

## Cultural Report on Reenactment of Roe v. Wade

On January 22nd 6pm, at the UAB Hill Student Center, I attended a Reargument of the US Supreme Court Case Roe v. Wade (1972). Afterwards there was a panel discussion of legal experts and activists who gave insight, historical context, and conversation on where this case stands today and moving forward. The host organization was Planned Parenthood Generation Action at UAB. When we arrived, Planned Parenthood had tables set up outside the theater with a display of resources and pamphlets regarding what they do. With me was Jackie and our friend who has an internship at PP. We had found out about the event from Shivani, a PP organizer who we first met while canvassing before the midterm elections.

The performance was essentially a reading of the court transcript along with a narrator who gave brief background information before and after the duration of the arguments. Sarah Weddington represented Texas woman Norma McCorvey against the Dallas County District Attorney Henry Wade who represented the state of Texas. The Court deemed abortion a fundamental right under the United States Constitution, subjecting all laws attempting to restrict abortion to the standard of scrutiny. The common theme of the justices' questions was their attempts to determine whether the question of abortion was a medical, philosophical, political, or constitutional one. Weddington's arguments focused on the fact that the Texas law is vague, when it says that abortion is legal when it is "life saving", she said doctors often can not tell or agree when that is the case. Weddington's next argument stated the fourteenth amendment's promise of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness", which should allow mothers to discontinue unwanted pregnancy and determine the course of their lives. Weddington did admit that moral issues were at stake but that the state has no legitimate interest in these personal decisions.

While I was aware of these ideas and arguments, the cultural and political climate of this time was not so much on my radar. During the panel discussion, they talked about how the cold war impacted the United States' commitment to traditional religious family values. Our ideological differences with the Soviet Union included their comparative gender equality and antireligion, meaning that strengthening our heteronormativity and religious zeal felt like defense against them. This added to the partisanship regarding abortion rights. After the decision came a war of semantics, "pro-life" admittedly picking the best label, and "pro-choice" sounding less virtuous. Today there is a move to say "reproductive rights" instead of "pro-choice" because it reaffirms a certain bodily sovereignty. The panel was upset regarding Amendment 2 which was recently passed in Alabama and is a "trigger law" meaning that it does not actively hold much weight until the Supreme Court reverses *Roe v. Wade*, at which point it would mean a no-exceptions abortion outlaw. Many people believe that this Amendment 2 has the most potential to pave the way to outlawing abortion in all cases including: saving the life of the mother, rape, and incest.

Afterwards, I was reflecting on how this discourse is embedded in the relationship between misogyny and nationalism. In what ways do we burden women to serve the hegemonic status quo? *It is important to resist norms attached to femininity because they are tied to women sacrificing their self interest and autonomy for reproductive ideals.* In our class we have read poets like Ghada Samman and Ahmed Fouad Negm who are very different but in all their poems there is a cry for inherent freedom and dignity for everyone. The question of legalizing abortion can not be separated from this appeal to sovereignty.