside my home throughout Friday evening, it was as though God and the all heavens were grieving with me, lamenting the loss of this good and faithful servant, in addition to everything else we have lost this year.

Lament is an underused practice in this society where we rush people through grief with a few days of bereavement leave and a culture that moves on at the speed of social media. But to move ahead with integrity, lament is a necessary step. We need to name our grief, express it deeply, cry out to God, connect with our brokenness.

Only then can we genuinely appreciate the fading of the downpour, the softening of the sobbing, the receding of the smoke. Only then can we truly embrace the cleansing that has occurred. Only then can we clearly and resolutely gather the legacy of those who have come before us, grab that moral arc with renewed strength and truth, and bend it ever toward justice.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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