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Mississippi Anti-Abortion Law (United States) - Emergency: Defend Our Rights!

Thursday 9 December 2021, by [FEELEY Dianne](#) (Date first published: 1 December 2021).

This is an edited version of the speech I gave on December 1st, at the Lansing rally in the Rotunda of the State Capitol. It was held at the same time as the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the Mississippi anti-abortion law. Three dozen activists later went to the chambers of the House of Representatives while they were in session and read, in unison, a statement calling for the repeal of the 1931 Michigan anti-abortion law, which would go into effect if Roe v. Wade was overturned. We left the chambers chanting “Repeal 328.”



Several demonstrations were held in cities around the country in defense of reproductive justice, which is under severe attack. Chicago demonstration, Linda Loew

MY FIRST DEMONSTRATION in support of reproductive rights was in 1968, when I marched with others in support of “Free Abortion on Demand.” That was what the women’s movement at that time called for, a demand that has never been implemented.

Next May or June, when the U.S. Supreme Court decides the Mississippi anti-abortion case, they will either place more restrictions on reproductive rights — or overthrow the already flawed Roe v. Wade. If you count them up, the stacked reactionary majority of the Supreme Court justices oppose abortion, while the majority of Americans support abortion under many circumstances.

What do greater restrictions mean? It means it becomes harder and more expensive to end a pregnancy. The greater the distance, the harder it is. This means that institutions — whether hospitals or police and courts — have the right to judge one’s personal medical decisions.

It also creates an environment where women who miscarry are in danger of being hauled into court and prosecuted for murder, manslaughter or child abuse. This is particularly true if they are poor or a person of color.

Pregnant individuals have been arrested for falling down stairs, drinking alcohol, being in a “dangerous” location, having a stillbirth, being drug dependent, having HIV. Over the last 15 years, as more state restrictions have passed, about 85 women each year are arrested, prosecuted and convicted. (See the National Advocates for Pregnant Women’s website)

* In January 2020 Brittany Poolaw, aged 19, had a miscarriage when she was 21 weeks pregnant. She was charged with first-degree manslaughter. Unable to pay the \$20,000 bond, she was imprisoned more than 18 months before her trial in October 2021 when a jury convicted her after three hours of deliberation. A member of the Comanche Nation, she was sentenced to four years. (Oklahoma)

* In 2018, Adora Perez delivered a stillborn baby; the DA claimed this was caused by drug use. She is serving an 11-year sentence for manslaughter. (California)

If Roe v. Wade is overturned, most Southern and Midwestern states either have trigger laws or pre-1973 anti-abortion laws that would ban abortion. Even in the case of a “medical exception,” as is written into the Texas SB8’s case, it creates a chilling environment where hospitals and doctors are afraid to they will be sued.

Since the Texas law went into effect September 1st, a woman with an ectopic pregnancy from a rural part of South Texas was turned away by both her doctor and the hospital. Had the fertilized egg caused her fallopian tube to burst, she could have died. Fortunately, she was able to drive 12 hours to a hospital in New Mexico — but that kind of delay can cost one’s life.

Some laws only allow intervention after the malformed fetus has no heartbeat. By then the woman may die from septic shock or organ failure. In Ireland, Savita Halappanavar (31), a dentist from India, had a miscarriage in her 17th week but spent days in the hospital waiting for the non-viable fetus to die.

By then her own life couldn’t be saved. In October 2021 a Polish woman Izabela (30), 22 weeks pregnant, died. In both cases people marched in the street and demanded change. In fact, Ireland changed their law after the massive outrage triggered by Savita’s death.

The only way we can have control over our own reproductive lives is to stand together. No restrictive abortion laws, scientific sex education, opposition to forced sterilization; an end to high maternal and infant mortality, health care for all, and the right to bring children into a healthy and safe environment. Nothing less is acceptable.

Dianne Feeley

P.S.

• Against the Current:
<https://againstthecurrent.org/emergency-defend-our-rights/>