

It's been a little over four months since SCOTUS overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Every day since has brought more horrifying results, with near-total abortion bans now in place in 13 states¹². Miscarriages are being criminalized as well³, often victimizing already traumatized individuals. As a community organizer, I saw a spark of fury in June that made mobilization easy. However, as the initial shock of the Scotus decision wears off, I'm seeing numbers decline at actions and rallies- but the fight isn't over, and November 8th is a vital part of it.

Perhaps more than ever, we need people in office who will protect our freedoms. The only reason Iowa has not had the strictest abortion ban in the country since 2018⁴ is because of legal protections that have since been removed at the federal level⁵. Wheels are in motion to remove them at the state level as well and have been for a while. Our legislature took the first step to amend the Iowa constitution to say "...this Constitution does not recognize, grant, or secure a right to abortion" back in 2020⁶. They will continue working towards this following June's reversal of previous court decisions that had determined the right to abortion was implied by the Iowa constitution⁷. The next step is for the legislature to pass the proposal again before the end of the 2023 legislative session⁸. It is, at this point, expected to pass. With the loss of federal protections, who we have sitting in local seats matters. We know those currently in office will ban abortion if they can, because Reynolds has said as much⁹ and because they already have.

This cannot stand. We cannot allow our basic freedoms and health protections to be taken from us. It is far past time to come together and say "enough." Every single person who votes for those who will protect our rights, who supports local clinics, who participates in reproductive rights events, who furthers the conversation, and who places pressure on our legislators, makes a difference. We cannot sit silently and hope.

¹ "State Bans on Abortion throughout Pregnancy." *Guttmacher Institute*, 18 Oct. 2022, <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/state-policies-later-abortions>.

² The New York Times. "Tracking the States Where Abortion Is Now Banned." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 24 May 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/us/abortion-laws-roe-v-wade.html>.

³ <https://www.theregreview.org/2022/02/08/blackman-criminalizing-pregnancy-loss/>

⁴ <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/ipr-news/2018-05-04/iowa-governor-signs-nations-strictest-abortion-law>

⁵ <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2022/08/11/kim-reynolds-asks-reinstate-fetal-heartbeat-iowa-abortion-law-without-roe-v-wade/10297123002/>

⁶ <https://www.aclu-ia.org/en/iowas-constitutional-amendment-abortion>

⁷ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/06/17/iowa-supreme-court-topple-states-constitutional-abortion-protections#:~:text=The%20Iowa%20Supreme%20Court%20has,person%20could%20receive%20an%20abortion>.

⁸ [How Is the Iowa Constitution Amended? | ACLU of Iowa \(aclu-ia.org\)](https://www.aclu-ia.org/en/news/how-is-the-iowa-constitution-amended)

⁹ <https://governor.iowa.gov/press-release/gov-reynolds-files-motion-to-challenge-injunction-on-fetal-heartbeat-bill%20#:~:text=In%202018%20the%20legislature%20passed,heartbeat%20can%20first%20be%20detected>.

There are countless reasons that someone could want or need an abortion- poverty, rape, medical circumstances, and yes- even just because they don't want a child. None of those reasons are relevant to the conversation- people do not owe others their life stories. Nobody should have to explain why they want or need an abortion. Nobody should feel the need to justify it, to reveal personal traumas, or to convince anyone else of the harm that maintaining a pregnancy would cause them- not a politician, an investigator, or even an obstetrician. It should be as simple as walking into a clinic and saying, "I want an abortion." Any pregnant person should have the freedom and access to do that, regardless of the circumstances.

We need to disrupt and unseat those in power such as Kim Reynolds, who are proposing and supporting abortion barriers and bans. There are no limits on abortion that are acceptable. We need to push back against every one that is attempted, and we need to do it hard. When the state makes something conditional, it allows a select few to impose their moral opinions on others. Policymakers picking and choosing when it is and is not ok for someone to have a medical procedure leads to inequities, and this country is already riddled with them.

The United States has the highest known maternal mortality rate of any so-called "developed nation"¹⁰ and that rate is around four times higher for those who are Black and two times higher for those who are indigenous than those who are white¹¹. We also know that limited abortion access disproportionately affects BIPOC and low-income individuals and families¹². We need to improve these issues, not make them worse. We do that by fighting to keep abortion legal in Iowa and improve its accessibility while standing in solidarity with other reproductive rights movements around the world¹³. We do it by supporting abortion access funds¹⁴ and clinics that provide reproductive health services¹⁵. By acknowledging that abortion is not an isolated issue and recognizing the intersectionality of reproductive justice, bodily autonomy, white supremacy, disability justice, racial and class disparities, health care equity, patriarchy, policing, LGBTQI rights, and violence against trans individuals and women.

This state and this country are full of crises, and they are all connected. We have a crisis of law enforcement murdering Black and Brown people¹⁶. We have a crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls¹⁷. We have a crisis of murdered Black, Latina, and Latinx trans women¹⁸. We have a

¹⁰ <https://www.ajmc.com/view/us-ranks-worst-in-maternal-care-mortality-compared-with-10-other-developed-nations>

¹¹ <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/population-care/examining-black-us-maternal-mortality-rate-and-how-cut-it>

¹² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3780732/>

¹³ <https://www.justsecurity.org/82632/how-latin-america-could-inspire-and-inform-the-us-fight-for-reproductive-justice/>

¹⁴ <https://www.iowaabortionaccessfund.org/shop/>

¹⁵ <https://www.emmagoldman.com/help-out.html>

¹⁶ [Report: Black people are still killed by police at a higher rate than other groups \(nbcnews.com\)](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/health/report-black-people-are-still-killed-by-police-at-a-higher-rate-than-other-groups-nbcnews.com)

¹⁷

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1752928X21000214?casa_token=qgg0e2noAyAAAAA:OxWIZNyXdFEo0w66WgcP5sINPzjPhUVy8OTtiqq_tZijMVI_w2OoxjWuZ3d6RcSTNoC8niwgTcA

¹⁸ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/2021-is-now-the-deadliest-year-on-record-for-transgender-people>

crisis of legislative attacks on LGBTQI people¹⁹... and now we are on the brink of a crisis of the legislative murder of people with uteruses by denial of health care.

Movements that addressed these issues in the past were supposed to be beginnings. They made great strides, but equity was never reached, and we were supposed to keep fighting, not be appeased by moments of progress. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s may have formally ended segregation in this country, but Black and Brown people are still murdered by police²⁰ and imprisoned²¹ at drastically disproportionate rates, in a nation that counts prisoners in the census to determine legislative representation²² and taxes their meager incomes²³, yet often denies them the right to vote²⁴

Stonewall and the gay liberation movement may have allowed many people to come out of hiding and eventually brought the legalization of gay marriage, but health equity, particularly for trans individuals, was never reached²⁵. Roe vs Wade granted most of us the right to abortion, but it has never been legal and accessible for everyone in this country with a uterus²⁷²⁸.

We still had work to do, and while some amazing people and organizations have been doing that work all along, we, as a whole, allowed ourselves to be lulled into complacency. We cannot do that anymore. We never should have to begin with.

Now, many of those rights that were won in the past are under attack. Both in Iowa²⁹ and nationally, the number of anti-LGBTQI bills introduced has increased legislative session after legislative session for at least the last 4 years³⁰. In the last session, a key bill passed into law and now trans girls and women and many non-binary children and young adults are being denied the ability to participate in school sports in Iowa³¹.

Now, our right to abortion, a vital health care need, is also under attack. If we allow that freedom to be taken away, people are going to be imprisoned and people are going to die. We cannot let that

¹⁹ <https://www.weareiowa.com/article/news/local/local-politics/iowa-anti-transgender-legislation-bills-2021-record-united-states/524-53833a20-9fff-4df9-96a6-a97819fe4d89>

²⁰ <https://counciloncj.foleon.com/policing/assessing-the-evidence/policing-by-the-numbers/>

²¹ <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/the-color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons-the-sentencing-project/>

²² <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2019/12/31/761932806/your-body-being-used-where-prisoners-who-can-t-vote-fill-voting-districts>

²³ <https://howtojustice.org/going-to-prison/filing-taxes-when-incarcerated/#:~:text=Do%20incarcerated%20people%20have%20to,%2C%20and%20sometimes%20no%2C%20mone>

²⁴ <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/felon-voting-rights.aspx>

²⁵ <https://www.ncsddc.org/our-work/health-equity/transgender-people-health-equity/#:~:text=Due%20to%20a%20lack%20of,underserved%20by%20health%20care%20providers.&text=Transgender%20women%20are%2049%20times,compared%20with%20the%20general%20population>

²⁶ <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/01/983490883/dr-rachel-levine-transgender-health-care-an-equity-issue-not-political-one>

²⁷ [Hyde Amendment \(plannedparenthoodaction.org\)](https://plannedparenthoodaction.org/hyde-amendment)

²⁸ [Episode 8: The Hyde Amendment with Great Plain Action Society founder Sikowis Nobiss \(castbox.fm\)](https://www.greatplainaction.org/episode-8-the-hyde-amendment-with-great-plain-action-society-founder-sikowis-nobiss)

²⁹ [Advocates See Number Of Anti-LGBTQ Proposals 'Accelerating' In Iowa Legislature | Iowa Public Radio](https://www.iowapublicradio.com/news/advocates-see-number-of-anti-lgbtq-proposals-accelerating-in-iowa-legislature)

³⁰ [Nearly 240 anti-LGBTQ bills filed in 2022 so far, most of them targeting trans people \(nbcnews.com\)](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nearly-240-anti-lgbtq-bills-filed-in-2022-so-far-most-of-them-targeting-trans-people)

³¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/03/politics/iowa-transgender-sports-ban/index.html>

happen. Together I do believe we can stop these attacks on our freedoms. History is full of such moments. But as history shows us, we have to do it as a movement. We need to be loud and persistent about all these issues, understand how they are connected, and not give up. We need to write, call, and take coordinated and targeted steps that cause interruption, force attention, and create discomfort....and we need record-breaking numbers at the polls. That is how rights are won...and they are always fought for.