

## Abortion Bans Are Racist. Here's Why.

### **Let's start with the basics: white supremacy**

- Systems of oppression in the United States are all rooted in white supremacy. Capitalism, patriarchy, the prison industrial complex, and the health care industrial complex are all designed to benefit cisgender, heterosexual, white, rich people.
- White supremacy aims to control the bodily autonomy, expressions, and freedoms of individuals. Like any system of power, it thrives by keeping a small group in power and preys off the labor, time, and bodies of everyone else.
- White supremacy benefits from enabling reproductive control and minimizing individual bodily autonomy. This means white supremacy is upheld when we have policies and resources in place for white people to reproduce while simultaneously creating barriers and disincentivizing people of color from reproducing.

### **What does this have to do with abortion? Everything.**

### **Abortion bans will always harm Black people, Brown people, Indigenous people, and other people of color the most, just like any other barrier**

- Because of all of the systems of oppression we mentioned, communities of color are more often to be trapped within cycles of poverty and therefore are often forced to delay accessing abortion services because they need time to secure the funds, arrange child care, and take time off of work. Because of these systemic barriers, they are also less able to travel out of state to get the care they need.
- In many states, due to decades of racist economic policies, the poverty rate for Black and Latinx women is disproportionately high, meaning they will be most impacted by abortion bans.
- Many states prohibit coverage of abortion through Medicaid programs and in nearly all private insurance plans.
- The disparities in health care access have been laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has most impacted communities of color. Abortion bans are no different.
- Black women are most severely impacted by the maternal mortality crisis in our country. The rate at which Black women die in pregnancy and childbirth is unconscionably high. When we restrict reproductive health care like abortion care even further and force people to remain pregnant against their will, this isn't helped.

### **This is not new. In the early 1990s, Black women realized the intersectional experiences of Black women weren't being heard or acted on within the reproductive health and rights movements and so they birthed the Reproductive Justice movement.**

- Reproductive Justice is the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.
- When we center the Reproductive Justice framework and apply it to abortion access, it is impossible to separate the harms of systemic racism and the harms of abortion restrictions.

### **When abortion care is restricted or banned, we open up the risk of communities being criminalized for accessing abortion care.**

- People of color, people who are struggling financially, residents of rural communities, immigrants, and trans, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people disproportionately face the risk

of criminalization for the outcome of their pregnancy. This includes unfortunate criminal prosecution based on accusations that they did something to prompt their own stillbirth or miscarriage.

- Abortion is health care. It should not be up for debate within the criminal legal system.

**Reproductive health care has a long and problematic history of controlling and coercing Black and Brown people.**

- The very specialty of obstetrics and gynecology was built on the experimentation on Black and Brown people, sometimes without their consent.
- This long history continues today: we've seen horrific instances of reproductive coercion related to contraceptive coercion and involuntary sterilization.

**Anti-abortion extremists attempt to use "anti-racist" tropes to attack Black and Brown folks accessing abortion and the providers who give them that medical care.**

- Anti-abortion extremists try to trick and mislead the public by claiming that their efforts to end abortion are efforts to protect Black and Brown communities.
- We know that if we are truly to center and honor the values and lives of Black and Brown people, and especially Black women who have been so historically abused and denied rights, we must trust them. Individuals know what they need for their lives. Sometimes, that includes abortion care.
- These accusations aren't about racism, they're about infantilizing and dehumanizing Black women.

**What is the solution? Communities and policies that value bodily autonomy**

- Bodily autonomy is crucial for all people and this will always include access to safe and effective abortion options.
- If you care about the needs your community members, you should prioritize their bodily autonomy by protecting and expanding their access to reproductive health care, not restricting it. This includes expanding access to vote – voting rights are a key piece of public health and bodily autonomy.

**Every person should be able to make their own decisions about their health and their bodies — including about abortion, in consultation with their loved ones and health care providers. No one should have their most personal medical decisions controlled by politicians, neighbors, complete strangers, or anyone else.**