

Civil liberties and freedoms

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



Civil liberties are the freedoms that citizens have in order to exercise rights that have been given, written, and documented in the Constitution. Although freedom of speech and unwarranted interference from the government are stated within this document, there too are many others. In order to clearly outline and state which rights of the American people were protected by the Constitution, the Bill of Rights was drafted. Although a document such as The Bill of Rights exists to protect citizens' rights, they have not always been successful in reassuring that all rights for all citizens would be withheld. There have been numerous instances in which citizens have felt as if they had been denied of their civil liberties.

As we know from previous history, there indeed was a case in which one citizen in particular felt that her civil rights had been violated. This landmark case is none other than the famous *Roe v. Wade*. *Roe v. Wade* was a United States Supreme Court decision that established the constitutional right to abortion (for women of course). This case serves even more significance as it ultimately dissolved law against abortion throughout the entire United States (*Roe*). This decision also revealed that the Supreme Court had begun to recognize that there are certain freedoms that a woman has/should have over her own health. However, even following the decision of the case, there has continued to be controversy over the legalization of abortion, regulation of abortion, as well as the source of funding for abortions. Because of the topic of abortion, the struggle it has/is creating for women's reproductive rights, and the fact that it continues to remain a current issue, we, as a group, decided that it would be a great topic for our group presentation!

After we decided on our topic, we made it a point to educate ourselves on the history of abortion.

A lot of the information that was found on abortion was quite outstanding. We discovered that before abortion was ever deemed illegal, it was once legal and even more so advertised during the time of early American settlers (National). This we found very interesting being that in today's society, abortions are made to be more of a secretive manner and a lot of women have been embarrassed about their decision to get one. We discovered that abortions did not become illegal until the mid to late 1800's. During this time states were beginning to make abortions illegal because of many reasons. The most fascinating reason we found for the new urgency of making abortions illegal was because Americans were afraid that the new increase in immigration would cause the problem of the immigration population, thus surpassing those of the Anglo-Saxon descent (National); making abortions illegal brought a slew of problems. Although abortion was now prohibited, the number of women that were getting abortions did not change.

At this point, what had begun happening was a horrible epidemic of women seeking “black market” abortions (National), rather than seeking doctors who were willing to perform abortions although it was illegal. These measures caused great danger to the women; in less severe cases there occurred great injury, but in more tragic instances, there was death (National). All of these dangerous tactics were performed by desperate women as means of aborting their unborn child. These horrible realities are what make abortion so controversial; however, these appalling truths still do

not deter others from their beliefs against abortion. Those of different races, backgrounds, and religions all have different opinions and viewpoints of abortion. The most controversial between those differences are religious beliefs. The Catholic Church is probably one of the strongest denominations against abortion (US Religious). Catholics believe that abortion is an “unspeakable crime” (US Religious). Another denomination that has such a strong opinion about the right to abortion is the Southern Baptist Church.

They are also against abortion, unless it was an occasion in which the mother’s health or life was in danger (US Religious). Although religious views are the prominent factor influencing people’s views and ideas on abortion, race is also a factor that seems to encompass significance on how people view the topic. Through our analysis and research, we happened to find a trend in the connection between race and views on abortion. It seems as if the number of abortions were higher in African American women with 36.4%, while white American women trailed closely behind with 36%. Other racial groups such as Hispanics had a much lower percentage with only 12%. This slim statistic can be accounted for because of their strong Catholic beliefs (The Case). We found it interesting that an explanation as of why the percentage of African American women who get abortions can be associated with the fact that a lot of the clinics offering these services such as Planned Parenthood are located in heavily minority populated areas (The Case). This assumption is definitely something that should be taken into account seeing as though Planned Parenthood facilities have had much controversy of their own. Planned Parenthood is a government funded clinic that provides health services for teens, providing contraceptives in addition to abortions.

Activists that are against abortion feel strongly about the defunding of Planned Parenthood and have raised a number of concerning points to support their premise. Critics say, “Planned Parenthood’s ruthless campaign to block abortion legislation shows that the organization is driven by truly aggressive pro-choice agenda” (Planned Parenthood). They take steps to disapprove this facility’s promotion of safe sex versus the first abstinence programs that have been observed. It does not seem accurate that these clinics have been accused of adopting a completely pro-choice stance because they offer women the right to determine whether they will terminate or go through with their pregnancies. Although abortion are only three percent of the services offered at Planned Parenthood facilities, the argument is raised whether or not taxpayer funds should go to an organization that is the nation’s largest abortion provider (Planned Parenthood). Because Planned Parenthood is a federally funded clinic, challengers have also argued that their tax dollars should not be used to run a program that they do not support in any way. We took into account all of the information that we read and researched in association to supporting and opposing abortion.

We then wanted to look at abortion’s history within the judicial system as we discussed earlier in the importance on Roe v. Wade. Although Roe v. Wade was a pioneer amongst a number of later court cases concerning abortion, it was not the only one to have a major impact on the government’s decision to keep or do away with it. Another important case concerning abortion is Doe v. Bolton. This case is important as it overturned a Georgia law trying to enforce strict regulations on abortions. The law basically ignored Roe v.

Wade and made it possible so that abortions would only be allowed if the mother's life was in jeopardy. It also made the entire process of getting an abortion more difficult by requiring that women have at least three approvals from three different doctors (American).

The Supreme Court decided that the Georgia law was indeed unconstitutional because it purposely made the process extremely difficult in order to prevent women from getting abortions (American). Another abortion related case is *Hodgson v. Minnesota*. This case is controversial because it addressed the issue of minors being able to get abortions without the consent of their parents (Americans). The ruling of this case allowed a minor to receive permission from a court in order to get the procedure without a parent's knowledge (American). Those against abortions were in fear that it would increase the number of minors getting pregnant, thus seeking abortions. These cases, along with *Roe v. Wade* are important because they clearly set the foundation for women in gaining their reproductive rights. Once we were able to read information on both the opposing and supporting stances in reference to abortion and looked into numerous court cases as a group, we came to the consensus that we are Pro-Choice. The first amendment of the United States Constitution states, " Non Establishment of religion; free exercise of religion; freedoms of speech, press, petition, and peaceable assembly. "

Therefore, the First amendment protects citizens of their civil liberties; there are obviously more to the list. Although civil liberties and civil rights are deemed controversial, they should not be. We believe that it is a woman's

choice and decision on what she wishes to do with her body. The government should not have any say or authority on what she wishes to do with what is given to her by birth. Due to numerous amendments (i. e. – first, fourteenth, etc.), a woman has the legal right to an abortion. If a woman is neither financially nor mentally stable, she should still be able to abort her child if need be reason being that it is her choice. However we do not believe that abortion should be used as a contraceptive. As we approached the final portion of our Civil Rights and Liberties project, the presentation, we wanted to make sure that our presentation was something that the class would be able to understand. We decided to perform a skit based on the landmark Roe v. Wade court case.

The original case, taking place in state of Texas in 1973, is not only one of the nation's most important cases, but rather the founding case concerning abortion. The plot of our skit involves college student Ashley Williams and her attempt to sue the state of Georgia for its new Planned Parenthood laws that have been taken into effect since the recent presidential election. Presidential candidate winner Mitt Romney has now outlawed all abortions, and as a result, the plaintiff, Ms. Ashley Williams has decided to take her particular issue to the Supreme Court. With the new law in effect, Ms. Williams felt as though it violated a number of not only her natural rights, but her rights as a woman as well. With this said, the defense then journeys through a series of questioning in order to convince the jury that those basic rights listed in the nation's Constitution do indeed belong to women and their decision to act how they see fit when it comes to their bodies. Ashley Williams hopes to receive nothing but true justice for herself and hopes that

her case will stand as an example for other women who have been negatively affected by the new law.

Following the presentation, there are a total of two videos that will be played in order to represent the decision of both Pro-Life and Pro-Choice. This project and presentation as a whole has taught us the importance of being advocates for our civil rights and liberties, especially as women. We have learned the importance of being conscious of women's reproductive rights. We believe that being a woman should come with guaranteed liberties, such as being able to do to their bodies whatever they please, and having the choice to an abortion is not an exception to that freedom.