

ORWAC Statement on the SCOTUS' Decision Overturning Roe v. Wade

Friday, June 24, 2022, Roe v. Wade was officially overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, removing the constitutional right to abortion in the United States. We are stunned, outraged, and depressed at this decision, as it will have horrifying consequences on the lives of ciswomen, transmen, nonbinary people, and other folks with uteruses in this country, not to mention their children and anyone in intimate relations with them. Many people fought long and hard to instantiate this right, and still many more to maintain it. It is now up to us to make sure that this labor was not in vain.

At the same time, we recognize that the right to an abortion has never been unilateral. Many women and folks with uteruses in rural areas, who are poor, trans, disabled, undocumented and/or BIPOC have been structurally denied access to abortion services. In historical context, U.S. American politics have long worked to contain and control reproduction in service of empire, particularly through the forced sterilization of Black, Indigenous, immigrant, disabled, and imprisoned people with uteruses. This is not to undermine the significance of Roe v. Wade being overturned. This decision will have terrifying consequences for everyone able to conceive a child in this country—and beyond, as questioning the *right to privacy* has far-reaching legal implications. What this context demonstrates is that our fight against this decision cannot be narrow, or single-mindedly focused on reproductive rights for a few. We must struggle together and toward a broad vision of reproductive justice, one that demands liberation for all.

We can draw wisdom from past struggles. The over 100 pieces published in *Women's Studies in Communication* analyzing, discussing, or referring to abortion rights and debates provide a number of places to start:

- Historical attempts to control childbearing bodies have always been connected to racial and colonial structures. As Stormer (2001) describes, previous attempts to criminalize abortion were bolstered by logics aimed at “revitaliz[ing] the white race” (p. 1). What we see now is no different, and must be fought comprehensively.
- There is a political power in repetition. Stone Watt (2020) demonstrates how repetition has been utilized by opponents of abortion rights, but it can also be a tool in the fight against the repression of these rights.
- Arguments against abortion depend on decontextualization (Haaland, 1989). Our struggle must be embodied, bringing feelings and physicality to the forefront to combat the erasure of pregnant people’s lived experiences.
- Arguments for fetal personhood depend on “the rhetoric of individualism” (Stormer, 2011, p. 21). By advocating with alternative logics we may open other pathways for understanding personhood (Zurakowski, 1994; Railsback, 1982), since “what abortion and what the continuation of life mean is intimately tied to corporeal and experiential memory” (Stormer, 2001, p. 21).

We remember our histories, and learn from them in our present struggles to create and enable better futures.

In the spirit of radically liberatory futures for all, we:

CALL TO COALITION

Now, more than ever, we must work in political intersectional coalition to combat reproductive injustice in all its varied forms, and to support the rights of all to live unencumbered by systemic violence. Justice Thomas has made it clear that this decision is paving a path to undermine other constitutional rights, such as those to contraception, same-sex marriage, and even same-sex relationships. We cannot afford to respond with a narrow movement for female rights. We must work together to combat *all* of these challenges in the wake of Roe's overturning. To fight back against these threats to our rights, *all of our rights*, requires banding together in political intersectional coalition. For none of us are free until we all are.

CALL TO IMAGINATION

In order to struggle for a better future, we must be able to imagine it. Perhaps for some, the memes and references to dystopic reproductive futures can help to animate resistance, but for others it just makes us overwhelmed and tired, laden with despair that makes resistance seem futile. When we are drowning in ugly and unjust visions of the future it can make them seem inevitable. We must be able to imagine outside the confines of the futures we've been handed, beyond the systems and discourses that currently constrain us, and toward radical liberatory justice: the kind of liberation that insists on its own possibilities. Little by little, by fleshing out the impossible, we can make it real. We need that kind of imagination right now to fight, even when everything in the world says that we have no future. If we can first imagine it, we can collaborate in taking action.

CALL TO HOPE

Importantly, we must maintain hope. Not as a naive desire for things to get better, but in the sense used by Sara Ahmed (2017) in *Living a Feminist Life*:

Hope is not at the expense of struggle but animates a struggle; hope gives us a sense that there is a point to working things out, working things through. Hope does not only or always point toward the future, but carries us through when the terrain is difficult, when the path we follow makes it harder to proceed. Hope is behind us when we have to work for something to be possible. (p. 2)

We hope that you will join all of us at ORWAC in maintaining hope, working to imagine futures where we all can live unconstrained by violent structures, and laboring to make them real, together.

Signed,

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