

International Safe Abortion Day

By Stella Crouch

September 28th is International Safe Abortion Day. If you didn't know that, don't be too hard on yourself as not many people seem to. Since abortion is considered a highly "controversial" topic this day of celebration actually isn't celebrated in very many places which need to change. Part of this change is getting the word out.

The day was first celebrated as a day of action for the decriminalization of abortion in Central and South America as well as the Caribbean in 1990. In 2011, the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) declared the 28th September as an international day. The date was chosen to commemorate the passing of the Law of Free Birth by the Brazilian parliament on September 28, 1871. The law was intended to provide freedom for the children of enslaved people in Brazil at the time. The law marked the beginning of a large-scale abolition movement in Brazil, but it turned out to be more of a legal loophole than a radical measure to help end slavery. Only a few people were freed under the law. More than one million people continued to be held as slaves until it was ultimately abolished on May 13, 1888, with the adoption of the Lei Áurea.

Every year almost half of all pregnancies (approximately 130 million) are unintended. Lack of access to safe abortions results in 45% of all abortions globally being unsafe, as cited from the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics. Unsafe abortion remains a catastrophic public health problem accounting for 13% of maternal mortality worldwide, or around 47,000 deaths, (International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics) with hundreds of thousands of survivors living with long-term complications, including infertility, chronic pain and even delayed death which usually isn't counted in statistics measuring death from unsafe abortions. This clearly calls for the strengthening of contraceptive services, sex education and access to comprehensive abortion care. Since abortion services are time-bound by gestational and legal limits, people seeking an abortion often resort to unsafe abortion when they cannot access safe abortion.

Just a few of the boundaries people can face that can lead people to resorting to unsafe abortions are:

- Abortion being illegal and/or criminalized in their country or area.
- Being "too young" to consent to an abortion.
- Being required to present parental consent.
- Not being able to afford an abortion. (Even people that have health insurance rarely can get abortion covered.)
- Living far away from a clinic that provides abortion care.
- Shame and pressure from others such as relatives, friends, religious organizations etc.
- Being past the gestational limit.

Now with abortion becoming even more restricted across the world and laws being passed specifically in Texas recently it is as salient as ever to fight for safe and accessible

abortions. It is also imperative that we recognize the intersections between privilege and abortion access as you are far less likely to be able to obtain a legal and safe abortion if you are; BIPOC+, LGBTQ+, disabled, neurodiverse, poor and young. You can get involved in International Safe Abortion Day by letting as many people as you can know about the day and educating them on it. As well as getting the word out you can also join organizations that already celebrate the day and start your own celebration by holding a gathering dedicated to coming together, educating, and supporting.

Sources and further reading:

-28 SEPTEMBER: INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY

<http://www.september28.org/>

-International Safe Abortion Day: 28 September 2021: First Call to Action

<https://www.safeabortionwomensright.org/news/international-safe-abortion-day-28-september-2021-first-call-to-action/>

-International Safe Abortion Day

<https://www.who.int/news/item/28-09-2020-international-safe-abortion-day>

-Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/global-network/global-health-advocacy/international-safe-abortion-day/>

-International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics

<https://www.figo.org/what-we-do/safe-abortion>

-This International Safe Abortion Day, “We Need Action—Not Restrictions or Performative Promises”

<https://msmagazine.com/2020/09/28/this-international-safe-abortion-day-we-need-action-not-restrictions-or-performative-promises/>