NWSA: One Year After The Dobbs Decision

One year ago, when SCOTUS issued their decision in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization case, they not only reversed 49 years of precedent and disproportionately impacted economically challenged communities of color and marginalized groups who were already navigating the existing healthcare obstacles, but they undermined the health, privacy, autonomy, and safety of all women, girls, and people with wombs.

At that time, the National Women's Studies Association felt compelled to speak out against this decision. It has been a challenging year, and we are still alarmed, concerned, and furious. That decision represented the culmination of work by the conservative right over several decades to reverse Roe v. Wade (1973) and give states the ultimate authority to govern, police, and oversee our most personal decisions about our bodies. This was a complete reversal of the Roe decision—in that case, they concluded that the constitutional rights to privacy and liberty protected a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy. Justice Harry Blackmun, who wrote the opinion for the majority, noted that while "the Constitution does not explicitly mention any right to privacy," several prior decisions had found "a guarantee of certain areas or zones of privacy." This guarantee of privacy is grounded in several amendments within the Bill of Rights and in the 14th Amendment's guarantee of liberty, which, taken together, "create zones of privacy in areas of society such as marriage, contraception, family relationships, and child-rearing."

Since the Dobbs decision, at least 20 states have enacted a near or full ban on abortion. Multiple states are discussing and debating legislation designed to attack, deny, or limit our ability to make our own reproductive choices. We have also seen some states fight back as 25 states, including Washington, DC, have passed laws protecting abortion, and in some cases providing funding, shielding those seeking or providing abortions, and protecting people from other states coming into their states seeking an abortion. To be clear, NWSA, the world's largest network of feminist scholars, educators, and activists, unequivocally affirms that a person's right to govern their body is a fundamental human right that must be enshrined into law in every state.

As we take a moment to stop and recognize how hard it has been over the past year, we urge you (again) to practice radical and intentional self-care. We need you to be healthy and prepared for whatever is coming next. We are in the midst of a fight for our lives and our livelihoods, and we must continue to push back and speak out. As we continue to prepare for our Annual Conference in Baltimore, we want to take every available moment to organize and push back. We must remember that they will try to silence
us. They will try to stop us. They will try to bury us, but they do not realize that we are seeds, and we will grow where we are planted and fight where we bloom.

In love and solidarity,
Karsonya Wise Whitehead, NWSA President
Erica Williams, NWSA Secretary
Domonique Hill, NWSA Member-at-Large
Beverly Guy Sheftall, NWSA Past President

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