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The far-right vs. women's rights

The US Supreme Court's imminent attack on woman's right to an abortion is underwritten by a reactionary, sexist, and racist far-right movement

On 2 May 2022, Americans learned that the US Supreme Court is poised to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that has safeguarded an American woman's right to an abortion for more than forty years. The magazine Politico published a leaked draft of a majority opinion written by conservative Justice Sam Alito, which would unequivocally strike down *Roe v. Wade*.

For now, this is merely a draft and carries no legal force. Whatever the final form of the opinion, it will not take legal effect until it is published, probably sometime in June. Both the legal arguments and the final vote could change during the pre-publication period. Some observers speculate that the document was leaked to lock the conservative judges into their radical position, while others believe it was leaked to pressure them to soften it. However, neither the motive for the leak nor the identity of the leaker is currently known.

The news came as a shock because the conservative majority on the Supreme Court has held off striking down *Roe v. Wade* in full because it is such a politically unpopular decision: 59 per cent of Americans believe that abortion should be legal in most, if not all cases. Only 28 per cent say they want to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned.

Abortion and contraception rights

The stakes are extremely high. If this draft were published in its current form it would result in abortion becoming illegal in at least 26 states. These states either still have their pre-Roe abortion bans on the books, or they have so-called 'trigger laws' that immediately ban abortion once *Roe v. Wade* is overruled. Abortion will remain legal in states without such laws, but those states would have the option of passing new laws to ban abortion. The fall of *Roe v. Wade* also raises the possibility of a future federal ban on abortion.

The fate of abortion is inextricably linked to that other great emancipator of women, contraception.

As the late liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg observed, the abortion issue is a referendum on women's full participation in society. The option of a safe, legal abortion has given women freedom to plan their lives and their families. Thanks to reproductive choice, women can pursue long-term educational and professional goals without fear that an unplanned pregnancy will derail them. Abortion enables women to be economically independent. They're not forced to marry the first man who gets them pregnant, or stay in an abusive relationship because their abuser got them pregnant.

The fate of abortion is inextricably linked to that other great emancipator of women, contraception. Alito's opinion is explicit that there is no constitutional protection for abortion at any stage of pregnancy. Anti-abortion activists have spent years falsely claiming that birth control pills and emergency contraception cause abortions. If courts accept these false claims, these forms of birth control could be outlawed as tools of abortion. That's not even considering whether Alito's reasoning will facilitate a challenge to the general constitutional right to contraception.

The far right's sexism

Since the draft leaked, women from all walks of life have shared stories of how abortions saved everything from their lives to their careers.

'I was just elected and I was faced with the decision whether to have an abortion or not. And I chose to have an abortion. I walked proudly into Planned Parenthood,' New York Attorney General Tish James recalled at a pro-choice rally the day after the leak. 'And I make no apologies to anyone. To no one.'

Statistics show that the average US abortion patient already has children.

Far-right congressman Matt Gaetz revealed more than he intended about the right's real motives for banning abortion when he insinuated the thousands of woman protesting for abortion rights were 'over-educated, under-loved' and 'lonely' with no matches on their internet dating profiles. Setting aside the absurdity that women are demanding abortion rights because they never have sex, Gaetz's sneer cuts to the heart of why conservatives hate

abortion rights.

Gaetz is denigrating everything abortion makes possible in women's lives. These women got to be 'over-educated' in his sexist estimation because they weren't trapped in an early marriage by an unplanned pregnancy. 'Under-loved' and 'lonely' represent his speculation that abortion equals childlessness. Although, in fact statistics show that the average US abortion patient already has children. But this conflict isn't about facts, it's about conflicting ideals of society.

Restoring the male-headed nuclear family

Voters whose number one priority is banning abortion are sometimes called 'single-issue voters,' but this is a misnomer. Abortion is currently the overriding issue on which they vote, but it is not a single issue for them, it's just their highest priority within a much larger agenda. They yearn for a return to a conservative social structure in which everyone gets married young and forms a male-headed nuclear family.

If they get their way on abortion, these socially conservative voters will simply move down the list to the next thing they want.

Outright racism also plays a role in opposition to abortion rights in some corners of the right. A popular right-wing conspiracy theory known as the Great Replacement warns that US-born Americans are being replaced by non-white immigrants. Banning abortion is one way to keep US birthrates up. Last year, Matt Gaetz defended the most popular right-wing talk show host in the United States for espousing the Great Replacement. The abortion debate is also a referendum on whether the United States will continue to be a secular state, as guaranteed by our Constitution. Abortion opponents are making explicitly Christian arguments for banning abortion.

If they get their way on abortion, these socially conservative voters will simply move down the list to the next thing they want. US social conservatives are always telling us that the family is the 'basic building block of civilization,' but not just any kind of family. They believe that every family should be a large heterosexual family with the man in charge. They want couples to get married young and have a lot of children. That's a fine personal goal, if that's a way of life that you find appealing, but the social conservatives want the state to force as many people into

this model as possible.



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