Abortion-rights movements

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Abortion-rights activists in São Paulo, Brazil.

Abortion-rights movements

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Terminology

• It was found that, in polling, respondents would label themselves differently when given specific details about the circumstances around an abortion including factors such as rape, incest, viability of the fetus, and survivability of the mother.

• The Associated Press favors the terms "abortion rights" and "anti-abortion" instead.

Many of the terms used in the debate are political framing terms used to validate one's own stance while invalidating the opposition's. For example, the labels "pro-choice" and "pro-life" imply endorsement of widely held values such as liberty and freedom, while suggesting that the opposition must be "anti-choice" or "anti-life" (alternatively "pro-coercion" or "pro-death").

These views do not always fall along a binary; in one Public Religion Research Institute poll, they noted that the vagueness of the terms led to seven in ten Americans describing themselves as "pro-choice", while almost two-thirds described themselves as "pro-life". It was found that, in polling, respondents would label themselves differently when given specific details about the circumstances around an abortion including factors such as rape, incest, viability of the fetus, and survivability of the mother.

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Early history

• In The Revolution, operated by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, an anonymous contributor signing "A" wrote in 1869 about the subject, arguing that instead of merely attempting to pass a law against abortion, the root cause must also be addressed.

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Feminists of the late 19th century were often opposed to the legalization of abortion. In The Revolution, operated by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, an anonymous contributor signing "A" wrote in 1869 about the subject, arguing that instead of merely attempting to pass a law against abortion, the root cause must also be addressed.

Simply passing an anti-abortion law would, the writer stated, "be only mowing off the top of the noxious weed, while the root remains. [...] No matter what the motive, love of ease, or a desire to save from suffering the unborn innocent, the woman is awfully guilty who commits the deed. It will burden her conscience in life, it will burden her soul in death; But oh! thrice guilty is he who drove her to the desperation which impelled her to the crime."

United Kingdom

• He performed an abortion, then illegal, and was put on trial on charges of procuring abortion.

• In 1931 Browne began to develop her argument for women's right to decide to have an abortion.

• The Abortion Law Reform Association continued its campaigning after the War, and this, combined with broad social changes brought the issue of abortion back into the political arena in the 1960s.

The movement towards the liberalization of abortion law emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in the context of the victories that had been recently won in the area of birth control. Campaigners including Marie Stopes in England and Margaret Sanger in the US had succeeded in bringing the issue into the open, and birth control clinics were established which offered family planning advice and contraceptive methods to women in need.

In 1929, the Infant Life Preservation Act was passed in the United Kingdom, which amended the law (Offences against the Person Act 1861) so that an abortion carried out in good faith, for the sole purpose of preserving the life of the mother, would not be an offence.

Stella Browne was a leading birth control campaigner, who increasingly began to venture into the more contentious issue of abortion in the 1930s. Browne's beliefs were heavily influenced by the work of Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter and other sexologists. She came to strongly believe that working women should have the choice to become pregnant and to terminate their pregnancy while they worked in the horrible circumstances surrounding a pregnant woman who was still required to do hard labour during her pregnancy. In this case she argued that doctors should give free information about birth control to women that wanted to know about it. This would give women agency over their own circumstances and allow them to decide whether they wanted to be mothers or not.

In the late 1920s Browne began a speaking tour around England, providing information about her beliefs on the need for accessibility of information about birth control for women, women's health problems, problems related to puberty and sex education and high maternal morbidity rates among other topics. These talks urged women to take matters of their sexuality and their health into their own hands. She became increasingly interested in her view of the woman's right to terminate their pregnancies, and in 1929 she brought forward her lecture “The Right to Abortion” in front of the World Sexual Reform Congress in London. In 1931 Browne began to develop her argument for women's right to decide to have an abortion. She again began touring, giving lectures on abortion and the negative consequences that followed if women were unable to terminate pregnancies of their own choosing such as: suicide, injury, permanent invalidism, madness and blood-poisoning.

Other prominent feminists, including Frida Laski, Dora Russell, Joan Malleson and Janet Chance began to champion this cause - the cause broke dramatically into the mainstream in July 1932 when the British Medical Association council formed a committee to discuss making changes to the laws on abortion. On 17 February 1936, Janet Chance, Alice Jenkins and Joan Malleson established the Abortion Law Reform Association as the first advocacy organisation for abortion liberalization. The association promoted access to abortion in the United Kingdom and campaigned for the elimination of legal obstacles. In its first year ALRA recruited 35 members, and by 1939 had almost 400 members.

The ALRA was very active between 1936 and 1939 sending speakers around the country to talk about Labour and Equal Citizenship and attempted, though most often unsuccessfully, to have letters and articles published in newspapers. They became the most popular when a member of the ALRA's Medico-Legal Committee received the case of a fourteen-year-old girl who had been raped, and received a termination of this pregnancy from Dr. Joan Malleson, a progenitor of the ALRA. This case gained a lot of publicity, however once the war began, the case was tucked away and the cause again lost its importance to the public.

In 1938, Joan Malleson precipitated one of the most influential cases in British abortion law when she referred a pregnant fourteen-year old rape victim to gynaecologist Aleck Bourne. He performed an abortion, then illegal, and was put on trial on charges of procuring abortion. Bourne was eventually acquitted in Rex v. Bourne as his actions were "...an example of disinterested conduct in consonance with the highest traditions of the profession". This court case set a precedent that doctors could not be prosecuted for performing an abortion in cases where pregnancy would probably cause "mental and physical wreck".

The Abortion Law Reform Association continued its campaigning after the War, and this, combined with broad social changes brought the issue of abortion back into the political arena in the 1960s. President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists John Peel chaired the committee advising the British Government on what became the 1967 Abortion Act, which allowed for legal abortion on a number of grounds, including to avoid injury to the physical or mental health of the woman or her existing child(ren) if the pregnancy was still under 28 weeks.

The United States Supreme Court membership in 1973 at the time of Roe v. Wade.

United States

• The forerunner of the NARAL Pro-Choice America was formed in 1969 to oppose restrictions on abortion and expand access to abortion.

• The Court arrived at its decision by concluding that the issue of abortion and abortion rights falls under the right to privacy.

• The court found that a mother had a right to abortion until viability, a point to be determined by the abortion doctor.

In America an abortion reform movement emerged in the 1960s. In 1964 Gerri Santoro of Connecticut died trying to obtain an illegal abortion and her photo became the symbol of the pro-choice movement. Some women's rights activist groups developed their own skills to provide abortions to women who could not obtain them elsewhere. As an example, in Chicago, a group known as "Jane" operated a floating abortion clinic throughout much of the 1960s. Women seeking the procedure would call a designated number and be given instructions on how to find "Jane".

In the late 1960s, a number of organizations were formed to mobilize opinion both against and for the legalization of abortion. The forerunner of the NARAL Pro-Choice America was formed in 1969 to oppose restrictions on abortion and expand access to abortion. In late 1973 NARAL became the National Abortion Rights Action League.

The landmark judicial ruling of the Supreme Court in Roe v. Wade ruled that a Texas statute forbidding abortion except when necessary to save the life of the mother was unconstitutional. The Court arrived at its decision by concluding that the issue of abortion and abortion rights falls under the right to privacy. The Court held that a right to privacy existed and included the right to have an abortion. The court found that a mother had a right to abortion until viability, a point to be determined by the abortion doctor. After viability a woman can obtain an abortion for health reasons, which the Court defined broadly to include psychological well-being in the decision Doe v. Bolton, delivered concurrently.

From the 1970s, and the spread of second-wave feminism, abortion and reproductive rights became unifying issues among various women's rights groups in Canada, the United States, the Netherlands, Britain, Norway, France, Germany, and Italy.

In 2015, in the wake of the The House of Representatives' vote to defund Planned Parenthood, Lindy West, Amelia Bonow and Kimberly Morrison launched ShoutYourAbortion to 'remind supporters and critics alike abortion is a legal right to anyone who wants or needs it'. The women encouraged other women to share positive abortion experiences online using the hashtag #ShoutYourAbortion in order to “denounce the stigma surrounding abortion.”

In 2019, the You Know Me movement started as a response to the successful 2019 passage of fetal heartbeat bills in five states in the United States, most notably the passing of anti-abortion laws in Georgia (House Bill 381)

, Ohio (House Bill 68) and Alabama (House Bill 314)

Around the world

Africa

• Most African nations, however, have abortion bans except in cases where the woman's life or health is at risk.

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Asia

Japan

• However, the Maternal Health Protection Law allows approved doctors to practice abortion with the consent of the mother and her spouse, if the pregnancy has resulted from rape, or if the continuation of the pregnancy may severely endanger the maternal health because of physical reasons or economic reasons.

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• Chapter XXIX of the Penal Code of Japan makes abortion illegal in Japan.

Chapter XXIX of the Penal Code of Japan makes abortion illegal in Japan. However, the Maternal Health Protection Law allows approved doctors to practice abortion with the consent of the mother and her spouse, if the pregnancy has resulted from rape, or if the continuation of the pregnancy may severely endanger the maternal health because of physical reasons or economic reasons. Other people, including the mother herself, trying to abort the fetus can be punished by the law. People trying to practice abortion without the consent of the woman can also be punished, including the doctors.

South Korea

• Abortion has been illegal in South Korea since 1953 but on April 11, 2019, South Korea's Constitutional Court ruled the abortion ban unconstitutional and called for the law to be amended.

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Abortion has been illegal in South Korea since 1953 but on April 11, 2019, South Korea's Constitutional Court ruled the abortion ban unconstitutional and called for the law to be amended. The law stands until the end of 2020.The Constitutional Court has taken into consideration pro-choice cases by women because they find the abortion ban as unconstitutional. To help support the legalization of abortion in South Korea, thousands of advocates compiled a petition for the Blue House to consider lifting the ban. Due to the abortion ban, this has led to many dangerous self-induced abortions and other illegal practices of abortion that needs more attention. This is why there are advocates challenging the law to put into perspective the negative factors this abortion ban brings. By making abortion illegal in South Korea, this also creates an issue when it comes to women's rights and their own rights to their bodies. As a result, many women's advocate groups were created and joined together to protest against the abortion ban law.

Global Day of Action is a form of protest that advocates to make a change and bring more awareness to global warming. During this protest, a group of feminist Korean advocates called, "The Joint Action for Reproductive Justice" connected with one another to promote concerns that requires more attention and needs a quick change such as making abortion legal. By combining different advocate groups that serves different purposes and their own goals they want to achieve into one event, it helps promote all the different aspects of reality that needs to change.

Pro-Choice Advocate Groups:

Center for Health and Social Change

Femidangdang

Femimonsters

Flaming Feminist Action

Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center

Korean Women's Associations United

Korea Women's Hot Line

Network for Glocal Activism

Sexual and Reproductive Rights Forum

Womenlink

Women with Disabilities Empathy

Europe

Ireland

Republic of Ireland

• Mainstream centre-right parties such as Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael do not have official policies on abortion rights but allow conscience vote on supportive of abortion in limited circumstances.

• After the death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012, there has been a renewed campaign to repeal the eighth amendment and legalize abortion.

Abortion is illegal in the Republic of Ireland except when the woman's life is threatened by a medical condition (including risk of suicide), since a 1983 referendum (aka 8th Amendment) amended the constitution. Subsequent amendments in 1992 (after the X Case) – the thirteenth and fourteenth – guaranteed the right to travel abroad (for abortions) and to distribute and obtain information of "lawful services" available in other countries. Two proposal to remove suicide risk as a ground for abortion were rejected by the people, in a referendum in 1992 and in 2002. Thousands of women get around the ban by privately travelling to the other European countries (typically Britain and the Netherlands) to undergo termination, or by ordering abortion pills from Women on Web online and taking them in Ireland.

The Sinn Féin, Labour Party, Social Democrats, Green Party, Communist Party, Socialist Party and Irish Republican Socialist Party have made their official policies to support abortion rights. Mainstream centre-right parties such as Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael do not have official policies on abortion rights but allow conscience vote on supportive of abortion in limited circumstances.

After the death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012, there has been a renewed campaign to repeal the eighth amendment and legalize abortion. As of January 2017[update], the Irish government has set up a citizens assembly to look at the issue. Their proposals, broadly supported by a cross-party Oireachtas committee, include repeal of the 8th Amendment, unrestricted access to abortion for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and no-term limits for special cases of fatal foetal abnormalities, rape and incest.

A referendum on the repealing of the 8th Amendment was held on 25 May 2018. Together for Yes a cross-society group formed from the Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment, National Women's Council of Ireland and the Abortion Rights Campaign will be the official campaign group for repeal in the referendum.

Northern Ireland

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Poland

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• The wide spread of Catholic Church in Poland within the country has made abortion socially 'unacceptable' .

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United Kingdom

• In the United Kingdom, the Abortion Act 1967 legalized abortion on a wide number of grounds, except in Northern Ireland.

• The Conservative Party is more evenly split between both camps and its former leader, David Cameron, supports abortion on demand in the early stages of pregnancy.

In the United Kingdom, the Abortion Act 1967 legalized abortion on a wide number of grounds, except in Northern Ireland. In Great Britain, the law states that pregnancy may be terminated up to 24 weeks if it:

puts the life of the pregnant woman at risk

poses a risk to the mental and physical health of the pregnant woman

poses a risk to the mental and physical health of the fetus

shows there is evidence of extreme fetal abnormality i.e. the child would be seriously physically or mentally handicapped after birth and during life.

However, the criterion of risk to mental and physical health is applied broadly, and de facto makes abortion available on demand, though this still requires the consent of two National Health Service doctors. Abortions in Great Britain are provided at no out-of-pocket cost to the patient by the NHS.

The Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats are predominantly pro-abortion-rights parties, though with significant minorities in each either holding more restrictive definitions of the right to choose, or subscribing to an anti-abortion analysis. The Conservative Party is more evenly split between both camps and its former leader, David Cameron, supports abortion on demand in the early stages of pregnancy.

Middle East

Iran

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Abortion was first legalized in 1978. In April 2005, the Iranian Parliament approved a new bill easing the conditions by also allowing abortion in certain cases when the fetus shows signs of handicap, and the Council of Guardians accepted the bill in 15 June 2005.

Legal abortion is now allowed if the mother's life is in danger, and also in cases of fetal abnormalities that makes it not viable after birth (such as anencephaly) or produce difficulties for mother to take care of it after birth, such as major thalassemia or bilateral polycystic kidney disease.

North America

United States

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South America

Argentina

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Because Argentina is very restrictive against abortion, reliable reporting on abortion rates is unavailable. Argentina is a strongly Catholic country, and protesters seeking liberalized abortion in 2013 directed anger toward the Catholic Church. Argentina is the home of the anti-violence organization Ni una menos, which was formed in 2015 to protest the murder of Daiana García, which opposes the violation of a woman's right to choose the number and interval of pregnancies.

See also

Anti-abortion movements

• Reproductive rights

Reproductive rights

References

External links

• Australia's Women's Abortion Action Campaign

• Abortion Access and Information

• Abortion Rights Campaign

Guttmacher Institute

Ipas

Abortion Access and Information

Australia's Women's Abortion Action Campaign

Abortion Rights Campaign

Tabbot Foundation (Australia)