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# **United States: Against the Supreme Court tens of thousands in the streets on May 14 in defense of abortion rights**

Wednesday 25 May 2022, by [SHEPPARD Barry](#) (Date first published: 24 May 2022).

**Tens of thousands marched and rallied on May 14 in defense of abortion rights in some 400 cities and towns across the U.S. in face of the “leaked” draft opinion by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito overturning the Court’s 1973 decision in *Roe vs Wade* legalizing abortion.**

The largest action was in Washington, D.C., of some 20,000.

It is likely that the Court’s anti-abortion reactionary majority will overturn *Roe* either explicitly or in fact when it rules on the issue next month.

The demonstrations were called on short notice by Womens March and supported by other abortion rights groups, including Planned Parenthood and Black women organizations, and kicked off a “Summer of Rage” that will lead up to the 2022 Women’s Conference August 12-14 in Houston, Texas.

Executive Director of Womens March Rachel O’Leary Carmona said, “We have to see an end to the attacks on our bodies. You can expect for women to be completely ungovernable until this government starts to work for us.”

The theme of the demonstrators was women’s right to control their own bodies, “Bans Off Our Bodies”, often expressed in colorful ways on the signs they carried.

Another sign carried by many was “I Had An Abortion”, an expression of the mood of defiance and readiness to fight.

The implications for the rights of LGBTQ people were also expressed. The New York Times article on the demonstrations said, “For some, protesting the draft opinion was not just about protecting the right to abortion.

“Lillian Penafiel, 35, and her wife, Emi Penafiel, worried what the Court’s ruling could mean for marriage equality, LGBTQ rights and [Black] voting rights.

“ ‘They’ve been very clear, especially what was written up, that our rights are going to be threatened as well, too, so that’s why we’re nervous,’ said Emi Penafiel. ‘They’re coming after all of it.’ “

The overthrow of *Roe* would leave it up to the states to pass their own laws on abortion rights. Twenty six states under the far right Republicans will be ready to outlaw all abortions.

However, the Court has already made decisions upholding state laws passed by Republicans and some Democrats restricting abortions so severely they are virtually outlawed, so the result of states passing their own laws is guaranteed.

It is likely that will mean that only those Democratic controlled states on or near the west coast or the northeast, with a few in the midwest, will allow most abortions. Women in states where abortions will be either outlawed who seek abortions will have to travel to those states, often hundreds of miles.

Working class women, especially those who have lower incomes, will find that difficult. Also, many will not be able to take off work to do so.

Most Black and Latino women would be hardest hit.

The *Times* reported that in New York City, the demonstration began in Brooklyn, before marching across the Brooklyn Bridge to a U.S. courthouse in lower Manhattan. At the gathering point, "Volunteers offered d snacks and signs with phrases like 'Stand With Black Women'."

Part of Democracy Now's report on the demonstrations host Amy Goodman played of video of one of the speakers at the Washington, D.C. rally, Monica Simpson, the African American executive director of SisterSong, who said, "We need you to get in this fight with us. We need you in every action. We need you in every state, in every place and everywhere in ensure that we have the reproductive justice we deserve.

"I know it's a hard fight, y'all. I know we've got the long haul to go, but if we stay connected, if we stay together, then I believe we will win!"

Goodman said, "This comes as frustration with President Biden and the Democratic Party is growing. As the party controls the House and Senate but has failed to put forward a plan to preserve federal abortion rights even if the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*." Referring to the hasty and too late attempt by the Democrats to introduce a face-saving bill, they knew would fail, for a federal law to defend abortion rights after the Alito draft was made public, Goodman said:

"Last week, Democratic Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia joined with Senate Republicans blocking the effort."

Even if it passed, the Supreme Court would declare it unconstitutional.

Goodman continued, "Meanwhile, [Democratic] House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other top Democrats support a conservative anti-abortion Democrat in Texas, Henry Cuellar, despite his long-standing opposition to reproductive rights." He is running against a progressive in the Democratic primary on May 24.

Goodman then introduced Renee Bracey Sherman, the Black founder and executive director of the activist organization We Testify, which is dedicated to the leadership and representation of women who have had abortions.

Goodman noted that she was wearing a T-shirt that says "I have had an abortion."

Sherman said, "I had an abortion when I was 19. It was one of the best decisions of my life. I was in a relationship that was toxic and unsafe, and I simply did not want to be pregnant, and I didn't want to parent at that time. I knew I could have an abortion [under *Roe* at the time] ....

“But I felt the stigma and the shame, particularly as a biracial Black women who had an abortion ... and didn’t see people talking about abortion access and the intersection of racism, anti-Blackness and lack of abortion access and how, for Black folks, we’re damned if we do and damned if we don’t.

“The same people who shame us for having abortions are the same people who shame us if we are single Black parents....”

Sherman is a writer. A recent article in Time magazine she wrote was titled “Voting Won’t Save Abortion Rights.”

Goodman said, “Renee, you’ve been very critical of the Democratic Party .... Why?”

Sherman replied, “I’ve learned over the last couple of years the worse thing a progressive or radical is ask Democrats to do their jobs ....

“I have been an abortion activist for well over a decade, and I’ve seen a lot of broken promises to people trying to get abortions. During the Obama years, when we saw all of the restrictions being enacted across the states, we asked if there was action that could be taken.

“And there were several times in which the administration said that abortion access wasn’t the front issue. In fact, policies that were racist and discriminatory, like the Hyde Amendment [which Congress has included in in annual spending bills since 1976, and which prohibits federal funds from covering abortion services for people enrolled in Medicaid, Medicare and Children’s Health Insurance programs], which doesn’t allow Medicaid to cover abortion care, was not repealed.”

In another excerpt from the interview, Sherman said:

“Every time you see Black people getting free, Black liberation, after the civil rights movement, after right now Black Lives Matter, you will see a lot of anti-abortion restrictions, because white people are afraid of the political power that Black people are able to get, and people of color everywhere, and immigrants, undocumented folks, queer folks, all of us.

“They are afraid of us challenging the status quo and being able to decide if, when and how to have our families. So all of this goes hands in hand.”

Both parties have worked to roll back the gains won in the radicalization of the “Sixties”. Now the Republicans are spearheading that drive. Having become the party of open extreme reactionaries, they are attacking women’s rights including abortion, Black rights including the right to vote, LGBTQ rights, etc.

A new front is climate change, an existential threat to humanity.

The establishment Democrats have not mobilized their voters against these reactionary attacks. More and more people are becoming aware of this fact, which reflects the whole ruling capitalist class’s move to the right. The Republican spearhead allows the Democrats to look more moderate by comparison but in fact are part of the overall reaction against the “Sixties”.

In the U.S. there is no mass party of the working class and the oppressed, even a reformist one, to challenge the Republicans and Democrats. The only way forward is to support all examples of resistance, which can lay the basis to begin to form such a party, to eventually a mass revolutionary movement to challenge capitalist rule.

**Barry Sheppard**

