



Introduction

Operating from 1969 to 1973 in Chicago, Illinois, the Abortion Counseling Service of Women's Liberation—more commonly known as *The Jane Collective*—was an underground healthcare network that provided illegal abortions to patients with unwanted pregnancies.¹

It is now 2023. Despite the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, Illinois officials have vowed to protect abortion access. As the only state in the region to guarantee this protection, Illinois has become a safe haven for people seeking refuge from the oppressive restrictions in their own state. However, Illinois' already-strained healthcare system lacks the infrastructure and capacity to respond to the influx of patients and administer abortion care.²

Activists from Chicago's South Side know better than to wait for the government to meet the needs of the people. Tamar Mason, founder of [Mothers Against Senseless Killings](#), has launched **The Janes**, a reboot of *The Jane Collective*, to help people obtain care that is rapidly being outlawed. As a member of The Janes, you will support and connect patients to lifesaving resources, while also organizing and mobilizing communities to affect lasting political change. Through action and ongoing conversations with colleagues, you will redefine the role of community care networks in a post-Roe United States, advocating for bodily autonomy as the foundation of freedom.³

State of the World

The current state of the world is one of turmoil and constant upheaval. The crisis in Ukraine has spiraled into a full-scale energy crisis that affects countries around the globe. China and the U.S. continue their soft-power escalation of tensions and climate change continues to bring unprecedented challenges to the international community. Members of the Janes interested in learning more on the broader topics facing the United Nations should refer to their State of the World brief for material related to the overarching themes and conflicts.

Executive Summary

On Friday, June 24, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court, with a conservative majority, determined that the Constitution does not protect the right to choose whether to terminate a pregnancy, overturning the 50-year precedent of *Roe v. Wade*. The decision not only dismantled decades of legal protection, but also paved the way for states to restrict or ban abortion rights. Although Illinois vowed to protect abortion access, five states that share its border are nearing abortion bans or have already enacted them.⁴

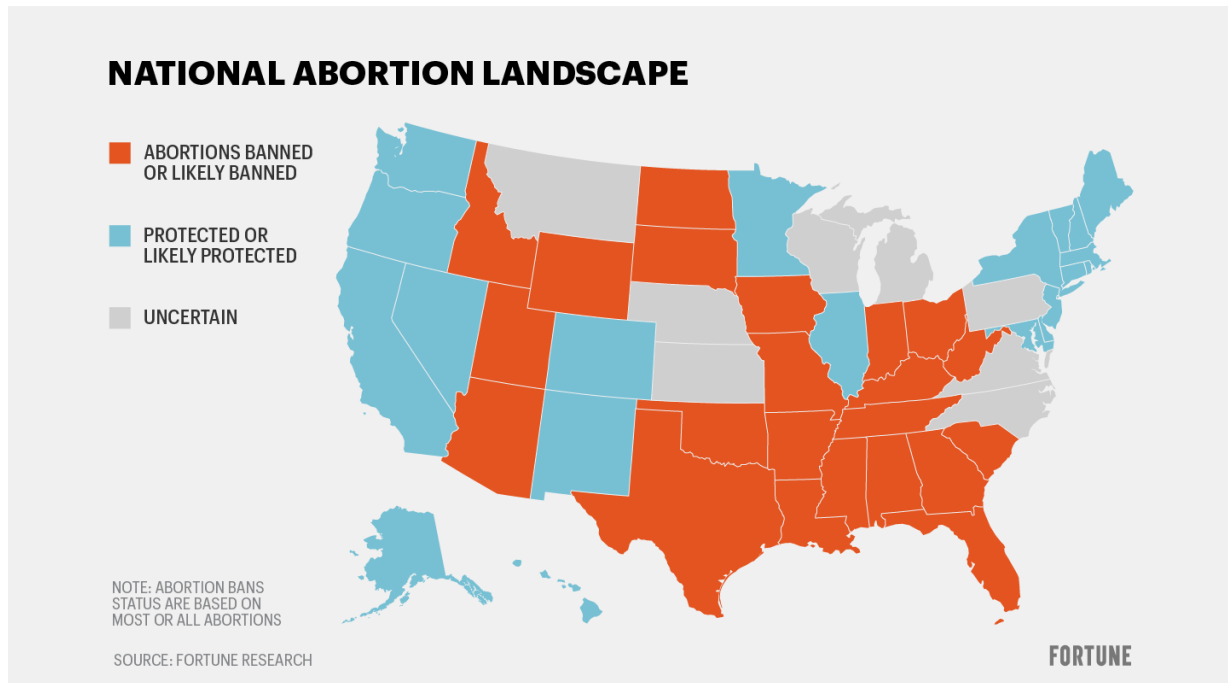
¹ [At a sold-out screening of 'The Janes,' Chicagoans get a history lesson — and marching orders](#)

² [We Are Jane: South Side Activist Revives Jane Collective To Help People Access Safe Abortions — Here's How To Join](#)

³ Ibid.

⁴ [These states have banned abortion. Here's what abortion laws will likely be in every state | Fortune](#)

In response to the rapid outlawing of abortion care, prominent South Side activists Tamar Mason and Kendra Winters are reviving *The Jane Collective* – a Chicago-based underground network that helped thousands of women get abortions prior to the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Mason and Winters, hailing from Englewood, Chicago, partnered with the Chicago Abortion Fund in July 2022 to continue the work of their predecessors. The revived network is now referred to as *The Janes*.⁵



⁵ [At a sold-out screening of 'The Janes,' Chicagoans get a history lesson — and marching orders](#)

Historical Background

The Jane Collective (1969-1973)

Heather Booth laid the foundation for *The Jane Collective*, officially known as the Abortion Counseling Service of Women's Liberation, in 1965 when she agreed to help her friend's sister access a safe abortion. Women with unwanted pregnancies sought Booth's help after learning of her work through word-of-mouth. Soon enough, the workload was more than Booth could manage on her own. After reaching out to other activists in the women's liberation movement, Booth and her colleagues formed the Collective, and began working to provide women with safer and more affordable abortions.⁶

Safety and affordability were top priorities for the Collective, especially in its early years, as the rate of abortions being performed by untrained providers increased. At the start, the Collective directed patients to trusted, male doctors to administer the procedure. This dynamic quickly changed, however, when the group learned that one of their most used doctors lied about his credentials. The incident divided the Collective. Many of its members realized that if a man without medical credentials could perform a safe abortion, then they could learn to do the same. Others, disagreeing with this approach, left the Collective entirely.⁷

Once a few members learned how to safely perform surgical abortions, the Collective provided thousands of them to women who could not afford to travel to places where abortion was legal, and provided them to Black and Brown women as well. It is estimated that members of the group performed nearly 11,000 abortions and prevented countless deaths during this time period.⁸

In 1972, Chicago police raided a member of the Collective's apartments, which resulted in the arrest of seven members. Facing a maximum prison sentence of 110 years, each of the seven members were charged with 11 counts of abortion and conspiracy to commit abortion. However, *Roe v. Wade* struck down abortion restrictions in 1973, and the charges were dropped. The Collective disbanded shortly afterwards, as women now had a federally protected right to safe abortion care.⁹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ [The Jane Collective \(1969–1973\) | The Embryo Project Encyclopedia](#)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Current Situation

In the summer of 2022, Tamar Mason stumbled upon the HBO documentary, “The Janes,” and quickly realized there was still more work to be done. As the founder of *Mothers Against Senseless Killings (MASK)*, a community-based organization dedicated to interrupting violence and crime, and as a Black mother herself, Mason jumped into action.¹⁰ She connected with fellow activist and longtime friend, Kendra Winters, to devise a game plan. Together, Mason and Winters identified the needs of their community, the capacity of local infrastructure, and the concerns arising in areas where abortion is illegal. Mason and Winters then used this information to identify and engage relevant experts who could fill gaps in knowledge and expertise and accomplish different objectives of the work ahead.

Medical professionals, community stakeholders, and activists came together to establish The Janes as the present-day reboot of the 1960s Jane Collective. Although there had been previous attempts to reboot the work, The Janes is taking on the unique role of helping those most at risk, namely Black and Brown women who may not have the tools needed for navigating the post-Roe world. It is also a priority for The Janes to show all individuals how the Supreme Court’s decision affects them.¹¹

One of the key partnerships established by Mason and Winters was with the Chicago Abortion Fund (CAF). For decades, CAF has provided financial, logistical, and emotional support to people seeking abortion care in Chicago, in Illinois, and throughout the Midwest.¹² This partnership is the foundation of The Janes because it allows Mason, Winters, and their colleagues to work with funds and organizations that have been doing this work for decades. Working with established groups means increased access to information, professionals, funding, and resources, which strengthens The Janes’ capabilities and expands their reach. It is important to note, however, that this is a mutually beneficial relationship. CAF cannot operate without the collective power that comes from engaging actors with lived experience. In other words, Mason, Winters, and their colleagues, as local leaders with a deep understanding of how to drive change for and with communities, are essential to transforming our political and social landscapes.

With the support of CAF, The Janes launched their first tactic at the end of 2022. Members traveled to areas where abortion access is restricted, wore “Jane” shirts, and guided those in need to the Abortion Fund and Planned Parenthood. The shirts are a signal to people, in any state, that you are a safe person to talk to about abortion access. This is an example of a standing tactic that continues across the lifespan of The Janes. Members will regularly travel with their shirts and provide guidance for as long as abortion care remains illegal in those areas. Not all tactics are standing, however. For example, an organized march or protest will likely have identified start and end dates.

Heather Booth voiced her support for the revived network shortly after hearing about its work and hopes it can be a resource for people in locations where

¹⁰ [Chicago Pledges \\$500K To Help People Access Abortion](#)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² [Chicago Abortion Fund](#)



accurate information may not be readily available.¹³ Misinformation is a verifiable concern in the world of abortion care. For example, one rumor created widespread chaos in Mississippi. The rumored ban on emergency contraceptives resulted in the suspension of sales at a number of pharmacies and clinics, until state lawmakers finally clarified that Mississippi's ban does not encompass emergency contraceptives.¹⁴ The incident in Mississippi not only reaffirms misinformation's ability to cause serious damage but also demonstrates the ways abortion care restrictions impact individuals and systems across society. The podcast episode, "How Abortion Bans Are Restricting Miscarriage Care," linked in the next section, shares other ways individuals are being impacted.

The Janes are encouraged by recent actions taken by Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who created a \$500,000 fund to support abortion care logistics.¹⁵ Remember, five states sharing a border with Illinois are either nearing abortion bans or have already enacted them, and Illinois is already seeing an influx of patients from these states.¹⁶ This means that funding for logistics is critical to being able to provide care to a growing number of patients. For this reason, The Janes are fiercely advocating for the creation of a logistics fund at the state level, as well as for the legal protection of providers who are brought in from states where abortion is illegal to perform services in Illinois.

Discussion Questions

1. If you had to identify three goals for The Janes to accomplish in 2023, what would they be?
2. Consider your role as a member of The Janes. What experiences, resources, and/or relationships might you be able to leverage in support of your team's goals?
3. What political, social, or financial barriers might you encounter in your work? How can you overcome them?
4. What support do you need from other members of The Janes to overcome these barriers?
5. How will the work of The Janes affect larger systems in the United States? What will you do to influence political and social change?

The Janes: Roles & Organizational Chart

Founder (Tamar Mason) – Aligns all operations with the organization's mission; serves as the "face" of the organization in external affairs; centers health equity in the work carried out; approves/rejects proposed plans; has veto power.

Co-Founder (Kendra Winters) – Aligns all operations with the organization's mission; ensures smooth operations across the organization's workstreams; approves/rejects proposed plans; has veto power.

Director of Communications (Valeria Sanchez) – Works with established funds and organizations to maximize efficiency of the organization (e.g. Chicago Abortion Fund, Planned Parenthood,

¹³ [We Are Jane: South Side Activist Revives Jane Collective To Help People Access Safe Abortions — Here's How To Join](#)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ [These states have banned abortion. Here's what abortion laws will likely be in every state | Fortune](#)

NOW, the National Council of Jewish Women, Chicago North Shore, the American Association of University Women, Naperville and the League of Women Voters Naperville); directly manages communications with organizations in surrounding states that have banned abortion; leads the dissemination of crucial information to communities; transforms the messaging of abortion to “[win over minds & hearts](#).”

Director of Community Outreach (Malika Huggins) – Nurtures and grows the network of underground abortion care in the region; oversees organization and mobilization efforts launched by the Lead Nurse and Lead Activist; leverages community linkages to increase efficiency of care network (e.g., partnership with local home visiting program to further the spread of resources & information).

Medical Advisor (Dr. Theodora Howard) – Consults on medical procedures; provides expertise on best practices; serves as the liaison between the organization and doctors willing to perform procedures (in-state and surrounding state); leads management and acquisition of medical resources; supervises and manages doctors in the organization.

Public Policy Consultant (Sameer Enyia, JD) – Consults on political developments; leads the development and advancement of local and state health care policies; examines the efficacy of existing policies and lay out the groundwork for new programs and legislation to meet the organization’s objectives and goals; serves as the liaison between the organization and elected officials.

Lead Activist (Gabriela Vasquez) – Coordinates all activists and their related activities (e.g., protests, strikes); organizes and mobilizes the community; works with the Director of Communications to “[win over hearts and minds](#).”

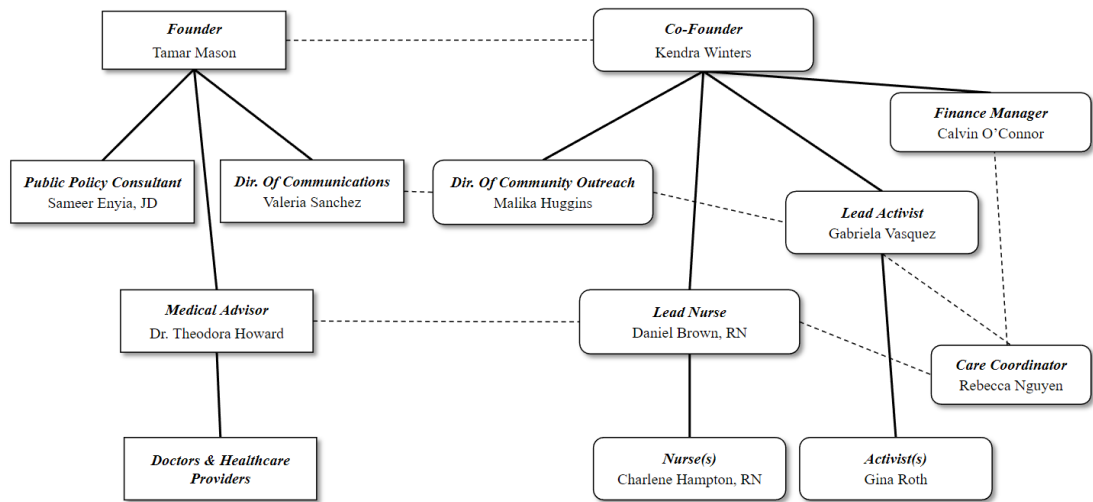
Lead Nurse (Danny Brown, NP) – Coordinates all nurses and their related activities (e.g., house calls, follow-ups, emergency protocol); works with Medical Advisor to ensure nurses are trained and equipped with the proper knowledge and tools; organizes and mobilizes other nurses/community health workers to join the efforts and/or provide support of some form.

Care Coordinator (Rebecca Nguyen) – Coordinates all operations involving patients receiving care (e.g., linking nurse with patient, mitigating barriers to care, such as transportation); manages general operations of organization, especially with the goal of ensuring confidentiality.

Finance Manager (Calvin O’Connor) – Manages finances related to the organization; raises funds and maintains documentation; coordinates financial assistance provided to patients.

Activist (Gina Roth) – Supports protests of all kinds; engages in local and state political activities; organizes and mobilizes the community.

Nurse (Charlene Hampton, RN) – Works directly with patients receiving abortion care; [trains patients and teaches best practices; follows up; organizes and mobilizes previous patients who are now interested in joining the organization](#).



Legend:

- ☐ Overseen by Tamar Mason
- ☐ Overseen by Kendra Winters
- Direct Relationship without Supervisory Role

Appendices

Key Terms¹⁷

Abortion: the deliberate termination of a human pregnancy that most often takes place during the first 28 weeks of pregnancy. The pregnancy can be terminated via emergency contraceptive, like Plan B (an oral pill), or surgery.

Community Care Network: the set of people and places that help you achieve your goals, and care for you during difficult times.

Community Stakeholder: people who affect or can be affected by a business or organization.

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization: a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which the court held that the Constitution of the United States does not protect a right to abortion.

Misinformation: false or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive.

Political System: the type of political organization that can be recognized, observed, or otherwise declared by a state. It defines the process for making official government decisions.

Roe v. Wade: a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which the Court ruled that the Constitution of the United States conferred the right to have an abortion.

Social System: the patterned network of relationships constituting a coherent whole that exist between individuals, groups, and institutions.

Surgical Abortion: a procedure that ends an undesired pregnancy by removing the fetus and placenta from the uterus. Surgical abortion is not the same as miscarriage.

Uterus: the organ in the lower body of a woman or female mammal where offspring are conceived, and in which they develop before birth; also referred to as the womb.

Additional Resources

An interview with incoming Professor of Sociology Tracy Weitz, national expert on abortion care and policy – [Roe v Wade Overturned: What It Means, What's Next | American University, Washington, D.C.](#)

A Post-Roe America, Part 2: The Abortion Providers (Podcast) – [A Post-Roe America, Part 2: The Abortion Providers - The New York Times](#)

Community Care Networks – [Community Care Networks](#)

Effective Advocacy Tactics: Mobilizing and Organizing Others – [Effective Advocacy Tactics: Mobilizing and Organizing Others - Phoenix Zones Initiative](#)

¹⁷ [Merriam-Webster](#)

Gen Z is re-thinking college and career plans in post-Roe America: 'I want to leave the country'— [Gen Z is re-thinking college and career plans in post-Roe America: 'I want to leave the country'](#)

How Abortion Bans Are Restricting Miscarriage Care – (Podcast) [How Abortion Bans Are Restricting Miscarriage Care - The New York Times](#)

Tracking the States Where Abortion Is Now Banned – [Tracking the States Where Abortion Is Now Banned in the U.S. - The New York Times](#)