

Research paper

## Dobbs to Trump: The Limits of Whitestream U.S. Feminist Attachments

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### ABSTRACT

Our focus is on one aspect of the 2024 United States presidential election. Through a close reading of ballot initiatives on abortion care, we lament the squandering of a second chance to secure inclusive reproductive health care for all in the US. Post-Dobbs had the potential to ensure that the feminist ask to address reproductive needs of the person at the end of the line was realized. Instead, we focused on securing limited legislative securities of abortion access for the few. We unpack how the focus on choice and liberal individualism as the dominant framework within feminist organising after June 2022 short-circuited our collective imaginations. The historical roots of whitestream feminist thinking resurfaced, marginalising the significant insights and contributions of women of color feminists from the past five decades. SisterSong, in partnership with other WOC feminist activists and scholars, has dedicated time and energy to accounting for multiple historical harms while articulating empowered reproductive futures for all. Regretfully, though, in light of national elections, US feminists abandoned the collective wisdom and knowledge generated by WOC in favor of political expediency. We conclude with a call for staying with the trouble and invite feminists to reimagine expansive reproductive futures.

**Keywords:** whitestream feminism, reproductive justice, *Dobbs*, abortion care, *Sistersong*

The straight line from Donald Trump to *Dobbs* is well scripted and nationally accepted within the United States of America (henceforth US).<sup>1</sup> The journey from *Dobbs* to Trump, however, is much less evident. What we want to explore are the twisted nonlinear connections between Trump's victory and the longue durée history of "whitestream" US feminism, to borrow the term from Indigenous feminist scholar Sandy Grande. (Grande, 2003). At first glance, the connections might seem counterintuitive and irreconcilable. But, as this article will show, they do exist.

Whitestream feminism here refers to the history of feminist thought and movement that has articulated its political messaging based on the exclusionary experiences of disadvantages and discriminations faced by white middle class women in the west. In non-Western locations such as India, hegemonic feminism has singularly focused on elite Savarna-upper caste Hindu women to shape its political messaging and sensibilities. US whitestream feminism has mostly operated within the traditional confines of power structures, seeking individualist

<sup>1</sup> *Dobbs* is used here as a shorthand for the landmark Supreme Court case *Dobbs v. Jackson's Women Health Organization*. In June 2022 the United States Supreme Court ruled that the constitution does not confer the right to abortion. The court overturned the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973 and the 1992 case of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. For details on *Dobbs* and its implications, see CD Brindis, MH Laitner, EW Clayton, SC Scrimshaw, "Societal implications of the *Dobbs v Jackson women's health organization* decision," *The Lancet*, 2024.

advancements rather than seeking change from the bottom up. Historically and within our contemporary times, whitestream feminist politics did not and does not exhaust feminist futurity. As we have been witnessing reproductive backsliding within the US, *SisterSong*, women of colour (WOC) reproductive justice collective located in Atlanta, Georgia, has been at the forefront of scripting and imagining an inclusive and expansive reproductive landscape. *SisterSong* strives to take into account the multitude of reproductive injustices faced by WOC based on their co-constitutive and intersecting identities of race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and immigrant status. *SisterSong*, along with feminist organising in the global south by Dalit women in India and working women in Argentina, offers significant positions of critique.<sup>2</sup> Feminist politics has not been a monolith; on the contrary, it's vast and contains multitudes of approaches and perspectives. This is especially true when it comes to addressing contemporaneous reproductive regressions in the US and elsewhere.

Many commentators understandably saw the 2024 US presidential elections dominated by gender politics. For the first time in US history an Asian-Black woman was the nominee from one of the two main national parties when the Democrats fielded Vice President Kamala Harris as their presidential candidate. Kamala Harris, her running mate Governor Tim Walz, and the Democratic Party ran a consistent campaign advocating for greater access to abortion and health care for women and pregnant individuals. As a result, during the election campaign, reproductive rights, access to abortion and contraception, and in vitro fertilization (IVF) were debated across multiple platforms by candidates seeking to be elected to national, state, and local governments. We witnessed engaged discussions over television and radio news, podcasts and roundtable discussions, newspaper editorials, public rallies, and national political conventions that brought together multiple commentators to explore these issues. From the rescinding of *Roe* in the summer of 2022 into November 2024 national elections, one could easily summarize that reproductive health and politics became a kitchen table conversation across the US, albeit an extremely restrictive, contentious, and nationally divisive one. Here we want to explore the discursive contours of the national conversation that ensued around repro health and why, despite the Dems being the party that advocated for abortion rights, they failed to win the presidency, lost the Senate, and were unsuccessful in retaking the House. As we interrogate the election outcome, we also explore the historical continuum of whitestream liberal US feminism and how, in this instance, it shaped discursive narratives and reproductive legislative initiatives.

## **SPLIT BALLOT AND A TRUNCATED VICTORY**

During the recently concluded presidential elections, there were a total of 10 state ballot initiatives related to abortion access; of these, there was 1 from Nebraska that was anti-abortion (Shishakly, 2025). 7 out of 10 ballot initiatives supporting abortion access passed, and the one from Nebraska also passed.<sup>3</sup> Many of these victories occurred through the phenomenon of a split vote. While the top of the ticket went to Trump, an openly anti-abortion candidate, simultaneously the down-ballot pro-choice legal protections for abortion access also received strong support. In this paper we attempt to make sense of what at first glance appears to be a political verdict in conflict with itself. To expand on this internal tension that threw up a split ballot, we focus on two states. In Arizona, for instance, Kamala Harris secured 46.7% of the electoral vote, whereas Proposition 139, seeking pro-abortion access and protections, passed with an impressive 61.61% majority. In Florida, the ballot measure seeking abortion protection garnered 57% support, whereas Kamala Harris secured a mere 43% of electoral votes. Even as Florida's pro-choice ballot initiative received impressive support, it failed to meet the high 60% state threshold for a constitutional amendment to protect abortion access in that state.

The presidential elections demonstrated and tapped into a majority national support for abortion as health care for women and pregnant individuals (Stevens & Xaba, 2024). However, the elections also voted a Republican presidential candidate into power whose campaign, led by the Make America Great Again (MAGA) slogan and paraphernalia, explicitly advanced the cause of white nationalism. Trump won by 312 electoral votes and secured 49.9% of the national popular vote. Many would argue that herein lies a political dissonance. While there was enthusiastic support for abortion access as health care, which was an overtly Democratic Party campaign issue, the popular vote simultaneously veered towards a self-proclaimed anti-feminist, anti-abortion, convicted felon, and sex offender as commander-in-chief.

Let us briefly return to the Arizona and Florida election figures mentioned above (Halpern et al., 2025). In Arizona there was a 16% difference between support for Prop 139 and for a Democratic candidate who came out strongly in support of protecting abortion access; in Florida this difference between the two was 14%. The electorate in both these states enthusiastically and unambivalently voted for protecting and securing abortion access

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<sup>2</sup> For a Dalit feminist perspectives on reproductive discrimination faced by women of caste minorities, see Shreeja Rao (2022), "Feminists in India laud their abortion rights—but they don't extend to Dalit women." Also see Johanna Gondouin, Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert, and Mohan Rao (2020), "Dalit feminist voices on reproductive rights and reproductive justice," and Sanjula Rajat and Margaret A. McLaren (2023), "Decolonial reproductive justice: analyzing reproductive oppression in India."

<sup>3</sup> For details on these 10 ballot initiatives, see Guarnieri, Isabel, and Krystal Leaphart (2024). "Abortion rights ballot measures win in 7 out of 10 US States."

for women and pregnant people (Can & Soyly, 2025). Electorates in both these states also voted clearly in favour of a presidential candidate who was instrumental in dismantling 50 years of constitutional protection afforded to abortion access and care. Leaning further into the statistics from these two states, what was achieved through the split ballot was a protection of legal claims to gendered sovereign personhood through down-ballot voting, alongside the perpetuation of racial privileges for Caucasians in choices made at the top of the ballot. One additional piece of statistical information from the November election that captures the racialised, gendered dimensions is the percentages of Black women who voted 92%; Hispanic women 61%; and Asian American women 54% for Harris, whereas White women favoured Trump 52% to 47%.<sup>4</sup> We read this as an instance of a truncated "victory" that a dominant liberal feminist repro politics delivered. The limits of American feminist advocacy in this moment signalled a "reconciliation" between abortion rights and the Trumpian platform. In this piece we take seriously the advice of Amia Srinivasan (2021) about feminism being, "...relentlessly truth telling, not least about itself." As feminist participant observers, we look back at the insufficiency of the pro-choice rhetoric with an accentuated focus on the electoral and legislative framework whereby abortion emerged as a singular reproductive issue before the 2024 elections.

## GENEALOGY OF WHITESTREAM FEMINISM

Dating from its inaugural Seneca Falls convention in 1848 to the 2024 presidential election, this is not the first time within whitemainstream American feminist history that a glaring disconnect between advocacy for gender rights and securing of racial privileges has simultaneously marked political frameworks from the national to the local levels (Sarkar, 2025). Instances of troubling, racialised feminist political discourse were on full display during the historical debates on the 14th and 15th amendments in the nineteenth century. Together these amendments extended voting rights to previously enslaved men. Leading liberal white feminist activists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to vigorously oppose the passing of these amendments for their exclusion of voting rights to educated white women. They articulated their opposition using racist logics of the inherent inferiority of enslaved Black men in comparison to elite white women as themselves (Srinivasan, 2021).<sup>5</sup> In more recent history of the 1960s-70s, authors such as Betty Friedan outlined the challenges in women's lives in the second half of the twentieth century, writing though with complete oblivion about the competing realities and challenges faced by women of colour and working class poor white women. Bell hooks and Kimberle Crenshaw wrote scathingly about the omission of black and working-class women from Friedan's canonical feminist text of 1963. hooks opens her book, *Feminist Theory from the Margins to the Center*, with a detailed analysis of the limits of Friedan's thesis on feminine mystique, writing:

*She ignored the existence of all non-white women and poor white women. She did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute than to be a leisure class housewife. (hooks, 1984)*

Crenshaw highlights how Simone de Beauvoir and Friedan failed to include experiences of working women and Black women (Yang & Henderson, 2024; Fakunle & Hernandez Delgado, 2026). Of Friedan, she writes that Friedan omitted these subaltern and marginalised women from her manifesto. In tracing the intellectual genesis of whiteness, Crenshaw goes back to Sojourner Truth, arguing in this 1989 piece that "even today, the difficulty white women have traditionally experienced in sacrificing racial privilege to strengthen feminism renders them susceptible to Truth's critical question." (Crenshaw, 1989)<sup>6</sup>

In the more recent past, during the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we witnessed yet again the "missionary" feminist sentiments that lent their support to war, invasion, and killings in order to "save brown women from brown men." (Spivak, 1986) The near total absence of solidarity arrangements adds to this tale of whitemainstream feminist politics in the US. Historical and contemporaneous instances of reproductive repressions that have targeted the bodies of WOC, indigenous, immigrants, poor, and disabled women did not amass public outrage or bring people onto the streets to protest these excesses. The reason we even know of these reproductive abuses is due to the organising and intellectual labour of WOC activists in organisations such as Sister Song and Physicians for Reproductive Health. Scholars such as Dorothy Roberts, Angela Davis, Loretta Ross, Betsy Hartmann, and Elane R. Gutierrez have enriched our understanding of the historical roots of multiple forms of reproductive excesses. As such, this history of whiteness operating as an organising frame of feminist politics in the US is nothing new or exceptionally revelatory within academic theorising and scholarship. In this short piece, we draw

<sup>4</sup> Buchholz, Katharina. (2024) "The Trump-Harris gender gap."

<sup>5</sup> Feminist historians have carefully documented the underlying racism that marked the women's suffrage movement across the Atlantic from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. For additional commentaries on US suffrage, see Ellen Carol DuBois (1992), ed. *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton-Susan B. Anthony Reader: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*. Rev. Ed. and Jen McDaniel (2013), "White suffragist dis/entitlement: The revolution and the rhetoric of racism." for details on British suffrage and imperial race politics, see Pamela Scully (2001), *Women's suffrage in the British empire*. And Antoinette Burton (1994), "A girdle round the world: British imperial sisterhood and the ideology of global sisterhood."

<sup>6</sup> Crenshaw is referring here to Sojourner Truth's canonical poem from 1851, "Ain't I a woman?"

upon this troubled history as a lens through which to examine the outcomes of the pro-abortion ballot initiatives in the 2024 election. When examined through the *longue durée* history of intersecting race, gender, class, and indigenous configurations, the electoral outcomes for November 2024 do not appear merely as an expression of political dissonance, but rather as an instance of US feminist redux, which we elaborate below.

## LEGACY OF WHITESTREAM US FEMINISM AND ITS HISTORICAL ATTACHMENTS TO LIBERAL SOVEREIGN INDIVIDUALISM AND PRESERVATION OF RACIAL PRIVILEGES

Starting from the summer of 2022, when the *Dobbs* decision became public, there was vibrant and lively feminist organising across the US. Much of this feminist organising focused on restoring abortion care for women and pregnant people. One of the authors, Ahluwalia, joined the local Flagstaff Abortion Alliance (FAA) in late 2022, which allowed her to become part of many lively discussions over regular Zoom meetings and local public rallies. During the early days, there was room for conversations on strategy and vision, whereby restoration of *Roe* alone was not what dominated our local community discussions. Feminist imagery, energy, and anger were fired up; we heard slogans such as “*Roe* was the floor and not the ceiling” (Littlefield, 2023).

Even when *Roe* enacted constitutional protections for abortion in 1973, there were limitations whereby access depended upon women’s financial situations and geographical locations, especially if they lived within rural health deserts. The foetal viability clause determined a period within a pregnancy when the foetus can live outside the womb, in some instances through artificial medical intervention. The viability period was arbitrarily placed between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (henceforth, ACOG) entered the post-*Dobbs* debates to point out that, as medical practitioners, they do not support the inclusion of the viability clause within contemporary pro-abortion ballot initiatives. According to ACOG, the viability determination within pregnancies was directed by political compulsions rather than science and medicine.<sup>7</sup>

In other instances, there were various Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers, commonly referred to as TRAP laws, that imposed multiple restrictions on providers of abortion care across states.<sup>8</sup> In some states, there was a 72-hour wait period mandated for those who sought abortion services. Again, this was overly burdensome for working women, especially those who lived in rural communities and needed to travel long distances to procure medical procedures to terminate unwanted pregnancies. Not only were these individuals required to make travel and lodging arrangements, but they also needed to ensure childcare in cases where they had other living children. In addition to incurring these costs, working women also lost wages for their time away from work. The post-*Roe* race, class, and geographic reproduction bind that determined women’s and pregnant individuals’ access to abortion was re-enacted rather than dismantled through the feminist framing of multiple ballot initiatives within the recently concluded presidential elections. The possibilities of framing a more expansive and inclusive repro agenda in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were yet again short-circuited.

In community meetings, some of us suggested we look beyond the US to see other possibilities of feminist communitarian organising. As someone who locates her research and teaching within a transnational feminist tradition, Ahluwalia, along with other members, frequently highlighted Argentina’s recent success in securing legal, safe, and free abortion care up to 15 weeks of pregnancy. The famous Argentinian green wave greatly inspired us in a university town where we handed out green bandanas and handkerchiefs with pro-abortion messaging printed on them at public rallies. Even as some of us were much inspired by reproductive political organising in places such as Argentina and other Latin American countries, from the very beginning, we shied away from pushing for abortion access as health care to be free in the world’s richest country, the US. In failing to draw inspiration from elsewhere, our national location and historical trajectory stymied our collective communitarian imaginations for a liberated and inclusive feminist future.

The Democratic Party, despite a history of anti-incumbency in mid-term elections, saw impressive wins during the elections in November 2022. Pro-abortion feminist national, state, and local organising facilitated this political victory for the Dems. The abortion issue turned out to be a blessing for Biden and the Democrats. This mid-term victory fuelled local organising, for instance, in our mountain town, we were able to pass a pro-abortion resolution through the city council after a long discussion and multiple presentations from local citizens.<sup>9</sup> However, by mid-2023, as we moved closer to the national elections, the focus of organising around abortion turned increasingly nostalgic with the intention to rehabilitate *Roe* and, as such, ended up once again privileging whiteness.

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<sup>7</sup> For more details on ACOG’s arguments against the insertion of viability clauses within pro-abortion legislation, see The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). “Facts are important: Understanding and navigating viability.”

<sup>8</sup> The various restrictions placed on abortion providers through TRAP laws are intended to discourage clinics and their clients from seeking necessary care. For details on these various restrictions across different US states, see Guttmacher (2025), “Targeted regulation of abortion providers.”

<sup>9</sup> See this news coverage on the passing of the city resolution in Flagstaff, KNAU, (2023) “Flagstaff council approves resolution to support abortion access.”

The openness and willingness to rescript the reproductive health care landscape for all Americans in the immediacy of the Supreme Court *Dobbs* decision began to shrink and disappear by mid-2023. As feminist organisers focused on crafting language for pro-abortion ballot initiatives, the political expediency of technocrats took over. There was increasingly less space and willingness to ensure that, literally and metaphorically, the person at the end of the line would have reproductive care access and protections in the post-*Roe* and post-*Dobbs* era. The second chance that *Dobbs* had afforded US feminists was forfeited in favour of minimalist guarantees of legalising abortion prior to foetal viability, as crafted in proposition 139 of Arizona and some of the other pro-abortion state ballot initiatives. We conceded ground too quickly to long-standing historical habits of adopting a path of least resistance. What began to take shape in more concrete forms across feminist spaces was a singular focus on ensuring limited legal protections for abortion care. Under *Roe* 2.0, there was the reinstatement of lost ground and an abandonment of the aim for a higher ceiling of reproductive care, access, and justice. Reproductive health care needs of those at the base of our social pyramid were once again sidelined, or at best assumed to be represented in what was presented as a universal and singular demand for restoration of legal protection for abortion access.

This time, as feminist participants, we witnessed firsthand the political workings of whitestream feminism in partnership with big repro, especially organisations such as the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the National Abortion Federation.<sup>10</sup> The public rally slogans, placards, pins, and speakers predominantly focused on individualism, with abortion becoming a single-issue agenda. Here we are reminded of Audre Lorde's (1984) percipient warning that many women of colour feminists have since repeated: "There is no single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives." Without claims to originality here, it is widely acknowledged among scholars of feminist histories that there have always been limits to how feminism has historically imagined gender empowerment and transformations. Feminists did not organise for absolutes in terms of gender empowerment; their historical successes were piecemeal, involving patriarchal concessions, active negotiations, and tactical readjustments—this time was no different.

Multiple local marches that were organised in our university town afforded us the opportunity to observe and collect protest art in the form of pins, placards, and slogans. It would not be an overreach to suggest that there was ample material generated for many a thesis and dissertation in the near future. For our purposes here, we want to focus on messaging that dominated these civil society gatherings and conversations, which we participated in. If we were to zero in on a dominant slogan at these gatherings on pins and placards, it would have to be "My body, my choice." This slogan was chanted with slight variations to accommodate gender nonconforming/nonbinary people with the addition of "Their body, their choice." As choice took precedence, the refusal to be reproductively governed as the self-owning, sovereign feminist subject with bodily autonomy was a sentiment that was articulated over and over again. Exercise of choice by free-standing individuals has been an important ideological stand that has shaped liberal feminist imaginary from the late nineteenth century into our twenty-first century. In reclaiming property over their own selves and reproduction, feminists staked a challenge to the collective claims of heteropatriarchal institutions of the family, state, and church over pregnant bodies and reproductive labour. While there is some merit in gendered assertions over bodily autonomy, the slogan rankles in its quick and easy acquiescence to hyper- or atomistic sovereign individualism of liberal politics. Autonomy, liberties, and the fantasy of individual sovereignty have been a cornerstone of the Western androgynous philosophical tradition dating back to the European Enlightenment.<sup>11</sup>

Why would legal claims to individual choice and sovereignty over one's reproductive body be a limiting frame for 21st-century feminist politics? Limits with these articulations have been amply outlined by postcolonial and decolonial feminists for close to four decades. In their point of departure, feminist activists and scholars writing from these positions have taken issue with individualised priorities of choice over structural constraints. This articulation limits the exercise of "choice" and individual autonomy for subaltern and marginalised girls, women, and pregnant individuals. The reattachment to choice glosses over how agentive subjects are formed in diverse and uneven ways through people's proximities and distances from power. Instead of enabling a recognition of racial and class hierarchies that limit access and expressions of autonomy for WOC and working women, what occurs is a reinforcement of existing power configurations through tacit acceptance.

It's important to highlight here that WOC have a long history of pushing back against this formulation of choice and abortion as representative of their reproductive concerns and needs. In 2003, Loretta Ross, the national coordinator of SisterSong, went on to challenge how "just talking about freedom of choice" would not suffice at a time of "an immoral and illegal war in Iraq, the Patriot Act, and in the face of poverty." She added, "I mean if

<sup>10</sup> For details on the politics of big repro, see Garnet Henderson, (2023) "Are big repro orgs going to get it together? Planned Parenthood is cutting a crucial program, the National Abortion Federation has a new president, and good news from... the FDA." The art in this piece captures the manner in which Planned Parenthood has worked to hinder local grassroots organising and community focused initiatives.

<sup>11</sup> For postcolonial feminist critiques of the European Enlightenment, see Nikita Dhawan (2014), *Decolonizing enlightenment: Transnational justice, human rights, and democracy in a postcolonial world*. For additional commentary on the limits of individual sovereignty, see Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, (2014) *Sex, or the unbearable*.

we made abortion totally available, totally accessible, totally legal, totally affordable, women would still have other problems. And so, to reducing women's lives down to just whether or not choice is available, we felt was inadequate."<sup>12</sup>

As choice took precedence over other formulations, the competing histories of WOC and poor women's unmet reproductive needs once again receded into the backdrop in the months between the midterms and national elections in the US. The needs of those at the end of the line were seriously diminished through a single-issue focus on abortion, especially given the long history of reproductive harm they have experienced in the past, which includes their inability to choose to parent, forced sterilizations, histories of lost generations, and, more recently, the increasing inability to keep the children they do have safe from police violence and gun violence. We ask, then, are the reproductive health care needs and aspirations of subaltern women reflected in the dominant framework of abortion isolation? Individualised abortion focus extends liberal and neoliberal logics that absolve families, communities, and the state from providing care and support for women and people who participate in myriad forms of reproductive labour. Moreover, in using the reproductive wrongs of a singular group to stand in for the universal, we run into the danger of setting up an exclusionary rather than an inclusive and robust movement. Unfortunately, seeking to create a national consensus around a single issue severely limited the conversation around feminist reproductive futures. In giving in to the long-standing epistemic habit, pro-choice proved to be an insufficient paradigm. In collectively confronting the reproductive obligations forced upon some, there was no political will and energy left to challenge the multiple reproductive burdens placed on subaltern racialised bodies.

We want to draw on a couple of additional examples from the recent feminist campaign for abortion access before we conclude with a brief commentary on the Atlanta-based Black women's collective, SisterSong.<sup>13</sup> The pins below ([Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#)) are merely two examples of creative and clever art that emerged in the course of the post-*Dobbs* feminist campaigns. Much of the appeal lies in their unabashed feminist assertion over female bodily autonomy within our increasingly nonideal, misogynistic, and patriarchal surveillance of women and pregnant people.

**Figure 1**

*Figure one*



**Figure 2**

*Figure two*



The political messaging, along with a quick and accessible pictorial biology lesson on female reproductive anatomy, notwithstanding, the hyper-atomistic and disembodied uteri in these pieces of activist art are not too far-fetched from the liberal feminist political discourse that has been dominant in the US. Our collective conversation

<sup>12</sup> For details on some earlier instances of WOC pushback against choice, see Kimala Price (2020), "What is reproductive justice? How women of color activists are redefining the pro-choice paradigm."

<sup>13</sup> For details on SisterSong, see SisterSong, "Sister song: Women of color reproductive justice collective."

veered towards assertion of individual “choice,” at the expense of recognition of historical harms and constraints around access, equity, and autonomy along intersecting axes of race, class, indigeneity, geography, and immigration. Feminist intentions of naming and recognizing a discontinuous access to resources and exercise of reproductive agency fast receded. As the fundamental unit of our collective concern became the universal and unmarked women and female-identified individuals, we left no room to inquire if our political messaging and strategies were responsive to the needs of immigrant, indigenous, disabled, and poor rural women. Even as we were able to name, identify, and address the underlying sexism and transphobia, we failed to acknowledge how other intersecting systemic oppressions worked to limit access to safe and legal abortion care for many within the contemporary US.

## **WOC REIMAGINE REPRODUCTIVE LIVES OF MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES<sup>14</sup>**

Even as whitestream dominant feminist campaigning and organising reinstated the mythic romance with liberal atomistic individualism, women of colour organising, especially as upheld by the thoughtful and nuanced work of SisterSong, provided a much-needed corrective for pursuing reproductive justice work in our times. SisterSong and WOC scholars and activists have pushed for a reproductive justice framework that lays out that reproductive justice is racial justice. Feminist solidarity arrangement under this framework insists on the recognition of how reproduction is always already a racialised gendered, embodied experience from the times of slavery into the present. Their work has recorded the racialised histories of who is allowed to reproduce and who is denied the right to bear and raise their children. Additionally, as SisterSong insists that WOC and communities of colour should have the right to raise our children without violence, they call for dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline and other structural oppressions. A vision for holistic, intersectional, and interdependent reproductive lives has been crafted and continues to be fleshed out among subaltern feminist communities.

In shifting the political location of enunciation towards the histories and experiences of WOC, SisterSong ensures a more deliberate exploration of communitarian-based repro-justice where not choice, but rather accessibility and shared vulnerabilities, are prioritised. In pushing for this shift, SisterSong can be credited with advancing a *Roe 2.0* agenda that aims for the ceiling rather than settling for a return to a time that offered choices to some at the expense of many. If we could have advanced a collective consensus to uphold and enable SisterSong and WOC to take center-stage in political campaigning and messaging, the feminist movement may have abandoned and moved away from presenting “choice” as the ultimate and singular framework for reproductive empowerment. The reconciliation of the liberal feminist demand for choice with MAGA might have been greatly disrupted. Had we allowed the national reproductive justice conversation to truthfully capture the lives of women and people who are multiply oppressed, US civil society would have generated and garnered a very different discursive landscape, one where MAGA ideology’s limits would have been impossible to ignore. Sadly, during the high noon of right-wing politics in the US, feminist organising leaned into compromised reformism for short-term gains. Fettered by narrow liberal humanist logics of reproduction, there was no sustained public recognition and naming of reproductive injustices visited upon the bodies of Black and Brown immigrants and workers. At the close of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, American feminism once again abandoned our analytical allegiance to the wisdom and intellectual insights of decolonial WOC scholars and activists.

Academic writing imposes its own limitations; wrapping up a discussion with a “conclusion” is one of them. As the presidential elections are behind us and some states have secured certain repro rights for now, we find ourselves in a place where the feminist conversation on the issues of reproductive justice has retreated from the forefront of public discussion. This retreat is somewhat understandable given the current political landscape in the US, which is deliberately and by design being flooded with outrageous proposals that are coming at us fast and furious. Against this backdrop of political churning and uncertainty, it has been challenging for us to fully appreciate and comprehend the impact of the US feminist “truncated victories” of last November. In thinking with one of our favourite feminist scholars who writes about disrupting dissonance, Sara Ahmed reminds us not to oversee the possibilities of people sitting at the same table, even as they appear to inhabit different worlds. In her *Feminist Killjoy Handbook*, we are instructed not to be stunned into silence, and instead of swallowing the dissonance and pretending everything is all right, she urges us to talk back to it and to disrupt it (Ahmed, 2023). This piece is an invitation to “staying with the trouble” and notice “what has receded into the background,” with the intention of foregrounding a collective imagination of a different future, one that is responsive to diverse reproductive needs, realities, challenges, and desires (2023).

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<sup>14</sup> We are borrowing language here from SisterSong’s self-description about their work. For details, see their section on “About Us” on their website.

and timely feedback that helped sharpen our ideas. Many thanks to all the wonderful members of the Flagstaff Abortion Alliance, who helped us better understand the workings of feminist organising and politics outside the classroom. Finally, we would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers at Feminist Encounters for their generous and thoughtful feedback and for taking the time to read and comment on our paper.

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### **Author contributions**

Sanjam Ahluwalia is responsible for the conceptualization, formal analysis, and writing of the original draft of the manuscript. Reagan Warner reviewed and edited the manuscript.

### **Data availability**

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

### **AI disclosure**

The authors declare that they have not used any generative artificial intelligence for the writing or editing of this manuscript. All intellectual property and revisions in this paper reflect the work of human authors.

### **Biographical sketch**

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