

Forced pregnancies and racial bias: A deadly combination?

featuring
Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan
The Century Foundation



This time on Code WACK!

Besides the Alabama IVF decision, **how else are reproductive rights being rolled back in America?** Why are some states going after **emergency contraception** known as **the morning-after pill**? ***What policy solutions are needed to better protect reproductive rights?***

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

Reproductive rights continue to be curtailed since the 2022 Dobbs decision. For example, an Oklahoma bill would ban FDA approved emergency contraception, otherwise known as the morning-after pill. Is this form of contraception federally protected or not?

"So technically it is federally protected, but Oklahoma would not be the first state who has attempted to kind of just go around the rules and go after something like emergency contraception.

"And I feel the need to also just blatantly state the fact that *emergency contraception is not abortion*. They are two completely different types of health care. Emergency contraception can't change anything about an embryo that has already implanted into a uterus. It is preventing the fertilization from even happening in the first place.

"And so whenever I hear about these bills that are coming out of places like Oklahoma, the first thing I want to suggest is that the people who are in these state houses need to take a biology lesson <laugh> because they are just grossly misinformed about what these different types of health care even entail." – **Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan**

What do you think could happen with this legislative effort to ban the morning after pill?

"I think what makes ... these things scary is that a lot of it does come down to the courts.

"... during the Trump administration, you know, so many judges were confirmed that are these anti-abortion judges ... who have their own

ideologies and set of ideas about what is and isn't permitted under the Constitution without acknowledging what the law of the land actually is.

"And so I think that's what the fear is, for a lot of people, is that even if a law dictates something, if it's not being enforced and [upheld] by the court" –

Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan

In your recent piece for The Century Foundation, you discuss the "reproductive justice framework." What is it, and why is it important?

"It's a framework that was formally put into words by a group of Black women in 1994, and they were really kind of dissatisfied with the binary that was just between the pro-choice and the pro-life movement. The pro-choice movement was predominantly White led and they were really singularly focused on the right to abortion.

"And so these women were saying there's a lot of other issues that deal with reproduction that are harming and impacting our communities. Of course, we want to support the pro-choice movement, in getting this right to abortion, but we also want to look at how that's connected to other things like access to maternal health care, prenatal/postnatal visits, insurance coverage, contraception, and also the right to have a child ... "

"And so that led to the three main pillars of reproductive justice, which is the right to have a child, the right to not have a child, and then the right to parent that child in a safe and healthy environment.

"And that goes into things like climate change and environmental justice. And the reason why I like the reproductive justice framework is because it's a really holistic approach to looking at care.

"I mean, instead of having, you know, these siloed movements, it offers a lot of opportunities for movement building as well. – **Vina Smith-Ramakrishnan**

Helpful Links

[The Century Foundation](#)

[Oklahoma anti-abortion bill spurs contraception, privacy concerns,](#)
News Nation Now

[The Abortion Justice Act,](#) *Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (D, MA)*

[The Right to Contraception Act,](#) *Congresswoman Kathy Manning (D, NC)*

[EACH Act for Reproductive Justice,](#) *Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (D, MA)*

[National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda,](#) *In Our Own Voice*

[The US war on reproductive rights should concern women everywhere,](#)
Al Jazeera

[How the Christian right took over the judiciary and changed America](#)
The Guardian

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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