

Anti-abortion feminism

How is this even a thing?

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On 24th June 2022, anti-abortion activists across the US celebrated as the Supreme Court voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, among them some self-described ‘feminists’. For a long time now, the anti-abortion movement has been declaring itself ‘pro-woman’ as much as pro-foetus, presenting abortion as a harm to women that they are coerced into or ultimately regret. Signs brandished at rallies and outside clinics declare ‘We love them both’ and ‘We value them both’, just as digital activists traffic in hashtags like ‘BothLivesMatter’. But there is also a strand of anti-abortion politics that explicitly describes its position as ‘feminist’, claiming that an anti-abortion stance is the only ‘true’ feminist position. An amicus brief, for example, claiming that ‘the judicially-created right of abortion disadvantages women’ was submitted to the Supreme Court by ‘240 women scholars and professionals, and pro-life feminist organizations’ including Feminists for Nonviolent Choices, New Wave Feminists and Feminists Choosing Life of New York.¹ Far fewer anti-abortion feminist groups and networks exist in the UK, though there are some worth noting, including the Pro-Life Feminist Society at Bristol University.

A common feminist response to anti-abortion feminism is to simply dismiss it as an oxymoron – to say that even if it is sincere, it is a contradiction in terms and hence there can be ‘no such thing’. But unfortunately, it is a thing, however much we wish it wasn’t, and however marginal it may be. Contradictory political positions, moreover, are hardly unique to anti-abortion feminists. So rather than denying the possibility of its existence, or being drawn into categorical battles over what counts as ‘feminism’ and what does not, the aim here is to try to get to grips with the logics, rhetorics and tactics of anti-abortion feminism so as to better resist its advances

and prevent it gaining further traction. What do you have to think to think that state-mandated pregnancy is ethically preferable to elective abortion? How can the criminalisation of pregnancy and increased restrictions on reproductive freedom be taken as a sign of feminist progress?

To engage with US anti-abortion feminism, I acknowledge, is to risk boosting its visibility, and we must be careful not to treat it as a more significant or widespread phenomenon than it actually is. It is always worth emphasising that most Americans support some legal access to abortion, and that anti-abortion feminism is a small grouping under the anti-abortion umbrella. That said, having a better understanding of its different variations and ways of operating will enable more effective opposition. Particularly troubling is the left-leaning version of anti-abortion feminism because this is the strand most likely to catch us off guard. The usual pairing of an anti-abortion position with a right-wing political agenda produces a set of blatant inconsistencies which make it all too obvious that attacks on abortion are not really about matters of ‘life’ at all. In response to the overturning of *Roe*, for instance, Hazel Carby highlights the raft of recent ‘anti-life legislation’ coming out of the Supreme Court, such as the expansion of gun rights only weeks after the Ulvade shooting in Texas, and the stripping of power from the Environmental Protection Agency to limit carbon emissions.² As Amia Srinivasan has put it, right-wing anti-abortionism should be understood as essentially a ‘symbolic’ form of politics because a ‘real movement’ to abolish abortion would have to be premised upon a programme for serious structural change, including state-guaranteed parental leave, childcare provision and universal healthcare, as well as safe, free, accessible

contraception and massive investment in sex education.³ But what about when anti-abortion activists *do* support state-provided healthcare and childcare, gun control and environmental protections, and use the language of social justice, anti-capitalism and ‘consistent life’? If this is the ‘real’ movement against abortion, what is it up to and how can it be confronted?

Origin stories

Anti-abortion feminists have been present in the US since the early 1970s. Feminists for Life, for example, was established in Ohio in 1973 by activists in the women’s liberation movement, Pat Goltz and Catherine Callahan, who found no space for their anti-abortion views in the National Organization of Women.⁴ In these early days, anti-abortion feminists like Goltz and Callahan sought a ‘respected place’ within the women’s liberation movement. But as Laury Oaks demonstrates, their goal was soon reformulated to ‘the task of rescuing it’, constructing an ‘oppositional position to the feminist movement from their pro-life stance’.⁵ In their original declaration, for example, FFL stated that ‘we pledge ourselves to help the feminist movement correct its failures’ and ‘purge itself of anti-life sentiments and practices’.⁶ But rather than having any influence over mainstream feminism, anti-abortion feminists have instead found a home within the anti-abortion movement, playing a key role in developing the ‘pro-woman’ arguments that it has increasingly favoured. The complaint of being ‘left out’ of feminist organising, however, still periodically re-emerges. In 2017, for example, the *New York Times* published an opinion piece by a public relations manager for the anti-abortion charity Human Coalition, Lauren Enriquez, condemning the exclusion of anti-abortion groups from the official list of participants in the Women’s March on Washington: ‘To us’, she writes, women’s “resistance” has to include opposition to the lie that freedom can be bought with the blood of our preborn children’.⁷

To secure the claim that ‘true’ feminism is opposed to abortion, contemporary US anti-abortion feminists trace their political lineage to feminists of the ‘first wave’ such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, framing the ‘second wave’ demand for legal abortion access as a deviation from ‘original’ feminist principles. Erika Ba-

chiochi – the Harvard-affiliated leading light of academic anti-abortion feminism, and co-author of the Supreme Court amicus brief – claims that these nineteenth century feminists ‘were, without known exception, opposed to abortion’.⁸ They believed, she tells us, that ‘unborn children should be protected by the law’ while also ‘call[ing] for mercy for women whose unequal social status and difficult circumstances led them, out of desperation, to seek out abortions’. Their feminist goal, apparently, was to ‘[agitate] for improved social conditions so that women might responsibly carry out their duties to their children, born and unborn’. But the ‘easy abortion access’ sought by feminists in the 1970s betrayed this original mission, by devaluing motherhood and propping up a masculine ideal of equality that has ‘stalled’ the feminist revolution. Feminists today, then, must ‘heed the wisdom of the early feminists’ and work to realise their ‘vision for justice’ in our own lifetimes.⁹

This strategic ‘return narrative’¹⁰ has also been widely deployed by anti-abortion activist groups outside of academia, since FFL began perpetuating it in the 1990s. Feminists for Nonviolent Choices, for example, provide a ‘herstory’ of anti-abortion feminism on their website which claims that the ‘first wave’ of US feminism represented by Cady Stanton and Anthony unequivocally supported the ‘right of the unborn’ and considered abortion to be ‘child murder’; but ‘second wave’ feminists like Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem were wrongly persuaded by male ‘abortionists’ that ‘women needed abortion if they expected to maintain positions in the workforce’. Fortunately, they write, the ‘third wave’ turned away from this masculinist form of feminism and paved the way for the current ‘fourth wave’: an ‘emerging feminism that progresses beyond justice for women, the poor, ethnic groups, to also include justice for the unborn’. Feminism, therefore, ‘has come full circle’.¹¹

The views of the early US women’s rights advocates were in fact more equivocal than the contemporary anti-abortion feminist narrative would have us believe. Various historians have now debunked it as a work of anachronistic invention evidenced by a handful of selectively assembled quotations. The widely circulated ‘child murder’ quote attributed to Anthony, for example, was extracted from an article written by an anonymous author in the magazine that Anthony edited whose identity remains unknown.¹² But this is not to try and res-

cue these nineteenth-century icons for our own side. It must not escape notice that the anti-abortion revival of white 'first wavers' like Anthony and Cady Stanton is occurring at a time when their investment and entanglement in white supremacy is becoming much more widely understood. While Bachiochi tries to straightforwardly align them with the cause of racial justice by glossing that the 'nineteenth-century women's rights advocates' had 'nearly all cut their teeth on slavery abolition work before turning their attention to women's unequal status in marriage and in society',¹³ it has been amply demonstrated that these 'suffragist heroines' repeatedly betrayed the interests of Black women and traded on racist representations of Black men to elevate their own cause.¹⁴ Cady Stanton, for instance, declared that it was better for a Black woman 'to be the slave of an educated white man, than of a degraded, ignorant black one'.¹⁵ Her vision of 'enlightened motherhood', moreover, was eugenic through and through. She argued that women must be educated into the idea that 'to bear noble children to noble men with sound bodies and sound minds' is a 'worthy work and one that brings its own happiness and reward', while 'to fill the world with idiots, lunatics, criminals, the blind, the deaf, the dumb ... is not a work worth a Christian woman, but a sin against herself, the state, and a gross violation of the immutable laws of God'.¹⁶ There may well be anti-abortion feminist groups and individuals that are unaware of this, but that is surely not the case for professional academics such as Bachiochi. So why is the association between Cady Stanton, Anthony and eugenic white supremacy being hidden from view?

This should be further considered in light of another omission from the 'return narrative' constructed by US anti-abortion feminists, which is the formation of the reproductive justice movement by women of colour in the 1990s. These activists were themselves deeply critical of how abortion rights became so centralised as a single issue within mainstream US feminism since the 1970s. They also rejected the dominant framework of 'choice': for its failure to foreground the grossly unequal social structures that enable or constrain individual choices in the first place; and to reckon with the numerous ways that the reproduction of women of colour, poor and disabled women has been controlled and precluded by the state, for example, through forced/coerced ster-

ilisation.¹⁷ The core point of the reproductive justice framework, however, is that 'the right to choose' is *not enough*. 'Even when abortion is legal', the founders of the movement emphasised, 'many women of colour cannot afford it, or cannot travel hundreds of miles to the nearest clinic. There is no choice where there is no access'. Their other central argument, moreover, is that while abortion access is essential, it is no more so than access to pregnancy and postnatal care, alternative birth options, safe homes and environments, and adequate childcare and education.¹⁸ But the exclusion of the reproductive justice movement from the anti-abortion 'return narrative' enables anti-abortion feminists to present their own constructed tradition as the only one that has ever stood up for the women within oppressed social groups so unserved by the politics of choice, and for the material needs of pregnant people, parents and children.



The efficacy of the narrative also trades on a divisive generational dynamic, as contemporary anti-abortion feminists define themselves as the 'post-Roe generation' who are righting the wrongs of '1970s feminism'. Generational logics that imply younger women must turn on the previous generation to forge their own path have long been critiqued by feminist theorists like Judith Roof

and Astrid Henry, for importing the ‘full force of Oedipal rivalry, recrimination, and debt’ into relations between feminists.¹⁹ As Henry has argued, new iterations of feminism are so often steeped in the logic of ‘disidentification’, as assertions of a new political identity are achieved through evoking a maternalised figure – the ‘bad mother’ – to rebel and identify against. This is endemic within anti-abortion discourse, as ‘second wave’ feminists are demonised as grossly ‘out of touch’ with the views and needs of young women today who now see the ‘tragedy of abortion’ for what it is – a strategy that comes particularly to the fore in materials targeted at college students. FFL, for example, whose Campus Outreach Program has been operative since the 1990s, makes statements like ‘Challenge the status quo. While members of the ‘70’s women’s movement continue to promote abortion, Feminists for Life is moving forward with woman-centred solutions in the workplace, home, and school’.²⁰ The strategic historiography of the ‘post-Roe generation’ is thus as much a matricidal enterprise as a mythic act of ‘return’.

Though there may be a common origin story, however, anti-abortion feminism is not a singular political entity. Some groups sit fairly comfortably within the mainstream conservative anti-abortion movement, promoting a moral case against abortion as a ‘tragic’ form of ‘violence against women’ without questioning too deeply the basic socio-economic structures of US society. FFL, for example, may speak of ‘systematically eliminating the root causes that drive women to abortion’ and of ‘working for low-income women’ through backing a handful of national and state-level welfare reforms; but it focuses mainly on campaigning for better facilities for pregnant/parenting students on campus and producing breezy brochures like ‘Raising Kids on a Shoestring’, as well as supporting ‘pregnancy crisis centres’ that mask their anti-abortion intents.²¹ Its politics can thus be characterised as Mama Grizzly-style ‘compassionate conservatism’ rebranded for college-age women, such that it can claim right-wing Republican politician Sarah Palin as one of its members without too much ideological tension.

But there are also versions of anti-abortion feminism in the US that are further to the left, or at least left-presenting and left-sounding. Rewriting anti-abortion ideology in the language of redistributive economics and

social justice, they may be just as deceptive as any ‘pregnancy crisis centre’. Though Bachiochi, for instance, is stationed firmly within the tradition of Catholic social conservatism, in economic terms she is a vocal critic of free market capitalism and a former supporter of Bernie Sanders. In response to the fall of *Roe*, she wrote that ‘Red states should not be able to stand on their post-*Roe* abortion bans as evidence of pro-life accomplishment while their pregnant residents and children face poverty, substandard health care ... and nonexistent workplace accommodations’²² – a line which, in isolation, one might assume has been taken from an article supportive of reproductive rights rather than one praising their removal. To be sure, Bachiochi and others in her camp go no further than calling for curbs on capitalism and moderate welfarist measures within its terms. But there are also anti-abortion feminists that describe themselves as ‘anti-capitalist’ and co-opt the terminology of radical political projects like prison abolition, border abolition and Black Lives Matter. For instance, the mission statement of Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising – a group whose leaders are currently under investigation for taking a box of foetal remains from a medical waste company truck and burying them at a secret location – claims they are out to ‘educate the public about the exploitative influence of the Abortion Industrial Complex through an anti-capitalist lens, advocate for pregnant people and connect abortion vulnerable communities with life-saving resources’.²³ What is the political imaginary behind such statements? How is anti-abortion extremism being packaged as anti-capitalist feminist struggle?

Abortion as false solution

The primary weapon of the right-wing anti-abortion movement is the law, its mission being to expand state control over pregnancy through criminalisation. Though overturning *Roe* has been the ultimate prize (with their sights now set on a national ban), the passing of ‘TRAP’ laws – Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers that requires excessively high standards of abortion providers – by Republican-controlled states has also been a major triumph, hugely restricting abortion access since the 1990s. The Texas Heartbeat Act of 2021, or SB8, further marked a high point of legal ingenuity with its unique enforcement mechanism, which authorised private indi-



Photo: Panda Mery, 'Communal Broadcasting in Flats'

viduals to bring a lawsuit against anyone who performed or facilitated a post-heartbeat abortion (after around six weeks: a point at which many people don't know they are pregnant), leaving abortion providers and advocates with no government officials to sue over the Texan law's constitutional illegality.

In contrast, leftist anti-abortion feminists are far less fixated on the legal arena, insisting that abortion prohibitions alone cannot bring an end to abortion because they do nothing to alter the socio-economic circumstances which cause 'desperate women' to abort. Strategic discussions on how to create 'a world without abortion' are thus concerned more with 'root causes' and 'abortion prevention' than developing legal tactics, with 'tearing down systems that aren't working' and agitating the 'oppressive status quo'.²⁴ Yet it must be emphasised that for all the effort to distance themselves from the right-wing anti-abortionists' devotion to criminal punishment, it is still common for leftist anti-abortion feminists to

claim that anti-abortion laws are necessary, if not sufficient. For instance, though unable to bring herself to vote for the 'boorish' Trump, writes Bachiochi, she was 'grateful' to the anti-abortion right for enabling his presidency and to the man himself for his anti-*Roe* Supreme Court picks.²⁵ What is the reasoning here? Is the criminal justice system not one of those systems that clearly 'aren't working'? If the goal is 'prevention' rather than prohibition and punishment, why are anti-abortion laws deemed necessary at all?

The argument made – from academics like Bachiochi to grassroots groups like New Wave Feminists – is that legal abortion access must be eradicated because it has precluded much-needed social, economic and cultural change by providing a false solution to feminised poverty and the patriarchal structuring of our institutions and workplaces. We have come to rely on abortion, it is said, as the answer for women in a society organised around corporate profit and the masculine norm, and so legal

abortion is 'stalling' progressive politics.²⁶ According to this view of abortion's role in society, if the workplace does not accommodate pregnant people and those with caring responsibilities, and the state does not provide healthcare and material support, they can just get an abortion and business continues as usual. Legal abortion access thus reassures us, apparently, that there is no great need for paid maternity and parental leave, for improved healthcare and welfare provision, or for decent wages, and so it is the 'false' or 'privileged' solution to gender inequality.

The more conspiracy-oriented anti-capitalist activists, like Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising, see US abortion providers as being in league with big money and the capitalist state, pushing abortion as a 'product expediently sold' to turn a profit, while providing an 'easy solution' for a state unwilling to support parents and children, and enabling the continued workplace exploitation of women whose maternity must be denied for the sake of their productivity.²⁷ This is what they mean by the 'Abortion Industrial Complex'. The more moderate, in contrast, present abortion advocates and providers as unwittingly propping up the status quo. But they are united in the claim that abortion buttresses patriarchal capitalism and stands in the way of either reform or revolution. As Bachiochi explains it, 'relatively easy abortion access has made it unnecessary for businesses and other institutions in the United States to acknowledge an essential cultural reality: Most working persons are (or ought to be) deeply encumbered by their obligations to their families. In the end, it may just be that an unmitigated right to abortion serves a profit-driven market above all else'.²⁸ It is also contended that the legal option of abortion perpetuates the social and cultural devaluation of pregnancy and parenting because it makes having a child seem like an 'unwelcome, inconvenient, and expensive "choice"' that must be subjected, 'like other "trade-offs" in the marketplace', to a "'cost-benefit" analysis'.²⁹ Legal abortion access, claim the anti-abortion feminists, thus perpetuates a male-dominated, market-driven society, and rather than being a lynchpin of women's reproductive freedom is the ultimate sign of women's oppression.

Mainstream feminism too is castigated for working much harder for abortion rights than for improved conditions for pregnant people and parents – a critique made also by reproductive justice theorists and activists. But

while the latter group insist we need both, anti-abortion feminists propose that the demand for abortion necessarily works *against* the demand for better support for pregnant/parenting people. The argument is that legal abortion access 'undermines efforts to enact and implement crucial policies necessary for pregnant women and mothers to participate in society on equal footing with men', because it promotes a model of equality which sets up 'the wombless male body as normative, thereby promoting cultural hostility toward pregnancy and motherhood'. The feminist demand for abortion, it is claimed, 'is a sell-out to male values and a capitulation to male lifestyles'.³⁰ But once legal access to abortion is removed, all of us will finally realise that gender inequality and feminised poverty must be addressed through socio-economic and cultural change. Once the 'abortion regime' has been ended and society properly values reproductive care work, pregnancy will 'no longer hold the subordinate status it seems to have in the eyes of elite academic feminist scholars'.³¹

Totalitarian tendencies

The first thing to ask, of course, is since when did forcing people to do a thing make that thing more socially valued? But let us accept for a moment this mind-bending argument that state-mandated pregnancy is the way to boost the socio-cultural value of pregnancy and parenting and overturn patriarchal capitalism. What do anti-abortion feminists have to say to those they would deny abortion access? Is the idea that unwillingly pregnant people must take the hit in order to make things better for the pregnant people and parents of the future? Because if they had a legal abortion this would send a signal to the wider society that pregnancy is not to be valued and nothing needs to change? And then, after a period of time has passed, and enough people have endured unwanted pregnancies and births, pregnancy and motherhood will have become so highly valued and economically supported that no one will want abortions anymore?

This kind of sacrificial logic surfaces with disturbing regularity within anti-abortion feminist discourse. Feminists Choosing Life of New York, for example, write that 'the feminists who want abortion because they "don't want to be pregnant" are hurting the women who are

forced to resort to abortion' because they are standing in the way of those women getting the support they need to have the babies they actually want.³² The trope of the aborting woman as selfish and overprivileged is thus recycled here with a 'feminist' twist, as a strict divide between the 'good' aborter (oppressed with no choice) and the 'bad' aborter (pampered with too many choices) is firmly established. 'Not wanting to be pregnant' is presented as a petulant and superficial whim that warrants no moral consideration, and indeed actively does harm. So those who experience their pregnancies that way must simply put up with it and give birth against their will.

Yet at the same time, leftist anti-abortion feminist discourse is characterised as much by a saviour complex as a sacrificial bent, which stems from the notion that under the right socio-economic and cultural conditions there would be no unwanted pregnancy. This view that an equitable and just society would be abortion-free implies that no woman ever *really* wants an abortion deep down, even the 'bad' aborter, because if we lived in a culture that truly valued pregnancy and motherhood, abortion would be simply 'unthinkable'. The argument against abortion then appears less about forcing unwillingly pregnant people to gestate and give birth in order to bring about the pregnancy-supporting society of the future, and more about saving them now for their own sake. 'Not wanting to be pregnant', from this angle, is not so much dismissed for being morally decadent as rendered discountable by anti-abortion activists prescribing what abortion-seekers would want if they were differently pregnant in a different reality.

State-mandated pregnancy and birth, then, is not only justified by leftist anti-abortion feminists in instrumental terms for the sake of the future – because it will bring down patriarchal capitalism! – but also for the good of the unwillingly pregnant in the present. This may be inconveniently contradicted by many women's own accounts of their experiences and decisions, but any personal account of abortion as a positive or straightforward experience is dismissed as evidence of patriarchal or pro-choice brainwashing, condemned as morally degraded, or simply ignored. The stories that anti-abortion feminist groups are interested and invested in, rather, are those which describe an experience of having no real alternative to abortion, alongside stories that speak of post-

abortion regret, and those of people who went through with a pregnancy that was unwanted at the time, but are now glad they did (which they use as evidence that your future self will always want the baby, regardless of how you feel as pregnant). Once again, then, 'not wanting to be pregnant' gets negated as a lived state of being, this time by fiat of projected retrospect.

To call out this selectivity is not to diminish the fact that many people do feel they have no choice but to have an abortion, or are directly coerced into having one: for example, when threatened by an abusive partner, or as when a number of pregnant Black women in the 1980s and 90s were given the 'choice' of abortion or prison by the state after testing positive for drugs.³³ Anti-abortion feminists are right to be outraged that so many people make decisions they don't want to make because of economic hardship, employment requirements and gender-based violence, and by the long, scandalous, ongoing history of state control of impoverished, disabled and racialised women's reproduction. But why does this outrage not extend any further? Why is it harnessed to support reproductive coercion, control and cruelty of another kind? As reproductive justice activists have demonstrated in all kinds of contexts, the right to be pregnant and have a child, and to raise the children we have in healthy and safe environments, necessarily goes hand in hand with the right *not to*. One right cannot exist without the other, because without both, there are no reproductive rights and freedoms at all. So even in a society entirely liberated from economic injustice, patriarchal domination and sexual violence, with all the support that pregnant and child-raising people could ever need, abortion access too will always be needed. For how could pregnancy ever be undertaken freely without the freedom to opt out?

For all its progressive packaging, then, leftist anti-abortion feminism is not so far from the Mama-Grizzly Sarah Palin variety after all, because it reduces down to the usual patriarchal formulas: either a woman who does not want to be pregnant is no real woman at all, and hence forcing her to gestate and give birth against her will can still be deemed 'pro-woman'; or all women really do want to be pregnant and become mothers deep down – even if they may think, feel and know they don't – and so reproductive control is really reproductive kindness. This is a feminism that claims to stand up for the poorest and most oppressed women, but rhetorically constructs those

women as victims in need of ‘abortion rescue’ and uses them as pawns in its anti-abortion argument. It calls for ‘solidarity’ yet promotes a divisive populist message that pro-abortion rights activists are ‘elite’ feminists packing off ‘desperate’ women to the abortion clinic because it is easier than fighting for economic and social justice. And though it prefers not to speak of criminal punishment (even posturing in some cases as being against mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex), making abortion illegal is nevertheless a fundamental objective for many leftist anti-abortion feminist groups and individuals. While trying to set themselves apart from the anti-abortion right, their relationship is actually more of the ‘good cop/bad cop’ type: the left side lets the right side do the dirty work of making abortion a crime, while they usher in the bottles and nappies and maternity pay. They claim that ‘we simply want to work to make the world a better and safer place for women and children’,³⁴ but remain rather silent on the fact that it is overwhelmingly poor women and disproportionately women of colour – the very women they are claiming to represent – that get arrested, prosecuted and incarcerated in the US for ‘fetal homicide’ or ‘child endangerment’. And now the court has overturned *Roe*, the state power exercised in the name of ‘foetal protection’ or ‘the unborn’ will be greatly increased.³⁵

It should also be emphasised that while leftist anti-abortion feminists may call for vital economic transformations like universal healthcare, childcare and wealth redistribution – and so it may seem that there is much common ground with reproductive justice feminists – the two groups are ultimately working to and from contradictory aims. Undoubtedly there are anti-abortion feminist grassroots initiatives that have made a serious difference to pregnant and parenting individuals in need of shelter, sympathy and basic items like food and formula. But we must not forget that the overarching goal of anti-abortion feminist activism is the ending of abortion, rather than enabling all people with the capacity for pregnancy to be self-determining agents with real options and multiple life possibilities before them. When anti-abortion feminist groups reach out to ‘abortion-vulnerable’ women and try to improve their material well-being, it is with the intention of keeping them pregnant; and when they call for revolution, it is with the aim of making abortion not just illegal and inaccessible but ‘un-

thinkable’ – a totalitarian ambition, as Susan Pedersen points out, if ever there was one.³⁶

‘Protecting the most vulnerable’

Another way in which anti-abortion feminists try to turn the tables is by claiming that only anti-abortion feminism holds true to the ‘core feminist principle’ of ‘protecting the most vulnerable’ – one of the most ubiquitous phrases in the discourse. Here the saviour complex is directed not so much toward the would-be aborter who doesn’t realise her own interests, but toward the foetus as abortion’s ultimate victim. While the right side of the anti-abortion movement seeks to promote the idea of ‘foetal personhood’ in the public sphere and have it recognised in law, leftist anti-abortion feminist groups tend to speak in secular terms and generally appeal instead to the ‘humanity’ of the foetus, co-opting human rights discourse in an effort to break the association of ‘pro-life’ values with Christian belief systems and political-economic power. The idea is that focusing on the ‘humanness’ of fetuses bypasses theological and philosophical debates over the ‘personhood’ category, because it is simply self-evident that a ‘human being’ is a human organism, and that the development of a human organism begins at fertilisation. This is just ‘science’. So a foetus, even a blastocyst, counts as a ‘human being’: ‘You do not have to be religious to value human life. You do not have to be religious to see the humanity of the fetus’.³⁷ It is also treated as self-evident that fetuses are the most vulnerable of all human beings, and that to be on the side of ‘life’ is to be against all forms of violence and killing (though no clarity is provided on whether this includes self-defence against misogynist violence or the uprisings of the colonised and enslaved).

Leftist anti-abortion feminist groups thus claim to be founded upon a ‘consistent life ethic’ of nonviolence ‘from womb to tomb’ and align anti-abortionism with other causes that ‘protect human life’. Feminists Choosing Life of New York, for example, include abortion on their list of ‘publicly sanctioned lethal violence’ alongside war, euthanasia and capital punishment; and New Wave Feminists also align the anti-abortion cause with struggles against capital punishment and family separation at US borders. ‘Our human dignity’, they contend, ‘doesn’t begin at birth and it doesn’t end at the border.’³⁸

From this perspective, feminists on the left who stand up against police brutality and killings while supporting foetal killing by elective abortion are deemed as guilty of hypocrisy as anti-abortionists on the right, who oppose gun control measures to protect children from school shootings while supporting laws that ‘protect the unborn’.



Bachiochi also charges that feminists on the left contradict ourselves when we demand abortion rights because we reject the ideology of property rights as applied to the economy, yet ‘embrace it as applied to a pregnant woman and her unborn child’.³⁹ Caricaturing the pro-abortion rights image of pregnancy as the invasion of a sovereign individual’s body-property by a trespasser, Bachiochi argues that feminism must give up the ‘Lockean’ commitment to bodily autonomy and self-ownership, and instead ground itself in a philosophy of interdependence and care premised on our shared vulnerability:

A post-Roe America will need to move beyond its wrong-headed obsession with autonomy. It will need to align both its rhetoric and its policies better with the realities of human existence and so should work to bring forth a renewed solidarity instead. We humans are not best understood as rights-bearing bundles of desires who pro-

gress through life by the sheer force of our autonomous wills. We are beings who are deeply dependent on one another for every good in life – first and foremost for our very existence, as we did not come to be by an act of our own will.⁴⁰

But as Bachiochi well knows, plenty of feminists on the left have articulated arguments supporting abortion that are in no way premised upon concepts of the body as ‘property’.⁴¹ It is not to John Locke that we turn, but feminist philosophers like Simone de Beauvoir, Iris Marion Young or Kathryn Sophia Belle, for whom the body is our mode of being in the world and not an object owned; or Judith Butler and Lisa Guenther, who for decades have worked to elaborate a bodily politics of vulnerability and interdependence as an alternative to liberal individualism. These latter philosophers reject the masculinist notion of vulnerability as an affliction or affront to the individual which must be vanquished, promoting instead an ambiguous model of vulnerability as an ‘openness to being affected’: a shared and inescapable condition of existence which makes possible not only violence, harm and exploitation, but also collectivity, care and love.⁴² Yet this existential fact of vulnerability and interdependence, as Erinn Gilson insists, does not in itself come with a set of normative principles.⁴³ So while Bachiochi contends that the vulnerability of the foetus automatically bestows an ‘affirmative duty of care’ upon the pregnant person (and the rest of us) to keep it alive, Gilson, Butler and others argue that the supposition of vulnerability can only be ‘a starting point rather than a concluding one: it does not have ameliorative normative force but rather is the supposition from which we can begin to reckon with political and ethical difficulties’.⁴⁴ How do specific discursive systems and operations of power transform our ‘openness to being affected’ into unequal and unjust social relations? What political and ethical responses are necessitated by different forms of vulnerability? Are keeping alive and ‘protecting’ the only forms that care can take? Are they always acts of care?

The politics of vulnerability

When we take this critical approach, we must indeed consider how fetuses are made vulnerable by their dependence upon a living pregnant body, and on the decision-making of the pregnant person so embodied, shaped by

the circumstances in which they live. But we also need to examine how the foetus is framed and produced as vulnerable through particular discursive and visual techniques. The anti-abortion narrative of the foetus's vulnerability implies that the foetus just *is* vulnerable, as if its vulnerability somehow exists outside historically shifting sociopolitical contexts. This gives 'the vulnerability of the foetus', as Katie Oliviero argues, a commonsense, instinctive appeal, promising 'an irrefutability where bodily harm is obvious and outside the manipulative forces of ideology'. Yet the 'emotional and moral clarity' promised by the notion of vulnerability 'conceals the discursive production of meaning'.⁴⁵ At no other time in American history have embryos and foetuses been so represented as 'beautiful, precious, vulnerable creatures that require the utmost levels of protection'.⁴⁶ It is through highly emotive and sensationalist rhetoric that the foetus comes to be understood as the most vulnerable, most helpless, most defenceless of all 'human beings', and through cartoon sketches and highly mediated sonogram imagery that it is rendered as a baby-in-waiting, 'who only requires further incubation in a maternal body in order to emerge as the autonomous subject that it already "is" in nascent form'.⁴⁷

What also must be questioned is the quantitative presumption that the foetus is the *most* vulnerable in the situation that is pregnancy. It is true that the relation between the foetal body and pregnant body is asymmetric and uneven: the foetus is passively dependent upon the pregnant body for its continuing existence, while the pregnant person does not, in most cases, similarly depend upon the continuing existence of the foetus for their own life. Yet a pregnant person is not simply an incubator *in which* a pregnancy takes place and *on which* a foetus depends. Pregnancy is a transformative state of being that brings multiple experiential possibilities and multiple forms of burden, pressure and risk. Miscarriage and particularly stillbirth, for instance, can put a pregnant person in significant physical peril, especially when medical care is absent or withheld for political reasons; and pregnancies that continue to term can also cause extreme illness, pain, injury (both temporary and permanent) and sometimes death – a risk that in the US is highest for low-income women, women of colour and Indigenous women.⁴⁸ Pregnant people from disadvantaged social groups are made disproportionately vulnerable by

insufficient material, social and emotional support, the stresses of everyday racism, sexism, classism, ableism and xenophobia, and by laws controlling pregnancy that remove their rights to bodily integrity and may see them arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned.

Anti-abortion feminists, however, refrain from grappling with the physically, psychologically, ethically and politically complex varieties of entangled vulnerability that pregnancy entails (and which pregnant people themselves negotiate on an everyday basis). As we have seen, the 'pro-woman' case against abortion rests on the claim that it is not chosen by, but forced upon, women. In relation to abortion, then, women are only vulnerable, and never at the same time self-determining agents. But when the argument shifts to the pro-foetus tack, the pregnant person is figured as the very source of the foetus's vulnerability who must be placed under state control or social imperative to enforce their 'duty of care' to it. As Lauren Berlant described it, the pregnant person is expected to 'act like a mother' to the foetus whilst effectively being made a 'child to the fetus', through the de-legitimation of their agency and identity as they become 'more minor and less politically represented than the fetus'.⁴⁹ The humanism that claims to consistently 'recognize the full humanity of both people groups, women and the unborn', thus reveals itself to be a strictly hierarchical humanism in which the actual lived lives of pregnant people are subordinated to the very form of 'life' that would not exist without them. Insofar as the foetus is rendered as 'vulnerable' or 'precarious life', as Penelope Deutscher argues, the vulnerability and precarity of the pregnant person is redoubled: 'The making of fetal precariousness is a making of maternal precariousness'.⁵⁰

The anti-abortion feminist claim that they are 'protecting the most vulnerable' is therefore a perfect illustration of what Oliviero describes as a 'reactive vulnerability claim': an invocation of 'vulnerability' which licenses forms of paternalist control that exacerbate the actual everyday vulnerabilities and precarities experienced by oppressed social groups. A particularly egregious example is the way that some contemporary US anti-abortion feminists seek to align themselves with Black Lives Matter – a movement founded by Black women which has been extremely clear that 'full access to abortion care is necessary for all Black people'⁵¹ – by

claiming that removing abortion access is essential for racial justice because it will protect and save 'Black lives'. In a report entitled 'ALL Black Lives Matter', for instance, Feminists Choosing Life of New York cite the comparatively higher rate of abortions had by Black women as evidence that abortion is a tool of eugenic white supremacy and one of the foremost threats to 'Black lives'. It suggests that 'if Planned Parenthood tends to set up camp where large populations of people of colour are, it may be evidence of racial targeting and a continuation of their eugenic policies from the past'; and approvingly cites the 'abortion is Black genocide' myth that has been pushed by both Black and white anti-abortion activists on the right for years.⁵² Including rates of abortion within overall rates of 'death', the FCLNY report states that 'the abortion rate in the black community exceeds the top ten causes of death among blacks combined', treating a Black woman having an abortion as equivalent to the killing of George Floyd by Derek Chauvin.

Once again, there are very real issues being invoked here. Planned Parenthood, under Margaret Sanger's direction and beyond, has indeed been complicit with white supremacist eugenics; and the higher incidence of abortion among Black communities must of course be understood within contexts of structural racism that leave Black women as a group with fewer resources to raise children, inadequate housing and healthcare, and less access to reproductive services including quality contraception. These factors also produce higher rates of miscarriage and stillbirth. But in this 73-page report by FCLNY, there is not one single mention of the reproductive justice movement, which has led the way in exposing and opposing the racist past and present of abortion provision in the US while also working to secure equal abortion access for all. Nor does it mention the robust response of Black feminists to the 'Black genocide' myth which, in the words of Loretta Ross, 're-enslaves Black women by making us breeders for someone else's cause'.⁵³ Instead, in the name of protecting 'unborn Black lives', anti-abortion feminist groups like FCLNY present Black women as simply falling victim to Planned Parenthood and the racist state.⁵⁴ Yet while being treated as victims and dupes with no agency to decide for themselves, they are simultaneously designated as dangerous subjects who 'wield the power to kill and let live' over the 'most vulnerable'.⁵⁵ The chilling logic is that Black wo-

men's reproductive lives cannot be left up to them, in case they inadvertently abort their own people out of existence.

Sex and consequences

The final core argument made by anti-abortion feminists relates directly to sex. It is said that abortion is harmful to women not only because it forces them to end the lives of their 'unborn children', but also because it leads to their sexual exploitation. As abortion enables 'consequence-free' sex, the argument goes, it perpetuates a 'casual sex ethic' that is to the benefit of men and the detriment of women, because 'the kind of sex that women want' is committed and reproductive.⁵⁶ Indeed, the claim is sometimes made that women simply are not *designed* for 'consequence-free' sex because of their presumed capacity to become pregnant.⁵⁷

This line of argument is much more prominent in the more socially conservative strands of anti-abortion feminism, like the Catholic version Bachioni has constructed which makes common cause with the new essentialism promoted by 'gender-critical' feminism:

The modern-day feminist movement on the whole has difficulty condemning epidemic pornography, the sexual mutilation of children at the behest of a cultish gender ideology and other forms of sexual exploitation (from "sex work" to now normative casual sex) ... and as increasing numbers of ordinary women lament today's male-oriented sexual norms ... easy abortion access in the United States has allowed *women to be taken advantage of* more fully in the workplace and in the bedroom.⁵⁸

The more progressive-presenting strands of anti-abortion feminism, in contrast, tend to refrain from such overt transphobia and austere sexual moralising. Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising, for instance, recognise 'that there are many people who are sexually active and are not prepared for or do not desire children', and proclaim their commitment to 'radical inclusivity' and 'amplifying LGBTQ+ voices'.⁵⁹ But they also say explicitly that bodily integrity is not an absolute value and that 'it is unjust to deny a pre-born child's right to life in favour of a bodily autonomy right that could have been vindicated earlier, and without violence, through the practice of abstinence or contraception'.⁶⁰ Unmarried sex for pleasure is just about allowed, then, but spontaneity, mistakes or

mind-changing are not, at least if you have the capacity to get pregnant.

Contraception itself, moreover, is a matter of debate in anti-abortion feminist circles. If a form of contraception is deemed to be an 'abortifacient', including contraception that prevents implantation like the morning-after pill, there is general agreement that it cannot be permitted. But there is also intense suspicion of all forms of 'techno-pharmacological' contraception, including condoms and the pill, such that even the more apparently 'progressive' groups like PAAU admit to being divided on the issue. A common notion perpetuated by anti-abortion feminists, for instance, is that contraception actually increases the likelihood of unplanned and unwanted pregnancy, and therefore rates of abortion, because it encourages 'risky' and 'irresponsible' sexual behaviour by uncoupling sex from reproduction, allowing men to behave simply as 'coital animals'.⁶¹ A related argument is that the widespread availability and use of contraception means that women feel they can no longer use fear of pregnancy as a reason to say no to sex. And thus denied their role as gatekeepers, they end up consenting to sex they don't want. Indeed, this argument may even be given a #MeToo spin: for instance, when Bachiochi writes that 'As the #MeToo movement has revealed in spades, the new "coital animal" – lacking the formative schooling of desire expected of an aspiring gentleman – will not so readily heed the word "no"'.⁶²

The issue of consent, however, opens up a line of questioning that anti-abortion feminists may well prefer to shut down again. Consent plays an important role in their argument that pregnant people have to take responsibility for the reproductive consequences of sex, not only because of the 'sexual asymmetry' of 'biological design' (which means they are the ones who get pregnant and so have an in-built 'duty' to gestate), but also because they chose to have sex in the first place. FCLNY, for instance, write that 'in the overwhelming majority of cases, pregnancy is the result of consensual sex, meaning two people freely engage in the act that is known to potentially make new, completely dependent human children'.⁶³ Essentially, then, if you have the capacity for pregnancy, to consensually engage in sex is to forfeit your right to bodily integrity and self-determination in matters of reproduction. But if we accept the concurrent argument made by anti-abortion feminists like Bachio-

chi that the availability of abortion and contraception creates a 'casual sex culture' in which women feel they have to consent to sex they don't really want, this makes the '*you had sex so now you must face the consequences*' stance seem both weaker and harsher.

Further, once the question of consent has been raised, we must also ask what anti-abortion feminists have to say about non-consensual sex, and on this issue they can be harsh indeed. Some, like Bachiochi, do concede that abortion should be legally permitted when there has been an 'entire lack of consent', but this exception usually comes with many caveats: for instance, that it must occur very early in the pregnancy and must take place in a hospital setting.⁶⁴ Others say that all foetal lives are precious and so must not be ended no matter the circumstances of their conception. Feminists for Life, for example, say it would be 'discriminatory' to allow fetuses conceived through rape to be aborted while those conceived through consensual sex were allowed to live: 'People used to value a woman based on who her father or husband was. It is similarly medieval to value a child by the actions of her father. That way of thinking is patriarchal and antifeminist, and it should have gone out with the Dark Ages.'⁶⁵ They also make the case that abortion after rape is not in the interest of the survivor herself because it is 'a second act of violence against a woman who is raped'. Though 'it is normal to wish we could erase a painful memory such as rape', writes the FFL President Serrin Foster, 'the hard truth is that as much as we want to, we can't. Abortion doesn't erase a memory'. And so the pregnancy must be endured, because 'a child is never a punishment'.⁶⁶ A survivor of sexual violence, exploitation or coercion must not 'pass on' the violence to an 'innocent unborn child'. Indeed, in light of the anti-abortion feminist claim that state-mandated pregnancy is the route to bringing down the patriarchy, are we to infer that forcing rape survivors to gestate and give birth to their rapists' children is the way to bring an end to sexual violence once and for all?

Regrouping after Roe

When encountering statements like those cited above, it is very difficult to understand how anti-abortion feminism has any adherents at all. And it is worth emphasising again that it doesn't have many. But contemporary anti-

abortion feminists in the US have become increasingly adept at crafting affective rhetorical strategies and co-opting contemporary political movements like #MeToo or Black Lives Matter to advance their own cause. And the leftist strand may well be effective where right-wing anti-abortionism fails, precisely because of the ways in which mainstream US pro-choice politics tends to operate, and the kinds of alliances that emerge as a result. Though most people, for example, would not view the offers made by Google, Apple and JP Morgan to cover employees' travel costs to out-of-state abortion clinics as evidence of a patriarchal plot to force their pregnant employees into abortion, plenty will be feeling uncomfortable as the fall of *Roe* gets converted into a PR opportunity by corporate power.

There is surely little doubt now that what is required of all pro-abortion rights advocates and activists is a full commitment to the reproductive justice framework, which entails putting the most disadvantaged at the centre and fighting for proper socio-economic support for all kinds of pregnancies, whether they end in abortion, miscarriage, stillbirth or live birth. It also means 'connect[ing] the dots' between social issues that seem unrelated to traditional views of reproductive politics, from decarceration and prison abolition to environmental justice.⁶⁷ But there are still vital strategic questions to consider, including questions about coalition-building. Coalitions for reproductive justice clearly cannot include anti-abortion feminists like those discussed above who support the criminalisation of abortion, and therefore the criminalisation of pregnancy more generally, however progressive and feminist they may present themselves to be. We might as well, as Sarah Jones writes, set the tent on fire.⁶⁸ But what about those feminists who identify as 'pro-life' but do not seek to criminalise other people's reproductive decisions and so could be categorised simultaneously as 'pro-choice'? Or those who aim at 'abortion reduction' rather than elimination, and claim to be guided by the principles of reproductive justice?

There are various reproductive justice thinker-activists who argue for greater flexibility as we reconsider who our allies might be. As Andrea Smith argued in her 2005 'Beyond Pro-Life and Pro-Choice' article, for example, 'we often lose opportunities to work with people with whom we may have sharp disagreements but who may, with different political framings and organiz-

ing strategies, shift their positions'.⁶⁹ She cites as an example the North Baton Rouge Women's Help Center in Louisiana – a 'crisis pregnancy centre' that 'articulates its pro-life position from an anti-racist perspective'. Why, Smith, asks, would we automatically assume that Planned Parenthood is an ally and the Women's Help Center is not, when both organisations 'support some positions that are beneficial to women of colour' while 'equally support[ing] positions that are detrimental to them'? Instead, Smith argues, we must 'think more creatively about who we could work in coalition' with, while simultaneously 'hold[ing] those who claim to be our allies more accountable for the positions they take'.⁷⁰ To take another example, in the 2017 collection *Radical Reproductive Justice*, Loretta Ross and fellow editors include an essay by 'pro-life feminist' Mary Krane Derr which argues that the reproductive justice movement 'is less than it could be if it is not for all unborn and already born humans', while at the same time denouncing the criminalisation of pregnant and aborting women.⁷¹ The idea behind this inclusion, Ross states, was to show that the reproductive justice framework is 'broad enough to include a lot of different perspectives', including those the editors disagree with, and 'to show how we could use the framework in some inventive and creative ways to build a forward-looking movement'.⁷²

Arguably, though, there is a tension between this flexible approach to coalition-building and the growing feminist conviction that wrangling over the ethics of abortion has so far done us more harm than good. Mainstream abortion-rights advocacy has for decades adopted a reactive discursive strategy which has allowed the anti-abortion movement to set the terms of debate and curtail the sayable. 'Members of the general public who support abortion rights', writes Charlotte Shane, have thus 'been abandoned to the unforgivably self-defeating slogan of "safe, legal, and rare" and the polite-company taboo – accommodated by "my body, my choice" – against even uttering the word "abortion"'.⁷³ So, as the failure of this strategy is so painfully felt in this post-*Roe* moment, more and more feminists are going on the offensive, refusing to concede anything to 'pro-life' ideologies, and redefining the right to elective abortion in unequivocal terms as a positive right, which is not just to be defended but championed – wholeheartedly, unapologetically, absolutely: 'From now on, we who fight for reproductive

freedom must announce our cause in the clearest terms: every impregnable person has the right to not be pregnant'.⁷⁴ And it is difficult to see a place in this project for dialogue with those, such as Derr, who do not support criminalisation but do not support abortion either, reluctantly acknowledging that some kind of legal abortion access may be needed yet casting doubt on its morality.

To highlight this potential tension is not to present the capacious coalition-building approach taken by reproductive justice pioneers like Ross or Smith as concessionary, nor to presume that engaging opposing views is necessarily a 'gateway ... to a de-radicalised politics'.⁷⁵ The process of working through tensions and disagreements can indeed be generative, just as trying alternative framings and strategies can bring new people in. But there are nonetheless issues to address, because even if the most left-leaning 'pro-life' feminists on the fringe insist that they do not support legal restrictions and criminal punishment, or that they follow Loretta Ross rather than Serrin Foster, any kind of anti-abortion argument (however complex and caveated it might be) can bolster the principles under which the mainstream anti-abortion movement claims to operate – a movement which is entirely invested in the criminalisation and stigmatisation of abortion and which is going after further controls. Indeed, as argued above, the 'softer', leftist, secular versions can actually serve to broaden its appeal. So questions of strategic alliance are paramount as the terms on which feminists conduct our reproductive politics are re-set. How might calls to renew or expand our coalitions be squared with calls to consolidate our position, double down on our principles and 'meet the absolutism' of the right with an absolutism of our own?⁷⁶

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Notes

1. The brief was authored by Teresa Stanton Collett (Professor of Law at the University of St. Thomas and Director of its 'Prolife Centre'), Erika Bachiochi (Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and Senior Fellow at the Harvard-affiliated Abigail Adams Institute) and Helen M. Alvaré (Chair in Law and Liberty at Antonin Scalia Law School, George Mason University). It can be viewed here, accessed 5 October 2022: [supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/19/19-1392/185366/20210804180314919_19-1392](https://supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/19/19-1392/185366/20210804180314919_19-1392%20Brief%20of%20240%20Women%20Scholars%20et%20al%20In%20Support%20of%20Petitioners.pdf) Brief of 240 Women Scholars et al In Support of Petitioners.pdf.

2. Hazel V. Carby, 'Prejudice Rules: LRB Contributors on the Overturning of *Roe v. Wade*', *London Review of Books* 44:14 (21 July 2022). The Supreme Court rejected New York State's restrictions on carrying a concealed gun in public and ruled that the constitutional 'right to keep and bear arms', affirmed for self-defence within the home in 2008, can now be applied outside it.

3. Amia Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex: Feminism in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 155.

4. The Ohio chapter of NOW went on to expel Goltz in 1974, though her membership of NOW at the national level was not revoked. See Laury Oaks, 'What Are Pro-Life Feminists Doing on Campus?', *NWSA Journal* 21:1 (Spring 2009), 178–203; or Mary Ziegler, 'Women's Rights on the Right: The History and Stakes of Modern Pro-Life Feminism, 1968 to the Present', *Berkeley Journal of Gender Law & Justice* 232 (2013), 232–268.

5. Laury Oaks, 'What Are Pro-Life Feminists Doing on Campus?', 181–182.

6. Ibid.

7. Lauren Enriquez, 'How the New Feminist Resistance Leaves Out American Women', *New York Times*, 27 February 2017, [nytimes.com/2017/02/27/opinion/how-the-new-feminist-resistance-leaves-out-american-women.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/27/opinion/how-the-new-feminist-resistance-leaves-out-american-women.html).

8. Erika Bachiochi, 'After *Roe v. Wade* and *Dobbs v. Jackson*', *Plough*, 25 June 2022, <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/culture-of-life/after-roe-v-wade-and-dobbs-v-jackson>.

9. Ibid. See also 'The Feminist Revolution Has Stalled: Blame *Roe v. Wade*', *America: The Jesuit Review*, 1 November 2021, <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2021/11/01/roe-wade-casey-texas-heartbeat-law-241725>.

10. In her critical analysis of 'feminist storytelling' in the 1990s and 2000s, Clare Hemmings identifies three main narrative structures that are deployed: 1. the history of feminist thought and practice is constructed as a 'progress narrative' whereby feminism becomes ever more enlightened and inclusive; 2. a 'loss narrative' whereby feminism gradually loses its political efficacy and theoretical punch; 3. a 'return narrative' whereby feminism loses its way but recovers itself by looping back through the past. While Hemmings highlights feminist 'new materialism' as the core example of a feminism that constructs its identity through a 'return narrative', it is interesting to observe how anti-abortion feminism also deploys this historiographical structure. See Clare Hemmings, 'Telling Feminist Stories', *Feminist Theory* 6: 2 (2005), 115–139.

11. Feminists For Nonviolent Choices, 'What We Believe', accessed 5 October 2022, <https://www.ffnvc.org/what-we-believe>. As another example, Feminists Choosing Life of New York write: 'The founders of the feminist movement all opposed abortion in the strongest terms. Pro-life feminism actually preceded pro-choice feminisms and has been here ever since. It was only in the 1960's that the National Organization of Women (NOW) incorporated abortion into their version of feminist goals and intertwined the idea of abortion and feminism in the minds of the public.' 'FAQs', accessed 5 October 2022, [fclny.org/faqs](https://www.fclny.org/faqs).

12. See, for example, Tracy A. Thomas, 'Misappropriating Women's History in the Law and Politics of Abortion', *Seattle University Law Review* 36:1 (2012); Ann D. Gordon and Lynn Sherr, 'No, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton Were Not Antiabortionists', *Time*, 10 November 2015; or Ann D. Gordon, 'Knowing Susan B. Anthony: The Stories We Tell of a Life', in *Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights*, eds. Christine Ridarsky and Mary Huth (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012).
13. Bachiochi, 'After *Roe v. Wade*'. A fuller exposition of her views can be found in *The Rights of Women: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2021), which draws particularly on the work of Mary Wollstonecraft who she appropriates here for the anti-abortion cause.
14. Cady Stanton and Anthony, for example, did support abolition but opposed the 14th and 15th Amendments which enshrined Black voting rights in the constitution due to the use of the phrase 'male citizens' in the text of the 14th, arguing that the cause of white women would be set back and humiliated if Black men were granted suffrage rights ahead of them. See, for example, Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2009); Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).
15. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 122. This is a widely quoted line that appears, for example, in Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981).
16. Tracy A. Thomas, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Feminist Foundations of Family Law* (New York: NYU Press, 2020).
17. See, for instance, Dorothy E. Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon, 1997); or Loretta J. Ross and Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press: 2017).
18. SisterSong, Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, accessed 5 October 2022, <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>.
19. Judith Roof, 'Generational Difficulties, or The Fear of a Barren History', *Generations: Academic Feminists in Dialogue*, eds. Devoney Looser and E. Ann Kaplan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 71; Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third Wave Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004). Elsewhere I have emphasised that to dismiss generational paradigms as wholly or exclusively patriarchal and Oedipal is to miss the multiple meanings and temporalities that they can express and establish within feminist discourse. See Victoria Browne, *Feminism, Time and Nonlinear History* (London and New York: Palgrave, 2014). For example, we should consider the particular resonance and meaning of matrilineal metaphors within the context of Black US feminism/womanism, as writers like Alice Walker have deployed the metaphor of matrilineage to overcome a brutal history of dislocation and disinheritance (see, for example, *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harcourt, 1983)).
20. Quoted in Oaks, 'What Are Pro-Life Feminists Doing on Campus?', 186–187.
21. Feminists for Life, 'Accomplishments', accessed 5 October 2022, <https://www.feministsforlife.org/accomplishments/>.
22. Bachiochi, 'After *Roe v. Wade*'.
23. Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising, accessed 5 October 2022, <https://paaunow.org/>.
24. New Wave Feminists, 'About', accessed 5 October 2022, <https://www.newwavefeminists.com/aboutnewwavefeminists.com/about>; and Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising.
25. Bachiochi, 'I Couldn't Vote for Trump but I'm Grateful for his Supreme Court Picks', *New York Times*, 7 December 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/07/opinion/trump-supreme-court-abortion-dobbs-roe.html>.
26. Bachiochi, 'The Feminist Revolution has Stalled'.
27. Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising, 'Stances: Capitalism', accessed 5 October 2022, <https://paaunow.org/stances-capitalism>.
28. Bachiochi, 'The feminist revolution has stalled'.
29. Bachiochi, 'After *Roe v. Wade*'; 'Reclaiming Feminism from the Logic of the Market', *Newsweek*, 15 July 2021, [newsweek.com/reclaiming-feminism-logic-market-opinion-1607303](https://www.newsweek.com/reclaiming-feminism-logic-market-opinion-1607303).
30. New Wave Feminists, 'Dobbs Amicus Brief – Press Release', accessed 5 October 2022, https://www.fclny.org/_files/ugd/689b6c_08441c88202f493a8c1b104f0fbfd7a1.pdf.
31. Ibid.
32. FCLNY, 'FAQs', accessed 5 October 2022, [fclny.org/faqs](https://www.fclny.org/faqs).
33. Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, 181.
34. New Wave Feminists, 'The Bomb Shelter', accessed 5 October 2022, [newwavefeminists.com/thebombshelter](https://www.newwavefeminists.com/thebombshelter).
35. National Advocates for Pregnant Women, 'National Advocates for Pregnant Women Files Brief with U.S. Supreme Court Focusing on the Impact of Mississippi's Abortion Ban on All Pregnant People, Not Only Those Seeking to End a Pregnancy', 20 September 2021, accessed 5 October 2022, [nationaladvocatesforpregnantwomen.org/dobbs-brief-release-9-2021](https://www.nationaladvocatesforpregnantwomen.org/dobbs-brief-release-9-2021).
36. Susan Pedersen, 'Prejudice Rules: LRB Contributors on the Overturning of *Roe v. Wade*', *London Review of Books* 44:14, 21 July 2022.
37. PAAU, 'Stances: Abortion', accessed 5 October 2022, [paaunow.org/stances](https://www.paaunow.org/stances).
38. FCLNY, 'Mission and Purpose', accessed 5 October 2022, <https://www.fclny.org/mission-and-purpose-staff-and-board>; NWF, 'The Bomb Shelter', accessed 5 October 2022, <https://www.newwavefeminists.com/thebombshelter>.
39. Bachiochi, 'What Makes a Fetus a Person?', *New York Times*, 1 July 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/opinion/fetal-personhood-constitution.html>.
40. Bachiochi, 'I Couldn't Vote for Trump'.
41. See, for example, Margaret Olivia Little, 'Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty to Gestate', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 2:3 (1999), 295–312; or Catriona Mackenzie 'Abortion and Embodiment', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 70:2 (1992), 136–55.
42. See, for example, Victoria Browne, Jason Danelly and Doerthe Rosenow, eds., *Vulnerability and the Politics of Care: Transdisciplinary Dialogues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); or Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay, eds., *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

43. Erinn Gilson, 'The Problems and Potentials of Vulnerability', in *Vulnerability and the Politics of Care*, 85–6.
44. *Ibid.*, 92.
45. Katie E. Oliviero, 'Vulnerability's Ambivalent Political Life: Trayvon Martin and the Racialized and Gendered Politics of Protection', *Feminist Formations* 28:1 (2016), 19.
46. Deborah Lupton, 'Introduction: Conceptualising and Configuring the Unborn Human', in *The Unborn Human*, ed. Lupton (Open Humanities Press, 2013), 1.
47. Lisa Guenther, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the Politics of Reproduction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 146.
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