

The attack on abortion rights is an attack on all working people

On May 2nd, a draft opinion written by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito was leaked. It revealed the thinking of at least a part of the Court majority: that *Roe v Wade* was “egregiously wrong from the start”, and suggested that rights that are not explicitly spelled out in the constitution aren't protected.

Alito's draft presents a false history of a supposed “unbroken tradition of prohibiting abortion on pain of criminal punishment persist[ing] from the earliest days of the common law until 1973”. The draft talks as though today, it is nothing to carry a pregnancy to term, and if the child isn't wanted, to give it up for adoption. It talks as though everybody has medical insurance and maternity leave, which when it does exist is almost always unpaid. Most working people and poor don't have these, and couldn't afford to stop working for any extended time anyway. It also talks as though it's no big deal to live 9 months with an unwanted pregnancy, and then drop a newborn baby off anonymously or put it up for adoption. It even notes grotesquely that there's a “domestic shortage in supply of [newborn white] infants” for adoption, as if the issue is a “supply chain problem” with women as a baby-factory assembly line.

Women need the freedom to choose if and when they start a family, to make sure their economic and relationship life is okay, that they're ready and want to have a child. And for working-class and poor women, this is all the more important because there's often no cushion or family safety net to fall back on.

Reproductive rights were won by protracted mass struggle

Roe was decided by a majority Republican-appointed Court. The context was 1973 and the women's liberation movement was at a high point. It was strengthened by ties to the other major

movements of the period: struggles for workers rights, civil rights, gay rights, the anti-Vietnam War struggle, the environmental struggle. It was also strengthened by the recognition that working-class and poor women suffer the most from restrictions on rights to abortion and contraception. In every realm, including these basic reproductive rights, the working class made progress due to its fighting spirit.

The right-wing has prioritized an assault on all reproductive rights

Since then the left-wing movement has died down, providing the opening for the ruling class to step up their attacks on all the gains we made. The religious right-wing has been leading the charge against all reproductive rights – sex education, contraception, abortion – and their main rallying cry has been overturning *Roe v Wade*. Every Republican President since Reagan has made overturning *Roe* a litmus test for Supreme Court nominees, and the GOP even made up rules to allow themselves to block a vote on Obama's nominee, Merrick Garland, giving Trump the opportunity to put abortion foe Neil Gorsuch on the bench.

And they've been eroding abortion rights wherever they can at the state level, passing onerous laws, imposing waiting periods and subjecting women to lying “counseling” about the supposed psychological risks of abortion, and shutting down clinics to force women to travel long distances. It's estimated that half of all states are certain or likely to ban abortion if/when *Roe* is overturned (1).

The right-wing also pens tortured “think” pieces on whether it is moral for women to have abortions in cases of rape, incest, fetal deformities, or when the mother's health is endangered. They usually

conclude just what they set out to prove: that abortion is never justified. Such disgusting arrogance! Who are they to claim the right stick their noses into women's private business like this?! They even pretend they're going to support poor women with pre- and post-natal funding and other programs. Right, they're suddenly going to stop their long history of cutting any and all social programs they can get their hands on.

The Democrats make abortion rights a low priority

In the face of this onslaught by the right, what has the Democratic Party done? They've appeased and sought compromise with the Republicans. They repeatedly promised a national law codifying the right to an abortion, but never fought for it; declaring it “not a priority” and more important to “focus on those areas that we can agree on” (Obama), tossing protecting abortion rights into the corner. The Democrats love to pose as friend of the working class, but when a right that most affects working women is on the table they're complacent – the ruling class can always fly their daughters and wives off somewhere to get safe and skilled abortion services, so it's “not a priority”.

It's up to the masses to fight back

It is working class and poor women who benefit most from having control over their reproductive lives, including through science-based sex education, access to contraception, and the right to abortion on demand and without having to justify it to anyone or pass any barriers – just like any other medical procedure. It is working women, and the working

class as a whole, who must fight vigorously and militantly for these rights.

There have already been angry, militant protests across the country, and protesters have demonstrated outside the six right-wing justices homes. Now there is a national day of protest called for May 14.

This motion must continue. Regardless of what happens to Roe v Wade, the reactionary anti-abortion laws that many states have enacted need to be abolished. And the right-wingers will continue to push for more reactionary laws, which need to be fought. And it looks likely that the Supreme Court will strike down Roe, which means that abortions will immediately be banned in multiple states, and the anti-abortion fanatics will continue to work to increase that number. They also want to pass laws that ban getting abortion pills through the mail, ban traveling from no-abortion states to seek an abortion where they are legal, and after Roe, they're planning to pass a federal law banning abortion across the nation. And they have always had their sights set on contraception and sex education, too – including education about safe sex practices for people of all sexual orientations – so our fight must be toward protecting these rights as well.

Thus, the present movement must continue and be further organized.

(1) <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2021/10/26-states-are-certain-or-likely-ban-abortion-without-roe-heres-which-ones-and-why> ◇

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