

Pro-choice demonstrators rally across the US over expected reversal of Roe v Wade

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Thousands of people were taking part in protests across the US on Saturday, 14 May 2022, to decry the supreme court's expected reversal of the landmark 1973 law that made abortion legal in America.

Organisers said there were more than 380 protest events in cities including major ones in Washington DC, New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago to demand that the right to an abortion is not stripped away by the court, which is dominated by rightwing justices.

Gathering in large groups and holding signs that included slogans such as "Reproductive justice for all" and "We will not go back", and chanting "My body, my choice", the protesters have been spurred by the leak of a supreme court draft opinion on 2 May. The leaked draft showed that the five rightwing justices on the nine-member court had voted to overturn Roe v Wade, the historic case that provided federal protection for abortion rights and proved a beacon in international efforts to improve the rights of women.

One of the main rallies in New York city [was] in the Foley Square area, where the crowd remained energized despite the rain – many present gathered early [that] morning in Brooklyn and walked across the bridge into Manhattan.

A group of high-school students stood atop a monument, wearing white pants with red coloring to mimic blood. They held signs with the photographs and names of women who died after being denied safe abortions.

Another group of high school students at Foley Square explained that they were protesting, as a Roe reversal would fall on their generation. Eliza and Adriana, both 16, co-founded the feminist student group at their high school. This is their first protest, they said.

"We're the generation that's going to have to deal with the repercussions of this court decision," Eliza said. "I wish I could say I was surprised, but I don't think I was. It's still devastating."

Adriana voiced similar sentiments. "The sign I'm carrying today says "My uterus does not belong to the state," Adriana said. Adriana noted that this was the same slogan advocates used decades ago, to note that the fundamental issues had not changed. "It's infuriating."

As the Los Angeles rally wrapped up, Elijah Lopez, 15, stood side by side with his mother, Lidia, carrying a sign that said "My mom is pissed." Lidia's sign read "Yeah, I'm pissed."

"Today is an important day in history," she said, referring to the rallies taking place across the US. "I was telling my son even though California is likely to maintain reproductive rights, in many other states that's not going to be the case."

"We can show them that people don't want this," Elijah said.

They came from the Inland Empire to advocate for reproductive rights together, part of a shared tradition of activism that began years ago when they started demonstrating against

family separation under the Trump administration, which Lidia said was her son's introduction to peaceful protest.

"It's easy to just not do anything. We have to take as many opportunities as we can to show up. I want him to be here," Lidia said.

Saturday's rally brought out many people who had never attended such protests before but were called to action seeing reproductive rights in jeopardy. Reginald Wheeler, a lifelong Los Angeles resident, said the event downtown marked his first protest.

"I support women," he said, "I would hope this is a reality check for those judges." He added that he worries about what will happen when people don't have access to abortion. "We're gonna have a lot of unwanted children, children suffering from homelessness."

Luna Hernandez with Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights, an organiser of the rally, said the event would get people into the streets to stop the supreme court from taking away reproductive rights.

"Only the people can stop this," Hernandez said. "We have to refuse to allow this. This has to be a turning point, it's not a done deal."

"When abortion is illegal, women die. Forced motherhood is female enslavement," she said.

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