

## News

## Artists and Activists March Over Brooklyn Bridge for Abortion Rights

Protesters held signs that read “If men got pregnant, you could get an abortion at an ATM” and “Abolish SCOTUS, Not Abortions!”



by Jasmine Liu  
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Bianca Romero, a New York City-based artist, created an interactive mural in front of the Brooklyn Courthouse in collaboration with Shout Your Abortion and Planned Parenthood. (photo courtesy the artist; all other photos Jasmine Liu/Hyperallergic)

At around noon on Saturday, May 14, thousands filtered onto the lawns of Cadman Plaza in Downtown Brooklyn. Electronic dance beats curated by Indian American artist DJ Rashad pounded through large speakers, and a group of seven or eight people twirled and jumped up and down with their hands in the air like they were at a rave. With an unmistakable humidity in the air, summer weather had arrived, and the atmosphere at the plaza was reminiscent of a music festival. Many sported green ensembles, a nod to pro-choice activism in Argentina that led to the legalization of abortion in the country in 2020. Some toted handmade posters; others enthusiastically picked up “Abortion is Health Care,” “Bans Off Our Bodies,” and “Stand With Black Women” signs passed out by volunteers.



A quirky Halloween costume was repurposed to be topical for the protest with the sign “m-eye body.”

Protesters were expressing their fury at a leaked Supreme Court draft opinion to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark 1973 decision that made access to safe abortions a constitutional right. In the recent draft, conservative Justice Samuel Alito judged the *Roe* precedent to be “egregiously wrong” and placed it in the same category as two other decisions he believed deserved the same epithet — *Korematsu v. United States*, which permitted the detention of Japanese Americans during World War II, and *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which authorized segregation under the “separate but equal” doctrine.

Despite the pervading carnivalesque aura at Cadman Plaza, some participants wore their despair on their sleeves. Angela Fremont, an artist who was born in the early 1950s, stood tall with a mournful black sign reading “I Survived an Illegal Abortion in Birmingham, Ala. in 1969,” followed by “#NeverAgain.”

Fremont told Hyperallergic that she was 18 at the time and had been living in Miami. After visiting two doctors — one of whom called her a “whore” and told her to leave his office when she disclosed that she was not

married — she was routed to Birmingham.

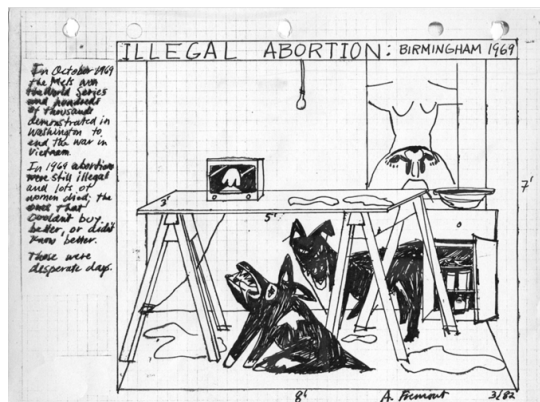
“The lady who picked me up drove me out of town down a dirt road to a shack. Inside the shack were three dogs with urine and feces on the floor. There were two sawhorses with a sheet of plywood on it, and a bare lightbulb hanging over the plywood,” she recounted. A hose was placed inside her cervix and air was pumped into her uterus; 30 hours later, after she returned to Tallahassee, she began to hemorrhage, became septic, and developed a fever. Interrogated by police, she told them she had done it to herself.



Artist Angela Fremont survived an illegal abortion when she was 18.

Fremont teared up as she said, “I was one of the lucky ones.” Her husband, who was doing a residency at Bellevue Hospital around the time she got her abortion, regularly saw women come in with “fevers of 107 and 108, and they’d be dead in the morning.”

“This is why all these people are here. Because this is what’s in store for us. It’s about women, it’s about men. It’s non-binary. It’s about our sisters, our children, our grandchildren. And it’s not right,” Fremont said. In the early 1980s, she created a series of artworks based on her abortion experience, including a sketch representing the shack where it happened.



Angela Fremont's "Illegal Abortion" sketch (image courtesy the artist)




"Everyone loves someone who had an abortion," a sign read.

Artist Bianca Romero, who was invited by Shout Your Abortion and Planned Parenthood, designed a freestanding mural that read "I will aid and abet abortions." The phrase alludes to the passage of the Heartbeat Act in Texas last fall, which permits citizens to bring lawsuits against anyone who receives an abortion or "knowingly engages in conduct that aids or abets the performance or inducement of an abortion." Members of the community were encouraged to fill in the white space with their own messages.

Activists unfurled a colossal pink banner that read "Our Bodies. Our Futures. Our Abortions" on the lawn at Cadman Plaza Park and carried it across several streets onto the Brooklyn Bridge, its words visible in photographs of the march taken from overhead. After marching across the bridge, protesters dispersed at Foley Square in Lower Manhattan, where they were met with a sparse group of pro-life counter-protesters on the steps of the New York County Supreme Court and the beginnings of misty rain.

Our Bodies. Our Futures. Our Abortions. Period. [#BansOffOurBodies pic.twitter.com/ykaWMcOKEY](https://twitter.com/ykaWMcOKEY)

—  PPGNY Action Fund (@PPGNYact) [May 14, 2022](#)

Several celebrities were spotted submerged in the crowd. At one point, model and author Padma Lakshmi climbed onto a raised area brandishing an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sign reading "Abortion Access for All." Julia Louis-Dreyfus marched with a sign quoting the fictional character Selina Meyer, whom she plays on the HBO show *Veep*.

"If men got pregnant, you could get an abortion at an ATM," it read, attributing the quote to "me." Women's March Co-Chair Linda Sarsour was seen doing a press interview on the bridge.

Pro-choice activists were met with a sparse group of pro-life counter-protesters at Foley Square.

Maria Quintana, a participant in the protest who identified as Afro-Latina, tied the criminalization of abortion to state surveillance and control that disproportionately limits the freedom of certain groups of Americans.

“The United States has continued to force hysterectomies and try to control women’s bodies — Black and brown and Indigenous women’s bodies — for years,” Quintana told Hyperallergic. “The government has no hold over us. We’re not your farm animals.”

Several signs lambasted Alito and the conservative majority of the Supreme Court. A group of six held signs with large cardboard cutouts of Alito, John Roberts, Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett, Neil Gorsuch, and Clarence Thomas. One sign, spoofing the popular word game Wordle, depicted three wrong tries — “Alito,” “Pence,” and “Trump” — followed by the right answer, “women.”

Some protested not only the draft decision but the very existence of the court itself. At the endpoint of the march, the Workers World Party, a Marxist-Leninist political party, tabled in the triangular Thomas Paine Park at the center of the plaza. “Abolish SCOTUS, Not Abortions!” one of their signs read. Other signs plastered to the table advocated reproductive justice for incarcerated people and people of all genders.

Many signs at the protest criticized both those serving on the Supreme Court and the institution of the court itself.

Paul Wilcox, who along with Gregory Chen passed out flyers on behalf of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, pointed to abortion rights as one of many issues that signal the need for democratic movement-building.

“The politicians are not going to be the ones that pass the law,” he told Hyperallergic, referencing attempts to codify *Roe* such as one [blocked](#) by Senate Republicans just last week. “The women’s movement and the progressive movement of the ’60s and ’70s were the ones that won us abortion rights.”

“It’s a very good development that people are waking up to the fact that it’s the movements that make change,” he continued. “We can’t take our rights for granted in this country. They can be rolled back.”

Near the finish line of the march, Nanette Rosenbaum said that she protested in the 1970s and “wasn’t expecting to have to do it a second time.” As a teenager in New York, she recounted that women were “very energized.” With many feminist protests taking place around the same time of the Vietnam protests, she said, “the timing was such that as a country, we started to wake up to the idea that a collection of voices can really make a difference. We felt very empowered.” She isn’t as convinced this time around that marching will make any difference.

Still, she added, “I feel as strongly today, at 65, as I did back then as a teen.”