

Critical Thinking Forum: Abortion Rights in Texas

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Authors Note

The state of Texas followed through with implementing Senate Bill 8, and it has remained in effect since September 2021. This dangerous law officially bans abortions after six weeks of gestational age and continues to invite private entities to file lawsuits against anyone aiding with abortion access after that permitted period of time. Regardless of the American Medical Association's clear disapproval of the Texas six-week abortion ban, it was ultimately upheld by the United States Supreme Court on Dec. 10, 2021 (Planned Parenthood, n.d.). It has also provided several other states with the blueprint to enact their own anti-abortion legislation.

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The political issue of abortion has been a widely publicized topic of debate throughout the past 50 years. The trajectory of this debate was slightly changed in the 1973 supreme court landmark case of *Roe vs. Wade*. This case affirmed the constitutional right to abortion across the entire United States (Cohen, 2021). Although *Roe vs. Wade* set a new path going toward women's rights, in today's modern times we are essentially taken right back to where we started. America is continuing to propose laws fairly similar to the ones that were suggested in the 1960s regarding women's rights to abortion. An historical instance of this phenomenon would be the "San Francisco Nine". This 1966 trial sought to sue nine well-respected doctors for performing abortions on women who had been exposed to rubella; a disease known to cause birth defects (Planned Parenthood, n.d.).

The answer to this debate is simple; it is the direct result of the dominant group condoning and administering Christian ideals. Additionally, it is the outcome of the continued support to enforce the White patriarchy. The entire topic of abortion in America is deeply engrained with patriarchal attitudes that have inevitably stained our culture. Patriarchy directly means "the social system in which power is held by men, through cultural norms and customs that favor men and withhold various opportunities from women" (Dictionary.com, n.d). This notion is currently being seen today with the recent oppressive legislation proposed in the state of Texas (Marimow, 2021).

More specifically, Greg Abbott, the governor of Texas, is actively advocating and supporting the implementation of these laws. He is a prime example of another White, Christian man attempting to advance his own personal and religious ideals onto others. This law essentially weaponizes private citizens with the threat of suing abortion providers and receivers up to \$10,000 (Marimow, 2021). This unconstitutional piece of legislation not only threatens

other private citizens, but various health organizations, health care providers, and individuals attempting to aid patients as well (Marimow, 2021). When everyday citizens are deputized to prosecute others based on their own religious and spiritual agendas, it is truly a war against women and basic religious freedom. It is also hypocritical to discontinue following the fundamental rights we were given centuries ago through the Constitution of the United States of America. Instead, we are now living under a Christian regime where the separation of church and state has become unheard of.

Not only are abortion rights an ongoing struggle for women in Texas, but the laws created affect the livelihoods of women of color even more. *The Washington Post* states: “Data compiled by the state indicated that nearly two-thirds of all Texas abortions in the last five years involved Black and Hispanic women”. Therefore, Black and Latino communities will be disproportionately affected regarding the Texas abortion ban. It is a known fact that 66% of women who obtain an abortion in the United States are minority women (Cohen, 2021). Along with this, research has also shown lower-income women have higher rates of unwanted pregnancy (Guttmacher Institute, 2021). This is most likely because of the lack of proper sex education, lack of contraceptive access, and lack of income. The consequences these women could face for attempting to get a medical procedure done can result in bankruptcy, homelessness, and countless more examples of social and economic backlash. These are the instances where patriarchal attitudes are deeply prevalent within our society.

Laws and other pieces of legislation similar to the proposed Texas abortion ban are one major example of how women in America are still being affected by the enforcement of the White patriarchy. There are not only significant opportunities being taken away from women, as previously mentioned, but their bodies are being seen as political playgrounds for the

advancement of personal religious and spiritual agendas. Also, a lot of people do not take into consideration that it is difficult to perpetuate racism and misogyny in our society without controlling women and their reproductive systems. This attempt at social and political control occurs in order to keep America under the thumb of the established systems of privilege. While punishing those who step out of societal normativity, there are no repercussions for those who uphold and implement the act of suppressing the rights of others.

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