IN OUR WORDS:
THE IMPACT OF
THE OVERTURNING
OF ROE V. WADE
ON GIRLS, YOUNG
WOMEN, AND GENDER-
EXPANSIVE YOUNG
PEOPLE OF COLOR

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Accessing Abortion & Reproductive Healthcare Services.
Girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color share that the Dobbs decision has impacted access to critical reproductive healthcare services, including abortion, STI testing and prevention, contraception, and a myriad of other services.

Power, Patriarchy, and Inequities.
Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color make clear that the Dobbs decision has exacerbated existing inequities in accessing abortion and reproductive healthcare services, including widening gaps in maternal and child health, economic security, and adverse patient-provider experiences.

Criminalization and Surveillance of Accessing Reproductive Healthcare Services.
Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color share experiences and fears of increased surveillance and criminalization for seeking abortion and reproductive healthcare services.

Making Personal Decisions Based on Abortion Rights.
Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color describe the far-reaching impact of the Dobbs decision, how the Supreme Court’s ruling has impacted almost every aspect of their lives, from where they go to school, live, and work.

Dobbs Decision Rolling Back Other Constitutional Rights.
The overturning of Roe v. Wade has caused girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color to fear the reversal of other civil, human, and women’s rights, including access to contraception, marriage equality, and interracial marriage.

Impact on Mental Health and Well-Being.
The Dobbs decision has greatly impacted the mental health of girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color. Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color report increased feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, depression, and an overwhelming loss of control over their lives.

Reproductive Healthcare Information, Access, and Education.
Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color underscore the heightened levels of stigma, fear, and shame associated with accessing reliable reproductive healthcare information following the Dobbs decision.

Determination and Vision for Justice.
Amid extraordinary uncertainty, girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color are renewing their calls for new visions and action toward achieving reproductive justice for their communities.
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FELLOWS INCLUDED:

Balkisa Abdikadir (FROM VERMONT)
Zakiyyah Babatunde-Bey (FROM CALIFORNIA)
Nina Berglund (FROM MINNESOTA)
Lanitta Berry (FROM NORTH CAROLINA)
Genisus Holland (FROM VIRGINIA)
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Addison Moore (FROM DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA)
Chloe Williams (FROM CALIFORNIA)

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THE HEARTLAND FOUNDATION

Sometimes I don't feel like a human
Instead I feel like a creature
Teeth gnashing on the bones of inequality
Swallowing down a bitter pill
& being told it tastes sweet
Like a fool who should be thankful
To be graced with the nutrients of deceit
Sometimes I don't feel Black
Instead I feel like a tragic footnote
One made up of all the histories
Of the ones who came before me
Shackled in invisible chains
Given by the universe
Under the guise of precious jewelry
Sometimes I don't feel like a woman
Instead I feel like a coffin
Made to hold something far more precious than me
Made to be shiny and new
Buried, forgotten, & used nonetheless
When I lay on my back underneath the cress of a gentle wind
I fantasize about a place where I would feel none of these things
Where I can be Black. A woman. Human
Not a footnote. A creature. A coffin
Some simple little idea capable of being silenced
I'd be the essence of freedom
Free to be everything
Free to be nothing
When I open my eyes as the wind becomes uncomfortable
Harsh on the face of possibilities
I think in realities
If the sun set forever tomorrow
If the ocean ceased to move
And the air became led
I would want the shadows of existence
To remember even with stitched lips and bound hands
I will scream sonnets, move mountains, shake the very earth
For our unalienable right to choose.
INTRODUCTION.

On June 24, 2022, The United States Supreme Court issued its ruling in the case of Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, upending 50 years of the law of the land and eliminating the constitutional right to an abortion. This decision has had seismic effects on the reproductive rights of women, girls, and gender-expansive people across the nation – impairing their ability to access critical reproductive healthcare when they need it most. Moreover, at the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender, age, class, and impact within systems, this decision will undoubtedly uniquely impact the lives of women, young women and girls of color, gender-expansive young people of color, and system-impacted girls, limiting their ability to self-determine their lives, families, and futures.

In the work that we do towards gender justice and realizing a more just, free, and joyful world for girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color, we know that reproductive justice is imperative.

Reproductive justice has always been woven throughout National Crittenton’s mission. Core to the values that underlie our work is the belief in the ability for all people to access reproductive health care services and support legally and without judgment or stigma, regardless of age, race, class, gender, or status within any system. More than reproductive rights, our work is anchored on reproductive justice – the right to have a child, the right not to have a child, and the right to parent a child or children in safe and healthy environments. Without bodily autonomy and self-determination, social, economic, and political justice for girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color – especially those of color and system-impacted – cannot be realized. For more than a century, our reproductive justice work has focused on the rights of young women and gender-expansive young people of color, centering those who are of color and system-impacted to choose when to give birth and to parent. We trust them. Their decisions. Their autonomy.
Like many, we are alarmed that the Supreme Court’s extreme decision infringes upon basic human rights for millions of people. But our disappointment and anger does not end there. It is exacerbated because since last year’s decision, girls and young people—especially girls of color, system-impacted girls—have been largely absent from the narrative—deprioritized and out of focus. We demand a response and a reaction to this moment that realizes that when reproductive rights and reproductive justice are stripped from whole populations, girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color, and system-impacted girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people—in foster care, involved with the young people legal system, and detained as unaccompanied minors—will face the most significant barriers. Moreover, these barriers are magnified for economically, socially, and politically disenfranchised girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color and can produce harmful life outcomes.

Channeling rage and disappointment into action, less than a week after the Supreme Court’s decision, National Crittenton launched The Reproductive Freedom Fund (RFF). This was part of our bold and unapologetic commitment to stand firm with the right for every person to access high-quality, gender-affirming sexual and reproductive health services. With the launch of the fund, we worked with young leaders to steward a process to ground ourselves in the expertise and lived experiences of young people in this moment. Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color fellows organized and convened girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color from across the country to hear directly from them about the consequences of the Supreme Court’s decision on their lives.

The report that follows has one goal: to center the voices and experiences of girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color in the conversation of the impact of the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe V. Wade. To hear from them how this decision has impacted their lives—the lives of their loved ones and their communities. As you read the report, you will learn that the Dobbs decision has only made visible and exacerbated existing inequities for girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color in accessing reproductive healthcare services, including abortion care. It has shorthanded their ability to access contraception, STI testing and prevention, comprehensive sex education, routine screenings, and more. From the increased levels of fear, anxiety, and stress to dictating where girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color seek to live, work, and play, this decision has undoubtedly shaken their lives. A recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found an astonishing 3 in 5 teen girls reported feeling persistently “sad or hopeless” representing the highest rate in a decade². And as willing as they are to share their experiences under these conditions, they are also uniquely positioned to offer the leadership, organizing, and solutions we need to build back not only our reproductive rights, but full reproductive justice.

On the pages to follow, we intend—as we always commit to doing—to capture the full experiences of girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color in their own words. We opt out of translation and instead lift salient quotes and narratives offered by girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color in the conversations we held, which were coded and organized by young leaders of color.

And as we always do, we offer our partners a call to action. Ask yourself as we continue to build back reproductive rights, health, and justice in a post-Dobbs world: where are girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color in the discussion? How are they being centered in the broader women’s rights, gender justice, and reproductive rights movements? How are policymakers and decision-makers, centering—even considering—their experiences?

The impact of this decision will only have coupling effects on girls over time. Dobbs not only impacts their ability to maintain their reproductive autonomy but their ability to self-determine their futures, including their educational, economic, and social livelihood.
Remarkably, while grappling with the loss of their reproductive rights, girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color that were engaged in these conversations are clear in their call for a renewed fight toward the full realization of reproductive justice.

The fight continues...

We also know that the fight against draw backs in reproductive rights and reproductive care access continues. As we publish findings from conversations with young people in their response to Dobbs, we await a decision from a judge in a court in Amarillo, Texas who will rule on a case that could ban mifepristone—a safe, effective, FDA-approved drug, that for over two decades, has been used by people in this country for medication abortion and miscarriage care. Over half of abortions in the U.S. are through medication abortion. Like Dobbs, this decision could have unique, devastating and consequential impacts on young people of color across the country, further curtailing their bodily autonomy and freedom, and fundamentally contradicting the core argument that the Supreme Court offered in overturning Roe v Wade: that abortion rights should be left up to states. While we hope our courts and judicial system will see this case as baseless and without merit, it reflects ongoing attacks on reproductive rights and bodily autonomy—an attempt to further restrict abortion in every state and territory in the U.S., regardless of state laws that offer legal protections on abortion.

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FOOTNOTES

1 | As defined by Sister Song, reproductive justice encompasses the right to have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. Women of color, trans women, and gender-expansive individuals for centuries have articulated that reproductive justice is central to achieving racial, economic, and social justice. Borne from this history, reproductive justice has always been woven throughout National Crittenton’s mission.

Since the [Trump administration], there has been so much misinformation. It’s hard to know if I am getting correct or biased information.
THE PROCESS.

From September 1, 2022-November 1, 2022, National Crittenton convened twelve 90-minute conversations across 14 states with 115 girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color ages 14-24. Conversations were designed and led by a group of eight fellows—all who identify as young women or gender-expansive young people of color. Fellows participated in a series of planning calls to design the structure and content of the conversations, including the research questions. Each fellow led conversations in 2-4 states and helped with the outreach and engagement of girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color for conversations. Two fellows led each conversation.

Our selection of states and regions focused on providing a breadth of what girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color across the country are experiencing. Because the Dobbs decision left abortion rights up to states, the aftermath of the decision is fragmented across states. Following the Supreme Court’s ruling, abortion was banned or severely restricted in 17 states, leaving millions of people without access to abortion and other critical reproductive healthcare services. In 12 of these states, abortion bans have virtually no exceptions for rape, incest, or both1. 26 other states across the country are pursuing efforts to ban or severely restrict access to abortion2, with only 16 states having codified abortion rights into law3.

Our goal was to hold conversations in states that demonstrated a range of abortion and reproductive rights laws, inclusive of states that were characterized as having the most restrictive access to abortion and reproductive healthcare services to states that have protected and expanded access4.

GIRLS, YOUNG WOMEN AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUNG PEOPLE OF COLOR FROM 14 STATES PARTICIPATED IN 12 CONVERSATIONS.
We leveraged partnerships with community organizations and agencies leading and supporting young women, girls, and gender-expansive young people of color to drive engagement for these conversations. Partner organizations helped us share out an email invitation where girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color were invited to sign up for a conversation in their state or region. Participants were selected on a first-sign-up basis with a limit of 25 sign-ups per conversation. The final number of participants in each conversation ranged from 6 to 18.

Each of the 12 conversations was 90 minutes in length, took place using the Zoom platform, was recorded for analysis purposes, and was divided into two distinct parts. Each conversation began with the lead facilitator describing the purpose of the conversation, the agenda of the discussion, and in collaboration with participants, establishing the community agreements for the conversation.

As designed by fellows, part one of the conversations (approximately 30 minutes) focused on girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color’s individual experiences following the overturning of Roe v. Wade, and part two (approximately 30 minutes) focused on the decision’s impact on communities. Appendix C includes details about the conversation structure, questions, and format.

Each conversation underwent a qualitative data analysis process, resulting in eight overarching themes representing the voices, visions, and solutions of girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color. As you proceed through each theme, you will note that we have prioritized direct quotes of the girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color who participated in our conversations. This decision was made to prioritize the experiences and wisdom of girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color in their own words and on their own terms. We recognize young people to be the experts of their own lives without needing adult translation and seek to simply capture their perspectives as they tell them.

**FOOTNOTES**

3 | https://www.axios.com/2021/10/31/roe-v-wade-repeal-supreme-court-texas-mississippi
4 | https://reproductiverights.org/maps-abortion-laws-by-state/
Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color who participated in conversations made clear that the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe v. Wade has impacted access to critical reproductive health services for girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color. Girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color shared the various consequences that the Supreme Court’s decision has had on their ability to access routine reproductive healthcare services, including abortion care, but also including a myriad of other health services. They described how the decision curtailed their ability to make personal decisions for themselves and their families and heightened the concern they had for the health and safety of girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color in their communities. Participants described feeling increased anxiety and fear about seeking reproductive healthcare and sometimes being unable to find clinics or medications they need. Some of them shared having to forgo routine reproductive healthcare services out of fear of interacting with protestors or third-party providers who would judge them. Others made clear that Dobbs has exacerbated existing inequities in accessing abortion and clinics that provide reproductive healthcare services.
Here’s what we heard:

I’m from Jackson, Mississippi and the Jackson Women’s Health Organization was the place I would go to receive STI testing. Last month, I tried visiting for my STI test and the building is now closed. Now I don’t have any option.

MISSISSIPPI CONVERSATION

Recently, I’ve gone into my usual pharmacies and seen the shelves for items related to reproductive care completely empty. You have to literally go and ask somebody, which I mean, even the implications of that are just wild because then you have to go and have a conversation with another person about getting something that normally you would just be able to pick up off the shelf.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

This year I did have to make a choice of ending my pregnancy...And I had to make that choice. And it was the hardest thing I will probably ever go through in my life. It has really affected my mental health. When I made that decision, it was the last thing I wanted to do. And I feel like the laws don’t truly realize that not everyone wants to make that choice. I didn’t want to, but I had to.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

Abortion is an emotionally draining process, even when it’s legal.

NORTH CAROLINA CONVERSATION

It’s scary thinking about the judgment I can receive as I try to get reproductive care. It has just added anxiety to already difficult situations.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

I mean, the thing is that banning abortions won’t stop abortions. It’s just going to become unsafe.

IDAHO CONVERSATION

Going to Planned Parenthood was already not safe, with all the protestors outside. Now, I don’t feel confident going because, in a sense, you have to try to hide why you’re seeking reproductive healthcare.

IDAHO CONVERSATION

Most of the teens in my community do opt for self-induced abortions because they are restricted from obtaining abortion care.

ALABAMA CONVERSATION
Across conversations, girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color made clear that the Dobbs decision has exacerbated existing inequities in accessing abortion and reproductive healthcare services for girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color. They shared disproportionate access to abortion and reproductive healthcare services across different social categories: race, class, gender, sexuality, geography, citizenship, rural/urban, and religion. Girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color identifying as system-impacted, low-income, queer, living in mixed-status families, or living on reservations described difficulties being able to travel to receive an abortion or reproductive healthcare services. Even before the Dobbs decision, participants shared that access to abortion and reproductive services was never promised — since the decision, it has only been more unsafe. Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color shared that the state of abortion and reproductive healthcare access has had spillover impacts on maternal and child health, and economic security, and triggered adverse experiences with healthcare providers.
People are not going to stop getting abortions by any means. I think the only thing that will happen is wealthier people will have the same access to abortions because they can always go to states where they can find providers who will perform an abortion. But I think for communities who don’t have the same amount of wealth will have to do things that aren’t going to be very safe. And ultimately that’s just going to put people of color in harm’s way.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION

My best friend went to school in Louisiana and she needed an abortion and couldn’t get one. All of this because a couple of men decided, hey, we want to control your body.

NEW YORK CONVERSATION

Abortions are banned in my state. So, most folks travel down to other states to get it done. And for those that don’t have the finances to pay their way to another community, they have to do it illegally, which can cause some serious health issues for them.

ALABAMA CONVERSATION

Sometimes access depends on like your insurance or how much money you have and things like that. These are things that I face and I know other people are facing. So while legally we have access to reproductive care, there are other barriers that make it difficult.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION

I’m Native American. I live around a lot of reservations and it’s really hard to access, you know, reproductive care up here or even abortion access. Even being in Minnesota where it is a pro-choice state but it’s still really hard to get abortions when you live on reservations. I see a lot of teen pregnancies and I wish there was more accessibility and affordability for us.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

There is a rise in the maternal mortality rate in my community and the financial well-being and development of the children that resulted from being unable to access abortions. The economic hardship that disproportionately impacts women of color is devastating.

NORTH CAROLINA CONVERSATION

Recently, I was changing to a new OBGYN and I had a conversation to understand if they were able to provide the type of care, options, and services I need. I had to ask if they were uncomfortable providing me with this information and these services… It’s sad that I had to do this to know that I will receive the care I need when I need it.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

I feel like a lot of people still have the mindset that women should be in the kitchen at home, raising their kids versus working, doing their own little thing.

IDAHO CONVERSATION
After the Dobbs decision, girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color reported increased levels of surveillance and criminalization for seeking abortion and reproductive healthcare services. Participants shared stories and examples where private data was used to target and arrest those seeking access to reproductive healthcare services or simply documenting their reproductive healthcare information. They described feeling anxious when using online applications and websites to track their menstrual cycles out of fear that they may be used against them by law enforcement. They also report stories where those seeking or contemplating abortions have been reported to authorities. The heightened levels of surveillance and criminalization have generated a culture of fear whereby girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color describe feeling unsafe disclosing they need access to reproductive healthcare services.
I have a period app where I track my period. What about if I forget to track my period for one week? Since I live in a state where abortion is banned, can I be targeted to report why? Can I be forced to go to court and explain? It’s scary that one small mistake can lead to a scary situation.

ALABAMA CONVERSATION

I have been concerned about data privacy following the overturning of Roe v Wade and what that means for someone who lives in a state that’s overturned it and how the data they put in apps can compromise their safety, especially like big tech companies are selling our data. In Nebraska, private Facebook data was used to support a case against a teenager who was accused of having an illegal abortion. This makes me scared about how what I say in private can impact myself and others.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

I have PCOS and it’s harder for me to have a period like most people. I use the app to track my cycle but now it’s going to look like I am pregnant even though I am not. I just don’t feel safe.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION

I feel tracking your cycle to be an app is setting yourself up to be in the government spotlight... months later it could raise some flags and lead the government to ask questions like Was this person pregnant? If so, why did they have a period now? Where did they get an abortion?

CONVERSATION

I think one of the biggest things that I’ve experienced is feeling safe with providers. I’m always asking myself can I trust you? Are you going to disclose our private conversations? Are you going to use your personal views against me? Is it going to influence the care and services I receive from you?

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

Many doctors and midwives stopped providing abortion and some started reporting to their colleagues who still provide it. Women who couldn’t afford to pay the few providers for offering abortion or who were afraid of prosecution sometimes tried dangerous methods of self-managing abortions. If they had complications and went to the hospital, it could be reported to the police.

NORTH CAROLINA CONVERSATION

I’m treated like I am buying something illegal...I feel watched and shamed for even seeking out birth control.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION
A girl I know told her best friend that she was getting an abortion. Her best friend’s mom found out and she called the authorities since they lived in a state where abortion is banned. The police called to say they received information and they have to investigate if she received an abortion and she could now be charged. Ever since this, I have felt unsafe to disclose information because I don’t know if it could be used against me.
Girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color describe how the Dobbs decision has impacted almost every aspect of their lives from where they go to school, live, and work and whether or not to start families. They report that their ability to self-determine their lives feels like it depends on state lines. When determining the state of their residence and educational institutions to attend, the accessibility of abortion and reproductive healthcare services remains critical.
Here’s what they said:

Like it’s one thing to have your body autonomy taken away, but it’s another thing to think about the ramifications this will have on all aspects of my life.

**MASSACHUSETTS CONVERSATION**

I think especially being in California, our laws haven’t changed in the same way that other states have, and so in order to keep that freedom, this makes us feel like we are bound to stay in California in order to preserve our rights.

**CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION**

I’m originally from Memphis, Tennessee and my reproductive rights were limited. There was one Planned Parenthood when I lived there and now that one closed. I am grateful to be in D.C. now.

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION**

I also plan on going to an HBCU after graduating this year. But with everything going on in the south, I have this sort of anxiety to do anything that involves leaving California.

**CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION**

I think that Roe v Wade has left me feeling unsafe and less willing to start a family. I think that’s a shared sentiment across our generation.

**MARYLAND PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION**

How we choose to live our lives is an extension of us being our genuine and most authentic selves...And as we’ve seen, especially with marginalized and historically underrepresented and oppressed people of color, this disproportionately will affect our populations, will affect our people, will affect our families and our communities.

**MINNESOTA CONVERSATION**
With the overturning of Roe v. Wade, girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color fear the reversal of other civil and human rights, especially access to contraception, marriage equality, and interracial marriage. After the Dobbs decision, many girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color described feeling shocked and unsettled that a right that had been the law of the land for nearly 50 years can be overturned so callously. Resultantly, girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color are increasingly fearful that other civil and human rights, some with shorter precedents, may also be at risk of being overturned.
Here’s what we heard:

The overturning of Roe just gives me anxiety about all the other rights we take for granted. It’s very frightening and disheartening that this could potentially be a stepping stone for the reversal of numerous things.

MISSISSIPPI CONVERSATION

I feel like if you were to tell someone like a decade ago that Roe v Wade was going to be overturned, people would have looked at you like, are you serious? No, because like it was kind of established as like the law of the land. And there’s so many other cases that are also established in, like this, in a certain manner. And, you know, if Roe was overturned that what about marriage equality or Brown v Board of Education?

NEW YORK CONVERSATION

This decision establishes a precedent for them to continue to infringe upon the rights that people have fought so hard for.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

Considering the history of Roe and how it was so ingrained into our lives and now all of a sudden it’s done. It was like having something taken away from us that I couldn’t even imagine was possible.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

I just have this false sense of security now. Because even if Roe v Wade had been the law of the land for 50 years, it was still overturned.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

I feel like a fetus shouldn’t have more rights than actual human beings should have.

IDAHO CONVERSATION

We are supposed to be the most democratic, progressive country who champions ourselves on maintaining rights and this decision just runs counter to everything we are supposed to stand for. It’s just very disappointing.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

With the overturn, Roe v Wade, I feel like the thing that has impacted me the most is not being comfortable to like, live my life and do things I used to do. Like going to get birth control is scary now. I just fear, like, oh, I’m getting birth control, is this going to be next? Like, is it is this going to be taken away from me?

IDAHO CONVERSATION
The Supreme Court decision has had a resounding impact on the mental health of girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color. Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color describe emotional experiences of feeling scared to access reproductive healthcare services and grappling with a loss of control over their own bodies. Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color in conversations shared feeling hopeless for the future and unsure how to seek reproductive healthcare information and services to take care and protect themselves. The increased reports of anxiety, depression, and stress has impacted their sense of self and direction for their futures, impacting almost every aspect of their lives.
Here’s what we heard:

It has impacted my mental health negatively because I feel as if I don’t have the right to my own body and I don’t have the right to decide what happens to it...it’s as if I or my health are not protected at all.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION

Seeing the overturning Roe v Wade really made my anxiety and depression worse.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

I feel a lot of anxiety about everything I do now. Especially when you’re going to like a place like the women’s clinic or somewhere that’s visibly a reproductive services clinic, I feel nervous.

MISSISSIPPI CONVERSATION

And it just ultimately has me extremely scared for the future as you hear from people down there now. And it has really taken a toll on my mental health.

IDAHO CONVERSATION

It’s hard to feel safe when I don’t even know what the care services are. It’s hard to feel safe if I don’t know what is being given to me or what information I have to look up.

IDAHO CONVERSATION

I’ve kind of always been nervous about getting reproductive care just from a very early age. It feels like my doctor is making decisions for me, or trying to convince me. I just feel like I don’t have the opportunity to speak up for my own body.

MISSISSIPPI CONVERSATION

In the case of my friend, she couldn’t have access to reproductive care because of the decision that her doctor could have provided. But because of this decision, the doctor could no longer help her. This has really affected her and so she started to get depressed.

ALABAMA CONVERSATION

I feel like we as women of color, we go through so much. And so we build ourselves so hard and up against the world. And I’m tired of carving myself up. I’m tired of having to walk out with my head high again. No. That is so tiring. Like I...that’s all I have to say. I’m just tired of acting like everything is okay.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

To be a young person of color at this moment in time can be very stressful, just as it was in the past. It seems like we’re in a constant state of stress.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

The decision affected my mental health. I had issues recently that I couldn’t speak out. I couldn’t tell nobody I wanted to have an abortion. I was stuck in the shame and fears. I felt no one would understand me. I almost took my life.

VIRGINIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION
Personally being a survivor of sexual assault and child rape, it makes me feel very anxious because I already have anxiety when it comes to anything sexual in general. And now that I don’t have resources easily available to me anymore, especially being able to access it without having to go through a long, drawn out process and maybe it’s not even covered by insurance or not available in the state anymore like it was before it makes it just very difficult to have no anxiety.
Girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color who participated in conversations underscore the heightened levels of stigma, fear, and shame associated with accessing reliable reproductive healthcare information following the Dobbs decision. Many girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color shared that they lack access to reliable information about reproductive healthcare information in their schools and at home. In response, they shared having to use social media and online sources to obtain critical information on their health. Many girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color shared being unable to distinguish between factual information and misinformation when making important personal healthcare decisions for themselves. On a larger scale, the culture of fear and stigma surrounding reproductive healthcare information has prevented the ability to have open and honest conversations about reproductive health and left them in the dark about the best ways to protect themselves.
Here’s what we heard:

I feel like access to reproductive care has always been a topic that’s kind of stigmatized, but after Roe was overturned it has just gotten worse.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

Accessing reproductive care was really hard for me in high school, and I think because of that I did become a young mom. And I mean, I don’t regret any of that. But I think that if I had access to reproductive care like condoms and birth control, I would have been able to prevent that. And I would have been able to, you know, live my high school life the way that like a kid should.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

Another thing is that sexual education is not required in all schools nationwide. So how do you expect students to practice safe sex and not make babies so that they don’t have to get an abortion if you’re not teaching them the correct ways to do this?

MASSACHUSETTS CONVERSATION

Now, I just google questions I have and I feel like that’s just the reality for a lot of my friends too. But also if you don’t have access to Internet, then it makes it even more difficult to know anything.

MISSISSIPPI CONVERSATION

I’m only a senior in high school. So like there are things about Roe v Wade that I still don’t know because schools refuse to tell me and I can’t find out the information myself.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

I feel like the services are hard to find. You have to like really research, ask people, ask the right people for the information.

MISSISSIPPI CONVERSATION

And I think one thing I noticed after this decision to overturn Roe vs Wade is that I haven’t heard anything about improving sexual education in schools or improving access to reproductive care for people...if it’s preventing people from having undesired pregnancies, for example, then they would improve access to reproductive care, and so people would really have sexual health and preventative education. But it seems like it was just a decision they made without thinking of the consequences.

ALABAMA CONVERSATION

I feel like we as women of color, we go through so much. And so we build ourselves so hard and up against the world. And I’m tired of carving myself up. I’m tired of having to walk out with my head high again. No. That is so tiring. Like I...that’s all I have to say. I’m just tired of acting like everything is okay.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

And it’s kind of scary because it’s like, oh, I want to access reproductive healthcare information and be more informed on my body and the choices I have. But it’s also like I feel a little scared because everyone’s watching me and it’s like they’re going to target or judge me for my decisions.

IDAHO CONVERSATION
I’m born and raised in Mississippi, have lived here my whole entire life. And up until I got into college, really, I was only really informed about abstinence. That’s the only thing I was taught within my family and within school. I really didn’t know about accessing other things, like contraception or condoms, because I didn’t have that information.
Amid extraordinary uncertainty, girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color put forth solutions, new visions and proposed actions toward achieving reproductive justice for their communities. While grappling with the seismic impacts of the Dobbs decision on their lives, girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color made clear in conversations that they intend to use this moment to bring urgent change to their communities. Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color spoke about creating spaces for dialogue and community-building to nurture the power of their visions and dreams to chart a pathway forward. Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color also talked about the need to invest in building a pipeline of girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color leaders across public service to increase representation. Girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color also called attention to the connection between electoral power and lawmaking – many shared that we need to elect leaders who represent our interests and hold all elected officials accountable to the communities they serve.
Here’s what we heard:

Now is the moment for us to truly ground ourselves and start imagining and being bold. Engaging young people who are energized to dream beautiful, amazing futures. I think, there’s so much room now to dream bigger and wilder like we never have before.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

I’ve learned that we can’t just expect the people in power to have our backs and support us. So I think we need to take the steps to use our power to elect our leaders and hold them accountable to bring change.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION

I feel like more people with opinions like ours, and I feel like more people in our positions need to speak out more and be louder with their voices in order for the people in the government and in those higher positions to listen.

VIRGINIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION

I feel like lawmakers didn’t understand the circumstances people face when making the decision to have an abortion... They didn’t take into consideration, in my opinion, all of the young girls who would be pregnant because of rape, all of the women who would die during childbirth if they carried to term, and all of the babies who could be born with painful and debilitating illnesses. There are just so many reasons and it feels like they didn’t take this into consideration when overturning Roe.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION

In order for the government to change, we need to change the people in office.

VIRGINIA CONVERSATION

I feel like we need to gather more people to have the strength in numbers. We need to speak up and speak out at the people in those higher positions to make them listen to our needs.

VIRGINIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION

We really need to take an aggressive approach in terms of getting our people in the right places. We need people to be physicians, lawyers, advocates, and more. When this happens, we can have more people who look like us understanding our communities and being in those spots to be that advocate.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

We need more Black teachers. We need more Black professors. We need more Black mayors. We need more Black Congresspeople. We need all of us in these positions.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PARTICIPANT IN DC/MD/VA CONVERSATION

We need to start early, not just in college. Our young people need support. Let’s get them mentors. Let’s get them leadership opportunities. Let’s get them funding. When young people are given a pathway to lead, that’s when things will change.

MINNESOTA CONVERSATION

I think one of the things that organizations can do better is to have more open conversations and dialogues like this and to center the people who are actually being affected by this decision and being able to share their stories.

CALIFORNIA CONVERSATION
I think when people think of reproductive justice, I think people solely think about reproductive rights and health. But reproductive justice also looks like clean water. It looks like not living in a food desert. It looks like access to health care. Even if you are low-income or live in disadvantaged communities, it means having doctors that are listening to us.
CONCLUSION.

In December of 2022, almost two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States Surgeon General issued a public health advisory on the state of mental health in young people, declaring 1 in 3 high school students and half of girls were experiencing a mental health crisis. National Crittenton’s In Solidarity Conversations Report from young people-led conversations in 2020 described the impact of mental health on girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color and called out the need for change. This round of conversations in response to the Dobbs decision further elevates the continuous increase in the stressors young people, particularly girls, and gender-expansive young people of color face. The cumulative impact combined with the lack of response and action must not be ignored.
IN SOLIDARITY CONVERSATIONS
FELLOWS’ CLOSING LETTER

This report places an undivided focus on the unique and specific experiences of girls, young women, and gender-expansive youth of color, and, in doing so, reveals their solutions, leadership, and vision for realizing reproductive justice. Accordingly, this report is not only documentation of the lived experiences of girls of color today but a starting point for building a world with reproductive justice with the leadership of girls, young women, and gender-expansive youth of color.

Girls, young women and gender-expansive young people of color are unrelenting in their belief and commitment to building back more than reproductive rights, but full reproductive justice for their communities. This fight is inclusive of securing reproductive rights, including abortion rights, but also includes broader social, economic, and political rights including comprehensive sexual education, increased economic investment in girls of color, and a pipeline of new electoral leadership.

To close, we will reiterate the call to action we began with. Ask yourself as we continue to build back reproductive rights, health, and justice in a post-Dobbs world: where are girls, young women, and young people of color in the discussion? How are they being centered in the broader women’s rights and gender justice movements? What policymakers, decision makers, are centering—even considering—their experiences? What groups are we still excluding from the conversations and what solutions are proposed to engage them?

Let’s all play the role we need to deepen their visibility in this moment. Let this moment lead to a time where we listen and learn from those who have been impacted by this nation’s fight against bodily autonomy. Some who are also impacted are our very own facilitators. Who take issues like this personally because they are also young women and gender-expansive.
There's so much room now to dream bigger and wilder like we never have before.
THOUGHTS OF A WORRIED WOMAN

Malcolm X once said “anytime you ask another man to set you free, you will never be free.

But what really does it mean to be free when living in a world that is destitute of sustaining progress and void of the ineptitude of empathy?

What is the meaning of freedom when we pay the price of our autonomy and peace?

Why as a society, do we pride ourselves as the leading country of democracy but yet dictate over half the population’s choice of free will?

It seems that the dichotomy of it all is rooted in the belief that liberties only apply to you when it makes others comfortable enough to acknowledge and validate.

As a woman, why am I constantly having to prove my valid right of choice?

Why should my daughter have to live with the conditions of pseudo independence especially when those who make the rules won’t live long enough to see their sovereignty rule?

There are so many questions but not enough satisfying answers during these times.

However, despite the darkest and deepest depth of grief and the overwhelmedness of adversity, the silver lining of hope always gleams with opportunity and optimism.

It might not be today or tomorrow but we as people who live in siloed communities and groups will come to the realization that we need each other.

The interdependence of this world runs deep and is rooted in the understanding that if our world is burning then we are either seeing the fire or smelling the smoke.

So the real question is how this same logic be transferred socially? How can men, people in power, and others who do not identify as a woman or a person capable of caring about life empathetically feel, see, and hear us?

Our pain, frustration, agility, love, potential, and passion.

We matter.

Our choices matter.

How we think matters.

People matter.

You matter

I matter.

Future generations matter.
So it’s been a little stressful, but getting educated, having this conversation, and my friends have been important to processing the decision. Just like knowing that other people my age feel the same way and we’re all kind of like going through it and being able to participate in activism has been very soothing.
APPENDIX A: Language

National Crittenton will use “her/them*” to emphasize that our shared understanding of gender identity is evolving in resistance to cis- and hetero-patriarchal, white-supremacist norms and systems that have for far too long oppressed, marginalized, and harmed all cis and trans girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color. In addition to her/them*, we will use a variety of terms to express gender identity and will defer to young leaders for guidance. As we continue to evolve, so too will our practices. National Crittenton, as a multiracial/ethnic, intergenerational organization, commits to continued self-critique and reflection to ensure that those of us most impacted by oppression and marginalization are centered. Below we have included definitions and explanations of specific terminology used in this report.

APPENDIX B: Outreach Email & Sign-Up Survey

Participants were invited to conversations using a variety of methods. Electronic fliers (see Appendix X) were generated for each regional conversation and included a brief description of the conversation purpose, format, dates, times, and registration information. Fliers and information about the conversations were distributed by partner organizations, their allies, and by young people facilitators using methods such as email list, listservs, social media platforms (i.e., Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc.), and word of mouth. Registration links embedded in recruiting materials automatically assigned participants to the appropriate regional conversation and gathered basic demographic information including city, state, age, gender identity, race, and ethnicity, and accommodation needs.

Survey Framing: Thank you for your interest in participating in a conversation with other young people regarding the impacts of the Dobbs decision, which resulted in the overturn of Roe V. Wade.

We are working on scheduling approximately 10 conversations over Zoom, focusing on states where reproductive freedom is in jeopardy, states with expanded services, and states with trigger laws. These conversations will be between 60-75 min with a group of no more than 15. They will be led by a young person. Our goal is to continue to highlight and elevate the unique challenges faced by young people of color.

We value your participation and will compensate you with a $100 gift card for your attendance.

You will receive an email with a link to join the conversation for your specific state. Thank you!
APPENDIX C: Sample Conversation Guide Questions & Visuals

In Solidarity Conversation: Reproductive Justice After Dobbs (Name of participating states)

RUN OF SHOW

→ 4:00pm-4:15pm  Moderator Introduction, Overview and Community Norms
→ 4:15pm-4:25pm  Icebreaker Questions
→ 4:25pm-4:55pm  Full Group Part One Discussion
→ 4:55pm-5:25pm  Full Group Part Two Discussion
→ 5:25pm-6:30pm  Debrief & Close

MODERATOR INTRODUCTION, OVERVIEW AND COMMUNITY NORMS: (15 MINUTES)

→ Introduce Yourself
→ Frame the Conversation
  ■ Background on In Solidarity Conversations:
  □ This is one of a series of 12 conversations that are happening with young folx of color, age 14-24, across states.
  □ The goal of these conversations is to hear how the recent landscape around reproductive health and justice—including the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe v Wade—is impacting young women and young folx of color, and their communities.
  □ Last month, National Crittenton – a national organization that works on policy, research and movement building work focused on girls and young women of color – launched a Fund to support young folx in their access to reproductive care. As part of launching the fund, they committed to holding listening sessions with young people across the country to ensure that the voices of young folx of color were heard in this moment.
→ Agenda Overview
→ Community Agreements
  ■ Moderator will instruct each participant to introduce themselves and offer a norm to share with the group. Here are some examples of norms you might offer:
  □ This space is confidential; leave the stories, take the lessons.
  □ Respect – always
  □ Valuing that we all think differently, and are impact differently
  □ It’s okay to not know – these issues can impact us without us being experts on all language and policies

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: (10 MINUTES)

1. How did you feel the moment Roe v. Wade was overturned;
2. What does reproductive justice look like for you?
FULL GROUP PART ONE DISCUSSION: (30 MINUTES)

Moderator will introduce the first set of questions:

- Can you describe any changes this decision-overturning of Roe v. Wade- had to your access to reproductive care— if there were changes?
- Has it been easy or hard to access information on reproductive rights and reproductive health? Explain why.
- Do you feel safe or unsafe utilizing the reproductive care services that are available to you? Why?
- Has this decision impacted your mental health? If it has, can you describe?

FULL GROUP PART TWO DISCUSSION: (30 MINUTES)

Moderator will introduce the second set of questions:

- How did the Supreme Court Decision to overturn Roe v Wade impact your community?
- Compared to your community, do you see differences in reproductive care access for other communities in your state?
  - Examples: Who can and can’t access birth control? Reproductive health information? Abortion care?
- In your opinion, how did we get to the overturning of Roe v Wade?
  - Note: Roe v Wade—the constitutional right to abortion—has been the law in the U.S. for 50 years. How did we get to a point where five decades later, it was overturned? What led to this decision?
- What do you think are the broader consequences of this decision?
- What does it mean for rulings on contraception? Same-sex marriage?
- What more can organizations serving young people do to center young folx of color in building back reproductive rights?
- How do we build back reproductive rights?

DEBRIEF + CLOSE OUT: (15 MINUTES)

Moderator will thank each participant for joining this conversation and close with a reminder on the following:

- **Gift Cards**: As a reminder, you will be compensated with a $100 gift card. You will receive your gift card through the email you signed up with.
- **Resources**: We want to make sure this conversation does not just help us center voices of young folx of color in this moment, but that you leave with resources too. As a reminder, we will send an email of resources your way after this conversation, including where to learn more about reproductive health and access in your state.
- **Reporting Back**: We are working with other conversation leads to compile and analyze the data from all of these conversations. We will definitely keep you informed when we have collected data on what we’ve learned from young folx across states.