



Is 'fetal personhood' coming to *your* state?

featuring
Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan
The Century Foundation

This time on Code WACK!

Where are we today when it comes to reproductive rights in America? *And what does the latest IVF case in Alabama mean for reproductive justice and healthcare equity in America?*

To find out, we spoke to **Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan**, a fellow at [The Century Foundation](#), where she works on issues related to maternal health and reproductive rights and justice. Vina's work supports The Century Foundation's efforts to eliminate racial and gender disparities in health outcomes. Vina has a master's of public health in global health policy from George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health.

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WE DISCUSS

There's been a consistent, steady encroachment on reproductive rights in America for decades. How would you describe where we're at today, specifically with abortion access?

"It's a patchwork right now in the country, where we're seeing after Dobbs ... a lot of states that have been historically hostile to abortion access - and reproductive rights more broadly - were very quick to enforce laws about *where* someone could have an abortion, whether or not they could have an abortion at all, gestational limits ... that really became kind of the unfortunate reality for a lot of people who lived in those states that were already very hostile.

"On the other hand, you see some more progressive states have been really trying to shore up access and quickly get legislation passed that will protect access, not only for the people who are living in those states, but also they're seeing influx of folks coming from out of state, from those states that are more hostile." – **Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan**

How are women and people of color disproportionately impacted when it comes to abortion bans and other impediments to reproductive justice?

"I think it goes back to the topic of geography. The South, you know, as I mentioned, is the region of the country where we're seeing the most states that have these abortion bans and the South is also the part of the country

that has the highest concentration of Black population in the U.S. So that's a really stark, you know, racial divide that we're seeing.

"There's also, you know, layers of social stigma that go into that when it comes to ... people of color seeking abortion as opposed to ... wealthier white women seeking abortion.

"There's also the issue of health coverage and insurance coverage and who has access to care - even though in ... many of these states you're not able to access abortion through like Medicaid coverage or even like the Hyde-eligible abortions the Hyde Amendment is, what prevents federal funds from being used to provide abortion care except for ... exceptions, which usually include rape, incest and the health and wellbeing of the mother." - **Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan**

What's the significance of the Alabama Supreme Court ruling that frozen embryos created during IVF are considered children under state law?

"... what is worrying to advocates is in the opinion, there were a lot of references made to ... religion and Christianity specifically, and that seemed like - to advocates - like a clear violation of a) you know, church and state are supposed to be separate in an ideal world.

"And also really troubling that if that is the way that courts are thinking about health care and rights, what does that mean for other states beyond Alabama? Are other states going to, you know, kind of take this as a playbook and, and try to do something similar with their own states and state constitutions? Is this going to make its way all the way up to the federal level? And so I think those are some of the worries and like alarm bells that started ringing off in people's heads once this happened." - **Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan**

Helpful Links

[The Century Foundation](#)

[IVF Is the Latest Battleground in the War on Reproductive Justice](#), *The Century Foundation*

[After Roe Fell: Abortion Laws by State](#), *Center for Reproductive Rights*

[Inequity in US Abortion Rights and Access: The End of Roe Is Deepening Existing Divides](#), *Guttmacher Institute*

[The Hyde Amendment: An Abortion Barrier Hiding in Plain Sight](#), *League of Women Voters*

[In Vitro Fertilization](#), *Yale Medicine*

[Chief justice's Christian reasoning in IVF opinion sparks alarm over church-state separation](#), *AP News*

Episode Transcript

Read the [episode transcript](#).

Guest Biography -

Vina Smith Ramakrishnan

Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan (she/her) is a fellow at [The Century Foundation](#), where she works on issues related to maternal health and reproductive rights and justice.

Vina's work supports TCF's efforts to eliminate racial and gender disparities in health outcomes.

Vina graduated with a BA in anthropology from St. Lawrence University and an MPH in global health policy from The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health.

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