

50.50: OPINION

Why the anti-trans movement is inseparable from the anti-abortion movement

Thursday 22 February 2024, by [STROOP Chrissy](#) (Date first published: 22 February 2024).

The transphobes who put a target on the back of Nex Benedict, who was beaten to death, are a threat to everyone

In the [United States](#), as in the [United Kingdom](#), there are some self-identified liberals and leftists who insist on pitting cisgender women's rights against trans rights, baselessly arguing that draconian discrimination against transgender people is necessary to "protect women and girls".

As a transgender American woman, the willingness of such people to partner with right-wingers to put a target on my back is bewildering and painful. The fact is, after all, that trans people suffer violence [disproportionately](#). Just this month, in fact, a non-binary, Native American teenager, Nex Benedict, was [beaten to death](#) by other students in a school bathroom in Oklahoma, and the school administration didn't even call an ambulance to try to save them.

So-called 'trans-exclusionary radical feminists' (or 'TERFs') may not care that they have innocent blood on their hands, so long as the blood spilled belongs to people on the trans spectrum, though such thinking is of course both cruel and shortsighted.

But it's hard to understand why the cis women who oppose transgender equality seem unconcerned that the moral panic they've decided to fuel is sweeping away their own rights in the same American states that are most viciously persecuting trans people. (These people, it should be said, represent a [small but loud minority](#) in the UK, and a [larger minority](#) in America, concentrated heavily on the political right.) If the Republicans - the ones who fund their precious anti-trans crusades - take control of the entire federal government in the 2024 elections, (cis) women's rights, and those of gay men and lesbians, will be on the chopping block nationwide along with trans rights. And it seems increasingly clear that the rights in jeopardy include not only access to abortion, which Republican women largely oppose, but to [contraception](#) and [fertility care](#) as well.

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Oklahoma is a case in point. A state with both a particularly harsh [abortion ban](#) and a gender-affirming [care ban](#) for trans youth, [Oklahoma](#) is a member of the dubious club of right-wing American states that have prosecuted women for having miscarriages. The fact that the targeted women are Black and brown also underscores the fundamentally racist and imperialist attitudes behind the right-wing drive to police the bodies of the vulnerable and the marginalised. As feminist writer Rebecca Solnit put it, “it’s no coincidence the American right is obsessed with border walls and with airtight gender definitions and racial discrimination to keep others in their places”.

What’s more, Oklahoma Republicans are currently attempting to create an [official state database](#) of residents who undergo abortions for any reason, even though the procedure is banned there unless the life or health of the mother is at risk. And that exemption only exists, for now, [because of an intervention by the courts](#), which did not reinstate exceptions for rape and incest.

Should Oklahoma’s abortion registry bill pass – a bill with the [fingerprints](#) of the powerful hate lobby [Alliance Defending Freedom \(ADF\)](#) all over it – the potential for that database to be used punitively and violently against cisgender women and transmasculine folks is certainly on par with the potential harm that could come of [Florida’s efforts](#) to forcibly out all trans residents in state documents, which would effectively give the state a database of trans people.

The parallels between legislative attacks on reproductive justice and legislative attacks on transgender rights abound. In both cases, Republican-controlled states have decided to interpose themselves between patients and doctors in personal matters, violating patient privacy and disregarding well established medical best practices in favour of their authoritarian Christian ideology. And just as the well-funded, coercive, and deceptive so-called [crisis pregnancy centres](#) use disinformation to scare vulnerable women away from choosing abortion, the state of Florida [now requires](#) the very small percentage of transgender adults who are still able to get gender-affirming care in the state to sign disinformation-riddled consent forms.

The adoption of the same tactics states used under Roe v Wade to restrict abortion access as a means of restricting gender-affirming care for trans Americans today is not a coincidence, and the ties between anti-trans and anti-abortion initiatives run deeper than parallels. The fact is that they are pursued, lobbied for, and funded largely by the same people – not least the notorious ADF, a Southern Poverty Law Center-designated [hate group](#) that lobbies and litigates against [gay](#), trans, and [abortion rights](#).

It seems unlikely that those who need to hear this message will deign to listen, but any gay male, lesbian, or cis female American who engages in anti-trans rhetoric and supports anti-trans laws is also aiding and abetting the right in assaulting their own rights and effectively placing targets on their own backs. I can’t think of a more apt illustration of the old saying about cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face.

Transgender rights do not harm cisgender women and girls. But the moral panic that’s currently raging on the rabid right in both the US and UK harms all of us. Authoritarian movements don’t stop on their own: they must be stopped. If we can’t find the solidarity to work together to that end, we will all perish eventually.

Chrissy Stroop, 17 février 2024

P.S.

- openDemocracy. 22 February 2024, 1.56pm:

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