

Protests in defense of abortion rights met with police violence in Los Angeles

Jacob Crosse
4 May 2022

In the wake of Monday's leak of the Supreme Court draft opinion that would overturn *Roe v. Wade* and abolish the right to an abortion, protests have been held in major cities throughout the country.

Marches and demonstrations attended by workers, students and youth took place in several cities Tuesday, including in Los Angeles and San Francisco, California; Austin and Houston, Texas; Providence, Rhode Island; New York City; Boston, Massachusetts; Denver, Colorado; Washington D.C.; and Richmond, Virginia, among other places.

Organic grassroots protests, as well as others organized by Democratic Party politicians or their appendages, such as "Women's March" or NARAL Pro-Choice America, are planned in the coming days and weeks, with nationwide protests scheduled for May 14.

Despite the peaceful character of the protests on Tuesday, in several instances police were seen violently attacking demonstrators, press and onlookers.

In downtown Los Angeles on Tuesday, independent reporter and documentary filmmaker Vishal P. Singh filmed thousands of workers, youth and students as they chanted and marched in support of abortion rights. Protesters had earlier rallied outside the federal courthouse, carrying signs reading "abortion=healthcare" and "abortion is a human right."

In the early evening, hundreds continued to march, leaving the courthouse and assembling at Pershing Square where they listened to speakers and chanted "legalize abortion now."

After 8 p.m., federal agents driving Department of

Homeland Security cars intervened in the protest and aggressively drove up, and into the crowd, forcing those in the path of the vehicle to move or risk being run over.

After driving into the crowd, DHS officers, wearing body armor and wielding batons, were seen shoving protesters and press alike, demanding they "back the f*ck up!"

Minutes later, Los Angeles police, wearing riot helmets and armed with shotguns, 40 millimeter "less lethal" launchers and batons, were filmed assaulting protesters.

The police riot against protesters continued. In another video, a Los Angeles cop is seen chasing and throwing a protester to the ground, causing them to almost hit a fire hydrant, while his partner viciously beat back onlookers with his baton.

Just after 9 p.m., Los Angeles Police Chief Michel Moore tweeted that the police "attempted to communicate, clear [sic] and provide dispersal order to the group" and that the "crowd began to throw rocks and bottles" at police.

At 9:20 p.m., Los Angeles Police declared the protest an "unlawful" assembly. However, by that point, less than 200 protesters remained, and 20 minutes later the order was lifted. Some protesters mingled past 10 p.m. It is unknown at this time if any arrests were made or how many protesters were injured by police thugs.

In downtown Austin, Texas, on Tuesday, hundreds of protesters, including many students, marched from the state Capitol to the federal courthouse against the

Supreme Court's opinion. They carried signs that read "my body my choice" and "we won't go back."

Despite no reports of violent activity or weapons, a video obtained by the local Fox affiliate shows an Austin police officer, seemingly for no reason, throwing a young unarmed woman protester violently to the ground.

The same cop pulled out his pepper spray and threatened the unarmed protesters to "back up!" At the same time, several other cops are seen surrounding another person who is lying on the ground.

There is overwhelming popular opposition to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, which would have an immediate impact on the ability of millions of working-class Americans to access an abortion. A December 2021 report from the Guttmacher Institute found that if the Supreme Court "overturns or guts" *Roe v. Wade*, "26 states are certain or likely to ban abortion," which would affect "58 percent of US women of reproductive age" in the United States, or roughly 40 million people.

In anticipation of the Supreme Court ruling, right-wing state legislatures, dominated by Republicans and conservative Democrats, enacted "a record 108 abortion restrictions in 19 states in 2021," according to the Institute.

Nine states, including Wisconsin, Michigan, West Virginia and Arizona, have laws still on the book that banned abortion prior to *Roe v. Wade*. There are 13 states—Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee, Utah, the Dakotas, Missouri, Idaho and Wyoming—that have "trigger bans" in place. This means that if *Roe* is overturned, within as little as 10 days abortions in that state would be illegal. In almost every state mentioned, having an abortion would be a felony.

The Democrats have responded to the provocation by the extreme-right faction of the court with impotent calls to elect more Democrats in the upcoming midterm election, along with empty promises to hold votes in Congress to legislate abortion rights that they know will not pass.

The Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street and the military, has adapted to the right-wing attack on

abortion rights for decades. It is opposed to any popular mobilization to defend the basic democratic right to an abortion, which would cut across its "national unity" campaign for war against Russia and threaten to develop into a broader movement against the ruling class.

As the assault on protesters in Los Angeles demonstrates, moreover, the Democrats will respond to popular opposition with police violence.

On Tuesday, the Socialist Equality Party issued a statement calling for the independent mobilization of the working class to defend the right to an abortion, connecting this struggle with a broader defense of democratic rights and opposition to the capitalist system. The statement declared:

There is a profound connection between the assault on democratic rights and the massive growth of social inequality, unrestrained militarism, and the destruction for all practical purposes of a labor movement. The abolition of the right to an abortion epitomizes the protracted disintegration of bourgeois democracy in the United States, which has become nothing more than a hollow shell.

Even the initial response to protests over the Supreme Court decision has further confirmed this fact.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact