

The defense of abortion rights requires a struggle against capitalism

Trévon Austin**30 September 2021**

On Saturday, Women's March will hold nationwide "mass mobilization events" in all 50 states to protest the counterrevolution against reproductive rights in Texas, Mississippi and many other Republican-controlled states. Demonstrations will take place ahead of the Supreme Court reconvening on October 4.

Protests were spurred by the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal to block the Texas law, which imposes the "fetal heartbeat" rule adopted by half a dozen states previously, which effectively prohibits abortion after about six weeks of pregnancy—before most women even know they have become pregnant. The law also encourages a form of "vigilante justice," allowing private citizens to sue anyone suspected of aiding in an abortion procedure.

Protesters are also appalled by Mississippi's Gestational Age Act, which bars abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy except for loosely defined "medical emergencies." Health professionals who perform abortions outside the parameters of the law will have their medical licenses suspended or revoked and could face additional penalties and fines. The law, originally passed in 2018, has been blocked by two federal courts, but the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments on a case concerning the law on December 1.

These laws were written in open challenge to *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that affirmed women's rights to make their own choices about their bodies, with the express aim of being taken up by the five-member ultra-right majority on the Supreme Court.

The Women's March announced it would be teaming up with 90 other groups in organizing the protests, including the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, Planned Parenthood, SHERO Mississippi, Mississippi in Action, Access Reproductive Care-

Southeast, SisterSong, The Frontline and the Working Families Party. It must be noted that the main organizations organizing Saturday's protests are politically connected, in varying degrees, to the Democratic Party. However, the oldest capitalist party in the world cannot be relied upon to defend this basic democratic right.

Already, it is clear that the parties involved intend to channel justified outrage at these draconian laws into support for the Democrats, identity politics and the right-wing #MeToo movement.

"Anti-choice extremists have a deep desire to return to a time when there was more clear and effective domination and control over queer and trans folks, women, and people of color; they want to revive those old values and societal norms to the point of re-acceptance. The authoritarian agenda of reproductive control is fueled by misogyny and racism—and we must challenge it, together," Women's March wrote in its statement announcing the protests.

But the political record of the Democratic Party, despite its professed differences with the Republicans, demonstrates that it is unwilling and incapable of offering any serious resistance to the mounting attacks on the democratic rights of the working class, including abortion rights.

After the Texas law went into effect, President Joe Biden issued a statement denouncing the law as "unconstitutional chaos" and "an unprecedented assault on a woman's constitutional rights." But other than declaring, in words, that his administration would take what steps it could "to ensure that women in Texas have access to safe and legal abortions," nothing has been done.

The Democrats, who control both houses of Congress, have made no effort to pass a law to codify

Roe v. Wade, which would require overriding a Senate filibuster. However, too many Democratic senators oppose changing filibuster rules—or are themselves opposed to abortion rights.

The ultra-right majority on the Supreme Court has repeatedly been used as an excuse for inaction, but each of the five justices determined to overturn *Roe v. Wade* owes his or her seat to the perfidy and cowardice of the Democrats.

Biden himself played a leading role in confirming Clarence Thomas to the high court: Biden was then the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and refused to block Thomas's nomination. Samuel Alito was only confirmed after Democrats joined their Republican "colleagues" to override a filibuster. Neil Gorsuch was chosen to replace the late arch-reactionary Antonin Scalia after Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell blocked President Barack Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland, and the White House offered little resistance.

More recently, after President Donald Trump nominated Brett Kavanaugh for the vacancy created by the retirement of Anthony Kennedy, Senate Democrats avoided any discussion of his right-wing judicial record and focused his confirmation hearing on #MeToo-style denunciation of actions he allegedly carried out as a teenager. Following the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Republicans rammed through Trump's nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, whose gender earned her the blind support of layers of the upper middle class obsessed with identity politics (i.e., the Democratic Party and its political satellites).

Now, after decades of the Democrats capitulating to the Republicans on abortion rights, the right to an abortion is in serious danger of being destroyed. However, this unraveling will have a disproportionate effect on working-class women, who cannot afford traveling to another state for an abortion. These state laws, if upheld by the Supreme Court, would force many working-class women to seek "back-alley" procedures that greatly increase the risk of death or mutilation. Of course, wealthier women will be able to travel to other states to have the procedure done.

The decades-long counterrevolution against *Roe v. Wade* has slowly eviscerated access to an abortion. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 90 percent of all US counties have no abortion provider. Seven states in

America have only a single abortion provider in the entire state. Twenty-seven large American cities have no abortion provider. Texas is home to the largest number of cities in the United States where a patient must travel at least 100 miles for the procedure.

This ongoing assault is a brutal attack on democratic rights that must be opposed by the entire working class. The Democrats have shown time and time again that they cannot be relied upon to defend even the most basic democratic rights. The fight to defend abortion rights, and all democratic rights, can only be successfully waged through the independent mobilization of the working class, in open opposition to the Democratic Party and the capitalist system.

The attack on the right to an abortion is bound up with the colossal growth of social inequality. Amid the deadliest pandemic in a century, a handful of billionaires saw their wealth skyrocket while their political representatives forced workers and children into unsafe workplaces and schools.

Democratic rights can only be achieved in a struggle to abolish the capitalist system, the source of all social inequality. The only social force capable of carrying out this historical necessity is the working class. The millions of workers justly outraged by the attacks on democratic rights must link their struggles with the mounting resistance of teachers, health care workers, industrial workers and all other workers who are beginning to rise up after decades of the suppression of the class struggle.

Those who agree with this perspective should join the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) to build the revolutionary leadership to lead the mass struggles that lie ahead.



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