

United States - Trump, the Republican controlled Congress and the War on Women

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For those that have been watching the right-wing war on women for at least a decade, people may think that all we are going to see is a continuation of the attacks on women's reproductive rights. While it is also a continuation, what is happening now actually will shift things more quickly and in an incredibly dangerous direction. I am beginning to feel like we are moving towards the world in *The Handmaid's Tale* (always a horror novel to me), with the only thing missing is someone to play Serena Joy (but I am certain that there are some fundamentalist women willing to step into the role).

So while we have become used to attempts in Congress to provide civil rights to zygotes, attempts to prevent working class women from accessing reproductive rights, attempts to eliminate funding to planned parenthood, attempts to prevent different medical procedures for abortion, attempts to legislate against late term abortions, attempts to block fair pay for women, blocking abortion coverage on health insurance plans, what is the difference now? And are elected state and federal officials the only problem? Certainly, attacks on women's reproductive rights through legislative action and attempts at plebiscites continue. In South Dakota, access to funds for abortion are limited only to the life of the mother in clear violation of the Hyde Amendment, there have been constant attempts to make abortion illegal in the state and it is a constant struggle to maintain the limited access to abortion in the state.

We have also seen problems with the Judiciary where a judge can block rules [1] under the ACA opposing discrimination against transgender people and abortion protections. While this injunction has no national standing irrespective of his claims, if accepted it will impact people in the areas of his jurisdiction. Many judges are elected or appointed based upon political positions rather than their legal expertise, so this is a serious problem. This case was brought in 5 different states [2] by faith-based groups trying to block these specific parts of the legislation. Religious groups have tried to block offering contraceptives as part of their health insurance policies based upon religion conscientious objection clauses; they have been successful in some of their attempts at the Supreme Court.

The actions of religious groups (in the US, it is not only the Catholics that have been blocking access to contraception and abortion rights, there are fundamentalist Protestants as well) working to undermine women's bodily autonomy have had significant impact upon accessing reproductive rights. Catholic hospitals [3] routinely do not provide proper reproductive health care including emergency contraceptives, preventive contraceptives, will not provide for voluntary sterilisation and

will only provide abortions if the mother's life is at stake (sometimes [4]). While there are other options available for this treatment in most places, there are areas in the country where Catholic hospitals are the only available places for treatment. The constant harassment at abortion clinics by faith-based groups, the murders of abortion providers, the attacks on the clinics and patients are long standing problems.

The problem is not only that of reproductive rights of which many women are aware, it also relates to women's access to healthcare, it relates to equal justice under the law for men and women (and for that matter between white men and everyone else), it relates to attempts to redefine rape, an understanding of what sexual assault constitutes. It relates to economic issues such as the fact that while equal pay legislation has existed for decades, women still earn less than men in the same jobs, they earn less in women's traditional employment even using the same skills that men have, they do not have paid maternity leave, they do not have access to free or affordable childcare, women are still over-represented in part-time minimum wage jobs and working several of them to ensure that they can still care for their families and homes.

Women's inequality relates to the fact that women are more dependent upon social security (they still live longer than men and had lower wages and social security is tied to lifetime income). So, as an example, my mother worked and had her own social security pension which was lower than my fathers (lower wages and hence contributions). When my father died, she lost her own pension and received my father's in return; her contributions were lost and while she got my father's pension, her income was lower than when he was alive. Given that women's income is still lower than men's, that still holds.

As such, cuts to social security or its privatisation will undermine retired people's plans, but will impact more strongly on women; women are also more dependent upon health benefits for the poor. Cuts to Medicaid, cuts to children's benefits (or the loss of healthcare for children) will hit the poorest hardest as they have to cover their children's healthcare.

Why is this different than before?

In many senses it is not different, the attacks on women's rights will continue. But there are some differences. I, for one, cannot remember a Presidential candidate being accused of routinely sexually assaulting women nor talking about it as though it was normal "locker room talk" before. I remember strongly when a Supreme Court nominee (Clarence Thomas) was accused of sexual harassment and protected and appointed to the court (I will never forget the manner in which Anita Hill was treated by Senators during the confirmation hearings), there were certainly accusations against Bill Clinton for sexual harassment and sexual assault, but these came out after he was in office. However, now we are talking about a Presidential candidate whose perspective on women basically views them as objects available for his sexual pleasure along with his "right" as a wealthy white man to act on his desires. While Trump had no negative views on contraception or abortion (as far as I can ascertain) prior to running as the Republican Party candidate for President, he jumped on board the anti-abortion ship like an old hand.

The appointment of Mike Pence is not only Trump's insurance policy against impeachment or assassination as many people are saying; the choice of Pence was to bringing the fundamentalist Christians on board to vote for Trump; in exchange he is appointing people to his cabinet that hold anti-abortion positions. Pence is the closest that fundamentalist Christians have come to the White House and if you know anything about Pence, that should scare you.

Vice President elect Mike Pence is a virulent misogynist (and homophobe), a born-again Catholic

evangelical who loves hiding behind his religion in attacking women's rights (and LGBTQ equality). As Indiana governor, he opposed sex education. He opposed needle exchanges for addicts, vitiated funding for Planned Parenthood (which also does HIV testing) and led to an HIV outbreak in one town. He also signed a bill into law [5] that opposed abortion on the grounds of foetal abnormality, on the grounds of sex, religion, nationality, etc. While that may sound ok to some, when women go to have an abortion, they should **not be asked why** they want to have one, only that they want the procedure done. Those performing the procedure would have been subject to criminal liability of wrongful death (thereby forcing doctors to invade a women's privacy before they would undertake a procedure); of course there was the unnecessary foetal ultrasound and hearing of the foetal heartbeat 18 hours before the procedure (of course they would have to pay for this), required the remains of fetuses to be buried or cremated, doctors having admitting privileges at local hospitals and the illegality of collecting foetal tissue (I guess unless to cremate or bury it).

He, of course, gutted Planned Parenthood funding when governor of Indiana [6]. He wants *Roe and Doe* "consigned to the ash heap of history." To add to the pleasure of Pence, when he was in the House, he opposed the Lily Ledbetter fair pay act (wondering how that relates to his religion? As far as I know, the Catholic Church does not oppose women working, as long as it does not interfere with women's primary role as mothers and carers; perhaps that is the basis of the "pin money" nonsense) at 3 different times when it was up for passage in the House. His economic positions have also impacted women strongly, while a Representative he opposed raising the federal minimum wage and while governor of Indiana, he signed a law blocking local governments forcing business to raise wages or benefits above the federal minimum and repealed a law requiring construction companies on publicly funded projects to pay the prevailing wage. As people should know, women are overly represented in minimum wage work (but his problem seems to be with the notion of a minimum wage rather than women being the primary recipients of it).

One major problem that we are seeing is the attempt to normalise misogyny in national discourse. This is not only the arguments by someone like the late unlamented Phyllis Schlafley who argued that rape is occurring on campus because women are there; if they were not at college it would not happen. It is not only shifting the blame away from the perpetrators of rape, sexual assault and violence against women onto the victims due to how they dress, how they look and that they are women. It is a concentrated attempt to change the way that women are perceived in the society, to normalise violence against them, to stereotype them into traditional roles. It is also to deny them basic guarantees to reproductive health care, to eliminate women's bodily autonomy as a human right.

In many senses, we can see the revival of the perspectives on women that should have disappeared along with the 1950s and these impact women daily as it is generalised ideology. This is not only about women's bodily autonomy (although that is a major issue in the US), it is also about the continuation of the myth of women's work as "pin money" irrespective of the fact that wages have decreased throughout the US for the majority and that our income is essential to maintain household income and not to purchase little luxuries. The denial of women's income as an essential contribution to household income (for single mothers, it is the only income unless they have access to benefits as well), I think is part of the fear that women may actually achieve financial independence from men, heaven forbid that their incomes exceed those of men.

As such, it is even more than the idea that women's only role in society is their role in social reproduction; they seem to believe that somehow all our contributions to society are reduced down to this specific role. The bullshit of the Madonna-Whore view of women is extremely evident and this nonsense is being revived as though there is truth to this stereotype of women. Those not fitting these descriptions (the vast majority of women) are being typecast as outsiders in their own lives. Look at how Trump talks to women and about women, how he views them in relation to him and

then tell me that you do not see this? In many senses he views women's role as how to serve him and men, not to stand as independent human beings.

Add to this, the misogyny of the Christian fundamentalists that he has nominated to his cabinet and those serving in Congress and you can see the picture.

The normalisation of misogyny legitimises misogyny, it becomes acceptable, or if not acceptable, something that is no longer outside of normal behaviour. This holds with treating women as sexual objects rather than human subjects and it holds as well as insisting that women are asking for special treatment because they are women (like health care coverage for maternity and access to affordable birth control under their control rather than their male partners). In many senses, Ben Carson [7] (up for director of Housing and Urban Development) saying that LGBTQ people will no longer face special treatment by being protected from bigots in accessing HUD funds/loans to purchase properties obtained through HUD and/or housing opportunities. LGBTQ couples are not asking for special treatment, they are asking for protection from homophobes just as Black people are demanding protection from racism when getting a property from HUD or renting a property from a private landlord or buying a home. Since straight white couples do not suffer from racism or homophobia when renting a property, all that people are asking for is the same treatment as other people.

Trump and his Nominated Cabinet

Let's start with Trump and his nominees (who even if they have to be confirmed by the Senate, will be confirmed by the Senate unless there are, at minimum, 3 defections from the Republicans and assuming that the two independent members of the Senate vote with the Democrats; a 50:50 split means the tie is broken by the Vice President, Mike Pence, who will vote with the Republicans) as there are certain things that all these nominees seem to share.

What unites Trump's nominees?

They are all extremely wealthy (this nominated cabinet is one of the wealthiest appointed in history) and are part of the ruling class; this is different than the normal as rarely do they participate directly, leaving this influence in the hands of their proxies (also known as Congress people, lobbyists, and high level employees of finance capital);

They are all supporters of the free market who view government regulation and state/public sector expenditure as undermining the free market, this not only holds for obvious things like finance capital, manufacturing and industrial capital, control over natural resources, it also holds for public/state education; think Austrian economists (e.g., Hayek and Von Mises) in control of the government (that ties nicely into some of the Koch Brother's ideas and some of their acolytes are going to be in Trump's cabinet) and followers of Ayn Rand [8]. The Austrian economics angle is what is also behind the gold standard nonsense that makes it into some of Trump's incoherent ramblings.

They are climate change deniers; even more so, they have strong ties to the oil, natural gas, and fracking industries or industries that serve them like those that make and install oil pipelines; these include the nominee for Secretary of State, Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson, it include Pruitt the nominee to head the Environmental Protection Agency, it includes Mike Pence the vice president, it includes the secretary of energy Rick Perry, who actually is on the Board of Directors of the company responsible for laying the Dakota Pipeline.

Ideologically, they are extremely hostile to immigrants and members of minority religions;

they view America as an exceptional place which is defined by the domination of white Christians; several of these nominees (and the Vice President) do not believe that the anti-Establishment clause of the Constitution means a separation of church and state; this is definitely the case with Education Secretary nominee Betsy DeVos [9] from the family that brought you Amway who is a fundamentalist Calvinist (who also believes in the benefits of child labour as a learning experience and thinks that public education creates a market monopoly; seeing education as a market enterprise rather than a place where children are encouraged to learn and think says a lot about her; irrespective of her lack of qualifications, and her support for charter schools and voucher programmes, she will probably pass the nominations process easily) and Jeff Sessions does not think that the separation of church and state is implied by the anti-Establishment clause although the Supreme Court has clearly ruled this way.

A number of these nominees are racists, homophobes, and misogynists (this is way beyond the attack on abortion rights as they also seem to be violently opposed to access to affordable contraceptives, women's health care including reproductive health care - see the support for the defunding of Planned Parenthood supported by Tim Price nominee for Health and Human Services).

The proposed Attorney General Jeff Sessions has a rather unpleasant history on civil rights and was already defeated by the Senate for a federal judgeship appointment under Reagan due to racist beliefs and statements [10]; calling the NAACP *un-American* [11] simply is the least objectionable thing that he has done. Moreover, he seems to be very confused about the definition of sexual assault as he could not decide whether Trump's groping of women's genitals is considered sexual assault; it seems that he has finally admitted that this constitutes sexual assault in his senate confirmation hearings [12]. He seems to have problems understanding the nature of domestic violence and is one of the 22 senators that opposed the reauthorisation of the Violence against women Act, he is violently opposed to abortion rights. To add insult to injury he also opposed funding for women owned business [13].

Let's also talk about Trump's nominee for Health and Human Services (HHS) Tom Price [14]. HHS oversees Medicare and Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act (set for repeal), the Centers for Disease Control, and regulations over the nation's food and drugs.

Tom Price opposes abortion and supported some horrific anti-choice legislation (see for e.g., The Health Care Conscience Rights Act [15]), opposed the no copay part of insurance [16] under ACA on birth control arguing that it violated religious freedom and religious liberty and that no women had trouble affording birth control. Facts like 1/3 of women had trouble affording their copays for birth control wouldn't sway someone who has an ideological opposition to affordable birth control it seems. He has supported anti-choice legislation that would ban abortion completely [17], supports the removal of funding of Planned Parenthood and has voted repeatedly to do so (which provides routine reproductive health care to women through Medicaid), opposed the re-authorisation of the Violence against Women act and opposed protections to LGBTQ people that were included in the act. He, like Pence, is a virulent misogynist, transphobe and homophobe and is going to be in charge of the Department of the US government responsible for ensuring access to healthcare for the poor (Medicaid), for the disabled and for the elderly (Medicare).

It is not only reproductive rights, it is women's healthcare

We need to add some additional problems to this discussion. The problem is not only Trump, it is also the fact that there is a Republican controlled Congress which is led by those that want to privatise and undermine social security, want to cut funding of Medicare (healthcare for the elderly

and disabled) and Medicaid (provides money for healthcare for the poor distributed from the Federal government to the states) and also who want to defund Planned Parenthood (PP) a major provider of women's healthcare as part of Medicaid funding (and have been spreading the lie that Planned Parenthood does abortions with federal funding; this is false, money for abortions on Medicaid is done through separate state provision of funds) which will leave large numbers of women without access to routine health care, including contraceptives, routine cancer screening (breast, cervical), STD screening, and prenatal health care), Affordable Care Act (ACA) and contraceptive provision (Gillibrand's attempt to stop this overturn of parts of the ACA ensuring access to affordable contraceptives). In the space of a week after the 115th Congress met, the repeal of the ACA began. It began swiftly and in a series of votes in one night, the gains that were actually won in the ACA were lost.

I want to focus in on the PP defunding as this is extremely serious and of course will hit women with low incomes the hardest [18]. The republican right (and that is most of them these days) have initiated the defunding of PP as part of the repeal of the ACA [19]. Planned Parenthood receives money through Medicaid funding distributed to states. The Planned Parenthood network is one of the primary providers of contraceptive care to women across the country [20], it provides routine health care such as pregnancy testing, cancer screening (pap smears, breast cancer screening), STD testing, treatment and support, for many women who cannot access routine reproductive healthcare. Already some states have defunded PP and quite honestly there is no way that local centres [21] will be able to make up for the loss of funding for PP [22].

While the ACA (also known as Obamacare) was by no means something anyone on the left would consider a coherent provision of health care (health insurance is not health care), there were some provisions that were extremely helpful for large numbers of people accessing some form of healthcare in the US [23]. While I have always supported single payer healthcare in the US, eliminating the ACA without a replacement (and if you think that Trump - who believes only in the free market - is going to put in single payer, either I have not understood a single thing that man believes in or I have a bridge between Manhattan and Brooklyn for sale. Not going to happen, all he will offer is free market solutions; remember the ACA was a republican idea. If that is too much interference in the market, why do you think that he will support a public/state based system of healthcare provision? Yes, single payer is the only clear alternative to Obamacare, but Trump is not going to sign onto that.

The beginning of the repeal of the ACA has commenced [24] in the short period in which the 115th Congress has been in session and while there were attempts by the Democrats to maintain some of the positive provisions [25] (e.g., access to affordable contraceptives, pregnancy, maternity and new born care including breastfeeding coverage, younger adults (under age 26; 6 million people are covered by this) being on their parent's health insurance, coverage for people with pre-existing conditions (btw pregnancy is considered a pre-existing condition; 52 million people are identified as having pre-existing conditions), coverage for children on Medicaid or CHIP providing comprehensive healthcare for children, maintaining the Medicaid expansion which ensures coverage for the 11 million people with lower incomes, and protecting Veterans health care through the Veteran's Administration, they lost the votes on these amendments and as a result 55 million women no longer have access to affordable birth control [26]. Kirsten Gillibrand's amendment attempting to protect the gains for women's healthcare (e.g., access to no-copay contraception on health insurance plans, access to healthcare during and after pregnancy, support for breast feeding) lost on a vote in the Senate of 59:59 with only two Republicans willing to fight for the gains made for women:

"For reference, the pill can cost between \$15-\$50 a month. Nexplanon, a birth control implant in the arm, can cost between \$400 and \$800 [27], and an IUD can cost up to \$1,000. It goes without saying that many Americans do not have that kind of money up front [28]."

If you have the stomach for it, you can read the debate in Congress during the late night vote to repeal the ACA [29]. Done as part of the budget resolution [30] for 2017, this so-called “votarama” will without question be passed by the House (it has already passed the House Committee by a vote of 20-16 [31]).

So when we are talking about the nightmare that this administration will be for women, it is not only Trump and his nominees that we are referring to. We also must talking an unrestrained right-wing Congress where even if all Democrats and independents united, they do not have the votes to reject Trump’s nominees or stop a long-term attack on women; moreover when any legislation lands on Trump’s desk, there is no question that he is going to approve it.

While the liberals have been worried to death about the SCOTUS and have used it to justify their support of all kinds of centre-right candidates on economic issues, that seems to be less an issue immediately. The rejection of TRAP laws by the court earlier this year undercut the right-wing offensive that was attempting to reduce the number of available abortion centres in several states. The repeal of *Roe and Doe* in the Supreme Court at least is on hold; Justice Kennedy has made it clear that while he may restrict access, he is not ready to overturn it. Invariably, Trump will appoint someone to fill the slot left by the death of the late unlamented Antonin Scalia who is on the right and will be opposed to *Roe and Doe* and will try to continue to limit women’s right to abortion or send it back to the States (which seems to be Trump’s preference according to reports) leaving large swathes of the US and hence large numbers of women in the US unable to access this right. So, there are 5 justices that are currently on the SCOTUS that will keep *Roe and Doe*. However, the death (or extreme illness) of one supporter will bring problems. Justice Ruth Bader-Ginsberg is elderly and not in great health. Yes, we can hope that another right-winger on the court dies (no one expected Scalia to kick the bucket as early as he did), but the probably is that Trump will be able to appoint 2 justices and that will shift the balance in the SCOTUS and *Roe and Doe* will be overturned.

Women’s reproductive rights

While both Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders came out for repeal of the Hyde Amendment, those positions almost seem like a fantasy right now. There is no way that Hyde can be blocked or repealed either by the Congress or due to executive order.



Following the decisions of *Roe and Doe*, opponents of abortion put a rider to appropriation bills called the Hyde Amendment which prevents the use of federal funds to cover abortion. This amendment is passed on appropriation bills and impacts all federal funding for the purposes of abortion. It affects those on Medicaid (unless states fund that directly), disabled women on Medicare, it impacts those on CHIP (healthcare for children) it impacts on insurance policies for federal workers, for those women serving in the military, it impacts Native American women as their health coverage is provided by the federal government, it impact Veterans who get their health care

from the Veteran's Administration, it impacts on women in prison and of course, it impacts on women with low incomes that live in Washington DC; the only bases upon which funding for abortions by the federal government is the life of the mother, rape and incest (the latter two were added during the Clinton administration).

According to the Guttmacher Institute [32]:

"For Medicaid and CHIP enrollees, this means that access to affordable abortion care is dependent on where they live. Of women aged 15-44 enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP nationwide in 2015, 58% lived in the 35 states and the District of Columbia that do not cover abortion except in limited circumstances.² This amounted to roughly 7.5 million women of reproductive age, including 3.5 million living below the federal poverty level.

In states that do not extend coverage beyond the limits of the Hyde Amendment, a woman whose income is at the Medicaid eligibility ceiling would need to pay nearly a third of her entire family income for a month for an abortion at 10 weeks of pregnancy.³ (An abortion at 10 weeks costs an average of \$500, and the average Medicaid ceiling for a family of three for a month in these states is \$1,566.) [33]."

In terms of Medicaid funded abortions [34] of the 17 states that cover all necessary abortions under Medicaid only 4 states (NY, WA, Hawaii and Maryland) do so voluntarily, the rest do so under court order. Of those under court order, Illinois and Arizona do not pay for all medically necessary abortions. The other states and the District of Columbia follow the Federal Standard under the Hyde Amendment (rape, incest and the life of the mother) except for South Dakota (which is in violation of federal law) and only pays for abortions if the mother's life is in danger. In Iowa, the governor must approve all abortions paid for using Medicaid and some states actually allow for publicly funded abortions for foetal impairment (VA, Mississippi and Iowa) and the physical health of the mother (Indiana, Utah, and Wisconsin).

"The Hyde Amendment primarily impacts women of colour who are more often on Medicaid due to the racism and poverty that people of colour live with in the US. According to Guttmacher "Thirty-one percent of black women aged 15-44 and 27% of Hispanic women of the same age were enrolled in Medicaid in 2015, compared with 15% of white women.⁶ And just over half of the 7.5 million women of reproductive age with Medicaid coverage in states that do not cover abortion were women of color [35]." Disabled women on Medicare cannot get abortion coverage and if they are also poor they are blocked through Medicaid as well."

While all women legally have access to abortion, it is a negative right. That is, that you have the legal right to have an abortion, the government does not have a legal obligation to ensure that you can access this right; funding is a major obstacle for accessing your rights.

Add to that the restrictions that many states have put in place which increase costs to women getting an abortion, like forced ultrasounds, waiting periods before the procedure, the latest being burial or cremation of the embryo or foetus. There is of course, the attempted restrictions based upon reasons for having an abortion, banning abortion at 20 weeks (in violation of *Roe*), banning certain types of procedures for abortions which are safer for women. Parental notification and involvement is routine and required by large numbers of states (some states do allow for a judge to go around this rule in certain circumstances) [36]. According to Guttmacher [37], in 2016, 18 states enacted 50 new abortion restrictions bringing the number of state restrictions of abortion to 338 since 2010.

But there is a plus (and that itself is good news) is the expansion of support for sex education, access

to contraceptive, access to emergency contraceptives, and access to STD testing without parental notification. The question now arising is will these be protecting with the ACA being repealed?

Resist, fight, organise!!

We need a united fightback and we needed it a decade ago. Many excellent people (both men and women) have been waging these struggles and have had major victories, but we are now in a situation where it is not only state legislators, it is both the Executive and Legislature at the Federal level under control of misogynists and sexists. What is at stake is not only reproductive rights, it is the fight against violence against women, a coherent understanding of what rape and sexual assault mean and holding those committing these actions accountable for them; the attempt to change the definition of rape is a classic example of attempts to remove accountability and we cannot allow this to happen (some of those men are still in Congress, they are an ever present danger to all women). The President elect clearly does not understand what sexual assault means and is a misogynist and his Cabinet nominees also have similar problems.

We need a fightback that unites the various strands of the women's movements and does not fall into only addressing the needs of white middle class women. We need this fight to be cross-generations, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and using the political understanding of women's oppression and the role of race, class and gender which has been dividing the women's movement. We need to stand in solidarity with each other and actually listen and hear what other sisters are saying.

This is an extremely political fight and without a doubt, it is women of colour, women of minority religions, and women on low incomes that are going to be facing an attack that makes the previous decade look like nothing. While all women are oppressed, it is women that are caught in the intersections of race, class, gender and sex that have felt this attack more strongly historically and who will feel it in the future as they do not have the money to defend themselves from this attack. The women's march has the correct demand which is abortion access for all [\[38\]](#) and not only those that can afford it. This is fundamental for women's bodily autonomy along with access to the broadest range of free contraceptives so that we actually truly have choice and it being a word with meaning.

For the vast majority of women, the problem is not cracking the glass ceiling (although that is a fight); it is actually getting on the same job ladder as men. It is fighting for equality in income, a recognition that we do jobs using the same skills as men and deserve the same wage for comparable work (thinking that we need to fight the same fight as in the 1970s really makes me depressed). It is the fact that the women are overrepresented in low paying part-time jobs because we have to cover our responsibilities to our families and homes.

But it is not only issues of wealth and income we need to address; we need to get paid maternity benefits (I am not opposed to parental benefits, but the reality is it is women that bear the primary responsibility for social reproduction), we need free child care, we need good free public education for our children, we need universities which working class children can attend for free, we need to recognise that women of colour have borne the brunt of economic, social and political inequality and injustice. We also need to acknowledge that due to the impact of race, class and gender and sex that we have different needs and that will impact on how we see the struggle against women's oppression and how to wage the struggle.

In 2016, we are still fighting for these basic economic rights, but we are also still fighting for recognition of our right to bodily autonomy, our (and our children's) rights to healthcare, and the recognition of our contribution to society in all arenas.

I am hoping that those that are able to do so will join the Women's March on Washington set for January 21st the day after Trump's inauguration.

It is so important that the organisers of the Women's demo in Washington have united around an explicitly political programme that is united along lines recognising the importance of race, class and gender and sex and the linkage between struggles of the past and the current struggles [39]. If you have not seen the principles of unity of the march, please go and look at them as they are exactly what we need to be fighting around [40]. Here is the introduction from the principles:

"The Women's March on Washington is a women-led movement bringing together people of all genders, ages, races, cultures, political affiliations and backgrounds in our nation's capital on January 21, 2017, to affirm our shared humanity and pronounce our bold message of resistance and self-determination.

Recognizing that women have intersecting identities and are therefore impacted by a multitude of social justice and human rights issues, we have outlined a representative vision for a government that is based on the principles of liberty and justice for all. As Dr. King said, "We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back."

Our liberation is bound in each other's. The Women's March on Washington includes leaders of organizations and communities that have been building the foundation for social progress for generations. We welcome vibrant collaboration and honor the legacy of the movements before us - the suffragists and abolitionists, the Civil Rights Movement, the feminist movement, the American Indian Movement, Occupy Wall Street, Marriage Equality, Black Lives Matter, and more - by employing a decentralized, leader-full structure and focusing on an ambitious, fundamental and comprehensive agenda."

It is essential that local demos should follow the same principles. This must be a movement, not just a series of demonstrations. I was incredibly disturbed to see that the march in Portland was initially simply going to be a march and was not willing to discuss the issues of race, class and gender; they didn't want to venture into "politics." How can a women's march in the current political climate not want to venture into politics. The Portland branch of the NAACP correctly pulled out of the local march; there is now a new leadership behind it and a shift in political goals [41].

We need to fight and we need to address this attack in the broadest possible way which includes intersectionality of race, class, sex and gender, LBGTQI issues, social, economic, and police justice. Reproductive rights are extremely political; we need to support access to legal, safe and free abortions, free contraceptives and access to health care for women and children of all ages. We have different medical needs than men, that means that those needs must be met and are not an afterthought or prevented due to pre-existing conditions.

We must thank Kirsten Gillibrand for her battle to save women's health care provisions of the ACA, we need to support her and other struggles in Congress, but we need to do more than fight it in Congress as we will not win it in Congress without a struggle and movement that will pressurise those in political power.

That means that we need to be doing not only national demos (which are important), but working at local levels to protect access to healthcare for women, which means supporting Planned Parenthood and local women's health centres where we can access healthcare and our reproductive rights.

One last point, remember not everyone is able to join a march, if only for health reasons. Making sure that those with disabilities can participate is essential, but even then, not everyone will be able

to do so. We need to remember, that the rule for everyone is from each according to their ability. There is a lot of work that needs to be done, and there are many ways to support the struggle against women's oppression that do not require going to marches. There is a lot of work that needs to be done locally by organising defence of women's health care providers, organising resistance through petitions, through letter writing, through simply talking to people. We all contribute in different way and whatever way you can participate is important.

Susan Pashkoff, NY brit expat

Some Useful information

If you have never done a march in winter, this link is incredibly useful so you know what to wear and bring (some things are obvious, dress in layers, bring a hat and gloves or mittens – I bring mittens with fingerless gloves to help with leafletting, wear boots that are good for walking and waterproofed if you have them, remember you may need to move quickly and being prepared for self-defence is useful, just in case you need it, thermal underwear may be a good idea and bring extra socks in case you need them; bring something to eat and to drink, bring all the medication that you take that covers a 24 hour period just in case; don't forget your feminine hygiene products; bring a hand cleanser or steriliser, tissues and handkerchiefs) the endorsements of certain products by the author notwithstanding, it is a good overall guide for winter protests [42].

The ACLU in DC has offered some useful information as to your rights when you are protesting, also very helpful, give it a read: <https://www.acludc.org/demonstrate>

Petition against Price:

https://act.weareultraviolet.org/sign/Senate_Block_Price?akid=s244401...J4M2o

Petition against Betsy DeVos:

P.S.

* Daily Kos . Monday Jan 16, 2017 · 12:00 AM CET:

<http://www.dailykos.com/stories/2017/1/15/1620891/-Anti-Capitalist-Meetup-Trump-the-Republican-controlled-Congress-and-the-War-on-Women>

Footnotes

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- [12] <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/313587-sessions-says-grabbing-a-womans-genitals-without-consent-is-sexual>
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- [14] <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/politics/a8377127/tom-price-facts-abortion-trump-health-secretary/>
- [15] <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/114/hr940/summary>
- [16] <https://www.theatlantic.com/please-support-us/?next=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.theatlantic.com%2Fhealth%2Farchive%2F2016%2F11%2Ftom-price-not-one-woman-cant-afford-birth-control%2F509003%2F#seen>
- [17] ESSF (article 40050), [United States: With Extremist Tom Price at Helm, the 'War on Women Has Reached HHS'](#).
- [18] <https://rewire.news/article/2017/01/13/congress-latest-attack-low-income-people/>
- [19] <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/05/politics/paul-ryan-planned-parenthood-obamacare/>
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- [28] <http://www.dailydot.com/irl/congress-women-healthcare/?fb=dd>
- [29] <https://www.congress.gov/amendment/115th-congress/senate-amendment/82/text>
- [30] <http://www.budget.senate.gov/chairman/newsroom/press/senate-clears-the-way-for-fast-track-repeal-of-obamacare->
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