



Why Does the Mifepristone Decision Matter for the HIV Community?

There is a scary through-line from the attacks on transgender bodies, reproductive freedom, PrEP and democracy.

April 20, 2023 By [PWN-USA](#)

This month, a radically conservative, Trump-appointed judge in Texas [ruled](#) to halt the Federal Drug Administration's (FDA) approval of a safe, effective and commonly-used medication abortion drug, mifepristone ("mife"), which is used along with misoprostol ("miso") to terminate pregnancies. It's important to know that the ruling has not gone into effect and is being considered by the Supreme Court. But ultimately, it could lead to a nationwide ban of this essential medication.

The ruling was widely anticipated by reproductive justice advocates, who have been preparing for this moment, but it was still devastating. We are heartbroken and worried for our communities. As we [said last year](#), the overturning of Roe v. Wade was just the beginning of many attacks on reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy.

Medication abortion accounted for [more than half of all abortions in 2020](#). If a mife ban goes into effect, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income communities will be most harmed, once again. Medication abortion is the most common, least invasive, most private, least expensive, and most accessible way for people to terminate pregnancies. Losing legal access to mife means that communities that are already hyperpoliced and surveilled will face greater risk of interactions with police, based on personal health decisions.

More than 100 studies conducted in 26 countries over a 30 year period [have shown that](#) abortion pills are safe and effective. This ruling was not about science, just like the recent pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) ruling out of Texas was not about science; just like the hateful legislation sweeping state legislatures that targets people who are trans and gender non-conforming, and those who love them, is not about science. This is, instead, about ideology and a desire to control the bodies, freedom, human rights and autonomy of people who are BIPOC, queer, trans and femme. This is about hatred for Blackness and brownness and indigeneity. This is about contempt for women. This is about feeling threatened by joy and liberation, truth and authenticity and Pride. This is about fear of our growing and collective power.

And once again, the silence from the HIV community—as in, zero acknowledgment of the

devastating mife court decision on federal HIV policy listservs; as in, PWN members and allies being asked by partners on a recent state HIV advocacy day to remove “abortion access” language from a list of policy priorities—speaks volumes. The continued failure to address reproductive rights and sexual freedom for all people living with HIV in the [National HIV/AIDS Strategy 2022-2025 Federal Implementation Plan](#) is just another example of the ways misogyny is baked into the domestic HIV response. (Don’t believe us? Search the implementation plan for the word “reproductive.” It appears twice, both in the context of primary HIV prevention.)

Just in the past few weeks, there is an obvious escalation of attacks on our communities if you’re paying attention.

Judge O’Connor’s recent decision to radically undermine the Affordable Care Act (ACA) preventive services requirement by singling out PrEP was deeply rooted in homophobic, dangerous, and harmful beliefs around PrEP and those who use it. We are currently in the midst of a [coordinated attack](#) on the rights, dignity and humanity of trans people. Meanwhile, in Tennessee, the state House of Representatives attempted to [expel](#) two, democratically-elected Black lawmakers for leading a protest against gun violence. This was a shocking and racist move by the Tennessee Republican supermajority to suppress legitimate political dissent. Both lawmakers have been reinstated. This is part of a larger pattern of majority-white state leaders attempting to remove power from Black and Latinx voters and consolidate control in their own hands. For example, a supermajority of white politicians in the Mississippi state legislature are [attempting to create](#) a separate, unelected court system and an expanded police force in Jackson, Mississippi, which is a majority-Black city with a pro-Black mayor.

This is the tyranny of white supremacy, anti-Blackness, misogyny, and queer- and transphobia in action. There is a scary through-line from the attacks on transgender bodies, reproductive freedom, PrEP, and democracy.

Let’s break it down. Unelected judges hold immense power to dole out rulings that affect the entire nation and can upend policies that otherwise have democratic support. As recent elections in California, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Vermont, and Wisconsin show, voters support and will protect abortion access when it’s on the ballot. This is why radically conservative groups are successfully petitioning extremist judges to use junk science, stigma, and discriminatory beliefs to undercut the administrative state and restrict access to basic healthcare, human rights, and dignity. To expand their ability to do this, conservatives are also using tactics to suppress voters and dissenting voices, especially BIPOC, queer, trans, and femme voices. This is a deliberate strategy to narrow the democratic pathways we have to push back against these threats to our basic freedom and human rights.

Is it confusing to understand that misogyny, anti-Blackness, transphobia and fear of our growing collective power are at the shared root of these coordinated attacks on our communities, and that we will have to rise in solidarity to combat them and to create the world we want and that our communities deserve?

Or is it the misogynoir in our own community that results in silence?

The reproductive justice and reproductive health community is literally shouting and HIV community leadership cannot hear.

We can't fight for PrEP and for decriminalization of HIV and not also fight for abortion medications and for science, not ideology, to be centered in FDA approval processes. These struggles are connected.

Courts, judges, and elected leaders don't keep us safe. We keep us safe. Here are three actions you can take right now:

1. Stay informed. PWN will continue to send updates to anyone who signs the [pledge to fight for reproductive freedom](#).
2. Demand change at the federal level. Tell the U.S. Congress that they must [pass the Women's Health Protection Act \(WHPA\) today](#). The WHPA is federal legislation that would protect abortion access in every U.S. state, no matter what the Supreme Court has said or will say about the right to abortion. All people – regardless of where they live, their gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status or ability to pay – should be able to control what does and does not happen to their bodies, including choosing the method of abortion that works best for them without barriers or delay. Learn more about the WHPA, [here](#).
3. Mobilize! Sign up to receive updates from your local Planned Parenthood and the Women's March, so you can be ready to show up in your hometown when needed.

We will never stop building power and working to transform these racist, oppressive, patriarchal systems. We are in the fight for our lives.