



Idea of the Day: Abortion Policy Negatively Affects Women of Color

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Abortion policy in this country does not treat all women equally. Even before *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973, affluent women were usually able to access abortion safely through a network of private doctors or by traveling to other states or countries where it was legal, while poor women risked their health, fertility, and often their lives to end a pregnancy. Unfortunately, because of a policy known as the Hyde Amendment, similar disparities and injustices still exist today—nearly 40 years after the Supreme Court declared that *all* women have a constitutional right to abortion.

The Hyde Amendment prohibits Medicaid, the joint federal-state health care program for the poor and indigent, from covering abortion care in almost all circumstances. Most people think of abortion as a “woman’s issue,” which of course it is. But the Hyde Amendment intentionally discriminates against poor women, who are disproportionately women of color. In this way, the Hyde Amendment is a policy that not only violates reproductive rights and principles of gender equity but one that undermines racial and economic justice as well.

According to the most recent Census data, 25.8 percent of African Americans and 25.3 percent of Hispanics are poor, compared to 12.3 percent of whites and 12.5 percent of Asians. These differences hold true for women of reproductive age (15 to 44 years old) living in poverty as well. While 28.5 percent are African American, 27.2 percent are Hispanic, and 27.0 percent are Native American, 15.8 percent are white and 13.3 percent are Asian.

The upshot: Women of color are more likely to rely on government health programs and therefore more likely to be directly affected by abortion funding restrictions such as the Hyde Amendment.

For more on this topic please see:

- [Separate and Unequal](#) by Jessica Arons and Madina Agénor

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