



US Supreme Court strikes heaviest blow in generations to women's rights

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Finally, they have done it. On June 24, after fifty years of a limited constitutional right to abortion, American women were robbed of that right. Campaigning under the obscene slogan of 'the right to life' and anti-science claims that termination means killing babies, women have been deprived of sovereignty over their own bodies. No wonder women across the continent-sized country, took to the streets to voice their rage and rejection.

By a 5-4 majority, the Supreme Court has set aside the 1973 Roe versus Wade judgment given by its predecessors, which granted all US women the right to end an unwanted pregnancy. This right had already been restricted by other decisions and by states with reactionary majorities in their legislatures and courts but now these same forces will have free rein.

They will doubtless move on to demolish the weaker and more partial gains made by LGBTQI and people of colour on the principle of personal autonomy. This is a major triumph for the religious bigots of all faiths who infest American politics, despite one of the most ancient and progressive constitutional gains, the separation of Church and state.

The bigots' narrow majority on the unelected court was created by Donald Trump, the most brazenly sexist president for many decades, a man who proudly admitted that he had sexually assaulted women many times. He had the impudence to claim that 'God made the decision' and that He was responsible for it. That this obscene clown is not in jail for open incitement to overthrow the Congress' recognition of his duly elected successor, says much about the US claim to be the world's model for democracy.

If the nearly two-thirds of Americans who opposed the repeal of Roe v Wade allow it to stand, it is the lives of real, living female US citizens that will be put at risk. The ruling will not end abortions, it will only end legal and safe abortions. Women will start dying the minute each state implements these disgustingly misnamed 'pro-Life laws'.

States with Republican majorities will now be free to pass laws further restricting or banning abortion outright. Already, 13 have passed trigger laws that allow them to do so virtually immediately. Indeed, several, including Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma and South Dakota have already done so and a further 22 will in short order. Women in these states will have to try to go to states with more liberal laws, although the reactionary states are preparing laws to heavily penalise even this.

Abortion will be made illegal across most of the South and Midwest where the poorest, often women of colour, will find it difficult to travel to a state where it remains legal. Many states are imposing laws to criminalise the women themselves. More than half, 58 percent, of all US women of reproductive age, some 40 million people, live in these states and their partners, and even taxi drivers who aid them, will also be liable to huge fines. Illegalisation is threatened against the so-called 'night after' pill and even contraception is being threatened by the pro-lifers.

Clearly, these forces of the right are seeking to imprison women in their reproductive and nurturing abilities. They realise that lack of control over these by women themselves is the bedrock for preserving a patriarchal society and indeed turning the clock back to its most archaic versions. Religions sense instinctively that the suffering of women under this system promotes resort to their spiritual opium and boosts votes for the right.

For all these reasons, a woman's right to bodily autonomy is a human right, historically linked to the same principle that underpinned the abolition of slavery, personal freedom. No wonder then that the states preparing to re-enslave women in this way are often the ones where white supremacy and cop killings of black people are still rampant

For the same reason, the fight to overturn this ruling should draw in the support of all the oppressed and exploited in the USA, a majority not at all reflected in the Supreme Court and distorted out of all recognition in the Senate, the House and the constitutions of the states, where voter suppression is rampant.

Internationally, the women's and labour movements, and all progressives, need to mobilise in support of our US sisters. The recent movements in Poland, Ireland and Argentina show what can be done. The same reactionary forces exist across the world and will be encouraged by their equivalents' victories in the USA.

The message from Vice President Kamala Harris sums up the Democrats' answer: "this is not over; voters will have the final say". With her eye on the mid-terms, which are predicted to strengthen Republican control of the Senate and even give them control of the House, her message was "You have the power to elect leaders who will defend and protect your rights."

No! US women need to reply, "We have a far greater power than that. We can overturn this arch reactionary ruling and re-establish our rights on the streets and in the workplaces, defending clinics and their patients, nurses and doctors by mass direct action."

A mass movement of women and their male and trans supporters against the June 24 SCOTUS ruling needs to break out on a scale similar to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. It should extend to the demand for a revolution that will sweep away all the reactionary bodies and laws which disfigure the claim of the US to be a democratic republic.

It is the US working class that needs to give a lead to this struggle, backing up mass demonstrations with mass strike action, especially in the states applying this vile decision -states which often also have draconian anti-union laws.

There is more to this than just "safety in numbers". There is the strength to overturn all the pillars of the house of unfreedom, built by Republicans and Democrats alike, as they restricted and reversed the real gains of the American Revolution; the Abolition of Slavery, the Great Unionisation of the 1930s, the Civil Rights gains of the 1960s and the women's and LGBTQI gains of the 1970s. But nothing will be permanent or secure until the class and the system that gives birth to these monsters, sexist and racist capitalism, is finally hurled into the abyss.

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