

# Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez blames men and not fascist Republicans for the Texas abortion ban, covering for Democrats' inaction

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On Tuesday, New York congresswoman and Democratic Socialist of America (DSA) member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez appeared on CNN's program "AC360" with Anderson Cooper. One of the topics of discussion was the recent ban on abortions in Texas, which the Supreme Court allowed to go into effect September 1.

The new Texas state law imposes the so-called "fetal heartbeat" rule, which effectively prohibits abortion after about six weeks of pregnancy—before most women even know they have become pregnant. The law also authorizes any individual to file a lawsuit against anyone who "aids or abets" an abortion, with the promise of a \$10,000 reward if the lawsuit is upheld.

The ban is a savage attack on democratic rights that openly defies the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision by the US Supreme Court that a woman's choice to have an abortion was constitutionally protected.

During the CNN program on Tuesday, Cooper asked Ocasio-Cortez to respond to recent comments by Republican Governor Greg Abbott. In the clip played by Cooper, Abbott promised to "eliminate all rapists from the state of Texas" so that no woman would need to have an abortion due to a rape.

Asked about her reaction, Ocasio-Cortez said she found the governor's remarks "disgusting" and that she was sorry she needed to "break down biology 101 on national television." Ocasio-Cortez pointed out that "six weeks pregnant ... for any person with a menstrual cycle" meant being "two weeks' late." So, she added, "you don't have six weeks."

The congresswoman spent the remaining portion of the segment obscuring or burying the central political issue involved in the abortion ban and generally adapting herself to the needs of the Democratic Party establishment.

Ocasio-Cortez focused her remarks on painting the issue exclusively in gender terms, blaming "cisgender men" for the assault on abortion rights. The congresswoman made approving reference to the #MeToo movement and

concentrated the discussion on "rape culture and misogynistic culture."

"What this is about" she noted, "is controlling women's bodies ... This is about making sure that someone like me as a woman or any menstruating person cannot make decisions over their own body."

The congresswoman argued that "sexual assault is about the abuse of power and sexual assault is about asserting control over another person. And the ease with which these men seek to do that to other people is atrocious. It is morally reprehensible, and they cannot even begin to understand the agonizing decisions that people have to make including in cases of miscarriage, rape and incest."

A number of points should be made about Ocasio-Cortez's remarks.

First, the most significant aspect of Ocasio-Cortez's appearance is the series of political issues she managed to avoid. Nowhere in the segment did the congresswoman refer to *Roe v. Wade*. Nothing was said about the reactionary role of the Supreme Court in denying an injunction against the Texas ban and the political implications of this unprecedented attack on democratic rights. In fact, the phrase "democratic rights" never escaped the congresswoman's mouth. No reference was made to the increasingly fascistic character of the Republican Party.

In keeping with the official Democratic Party line, Ocasio-Cortez did not call for Congress to pass a law to codify *Roe v. Wade*, which would require overriding a Senate filibuster. Too many Senate Democrats support the filibuster—or oppose abortion rights—to make this possible. She made no criticism of the Democratic Party's inaction and, of course, no mention of the decades-long retreat by the Democrats on abortion and other elementary rights.

The considerable length of time Ocasio-Cortez spent discussing abortions in cases of rape is particularly notable considering that less than one percent of women get abortions because of sexual assault. This was by itself a

political concession to the law-and-order frenzy of the extreme right, framing abortion entirely in the context of violent crime. She said nothing about the rights of the vast majority of women who choose to get abortions due to health concerns, economic problems or simply because they do not want or are not yet ready to have children.

It must be noted as well that the Texas law does not equally impact “all women” or “all menstruating people” as Ocasio-Cortez suggests. Any affluent woman who wants an abortion will be able to get one with relative ease for the right price or by traveling to a different state.

Ocasio-Cortez’s focus on sexual assault and gender issues is a calculated political decision. The Democratic Party officialdom is aware that the right to abortion is an explosive issue that has support within wide layers of the population. The ultra-right Texas measure comes in the context of a sharp turn by sections of the Republican Party toward more direct authoritarian forms of rule, taking place only months after an attempted coup in Washington.

Ocasio-Cortez directed a number of harsh remarks toward Abbott, undoubtedly a repugnant figure, but said nothing about the fascistic political elements for whom he speaks. The last thing Democratic Party leaders want is for the real political and democratic content of the issue to come to the fore. To reveal the political forces involved in this campaign would expose the lie that the threats bound up with Trump’s rise to power—that is, of fascism and dictatorship—disappeared when he left office. The Democrats, as part of the ruling elite, are much more frightened of the population being alerted to the dangers and mobilizing themselves than they are of Abbott’s right-wing conspiracies.

All the conditions that gave rise to Trump and his January 6 coup attempt persist in American society. The campaign to destroy the right to abortion, with the complicity of the Supreme Court, should come as a serious warning: no democratic rights, no matter how elementary, are safe in capitalist America.

To provide a “left” cover for their cowardice and complicity, the Democrats rely on figures such as Ocasio-Cortez. The strategy is to keep the discussion narrowly contained to gender, create as much confusion as possible and obscure the burning class questions. This has been the essential content of the Democratic Party’s campaign over “women’s issues” for years.

The muted response to the Texas abortion ban by the most ardent promoters of the #MeToo campaign clearly brings this out.

At the height of the #MeToo movement, enormous resources were devoted to removing men from positions in government, the media and cultural life on the basis of

unproven allegations. For months, leading newspapers and magazines recounted every allegation in graphic detail. At one point, the *New York Times* published a two-page spread exulting in the downfall of the various men targeted in the sexual misconduct witch-hunt.

Where are all these crusaders for women’s rights now? Where is the saturation coverage in the *Times* identifying the major political figures spearheading the reactionary campaign against abortion rights and exposing its aims?

Only a small fraction of the time and money mobilized in the four-year #MeToo effort is being allocated to fighting the vicious Texas ban and upholding *Roe v. Wade*. In fact, the upper-middle-class women—corporate executives, media personalities, academics, Hollywood actors—who loudly and enthusiastically supported every smear against “powerful men,” i.e., their rivals for positions and income, have responded to Abbott’s law with a conspicuous collective yawn. The conditions and suffering of working class and younger women do not arouse their interest at all.

As for the Democratic Party, the subservience of its “left” spokeswoman Ocasio-Cortez to the political establishment on this issue reveals, in a stark manner, that this corporate-controlled party is incapable of offering any serious resistance to the mounting attacks on the democratic rights of the working class. On the contrary, they are the accomplices of such assaults.

The fight to defend abortion rights, and all democratic rights, is an existential one for the working class. It requires an all-out and determined struggle. However, not a single step forward can be made without breaking with both capitalist parties. The working class must be organized independently, in a struggle against the Democratic Party and the two-party setup, on the basis of a revolutionary socialist perspective.



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