

Diversifying

JUL 18, 2022

How Abortion Bans Affect Your Money



Speakers

Protestors, Delyanne Barros, Alana Edmondson, Linda Goler Blount, Vivian Tu

00:00:03

Protestors

My body! My choice! My body! My choice! My body! My choice!

00:00:09

Delyanne Barros

It's been a few weeks since the Supreme Court officially overturned Roe v. Wade, ending the constitutional right to abortion in the U.S..

00:00:17

Protestors

No justice, no peace!

00:00:20

Delyanne Barros

In the next few months, it's likely 26 states will make it illegal or next to impossible to end a pregnancy. Speaking from my point of view as a woman, there are times when I'm so upset I have trouble putting it into words. Not great for a podcast, I know, but I don't think it can be overstated what a huge loss this is.

00:00:43

Protestors

We want justice. We want justice. We want justice. We want it now.

00:00:54

Delyanne Barros

Right now, you might be thinking, Delyanne, why are you talking about this? I'm here for tips on how to manage my money. Tell me about the stock market. Talk to me about what to do with my debt. It's important for you all to understand that I see the work I do here as social justice, as a fight against inequality. Teaching women and people of color how to build wealth helps us close the racial and gender wealth gaps in this country. It provides people with more choices and ultimately more freedom. That's the bottom line here. And frankly, access to abortion is a personal finance topic. Money is political. Access to health care is political. And let's face it, having and raising children is expensive. Whether or not you have them and when will impact every aspect of your life, including your finances. For many, abortion access is the difference between financial stability and poverty. I'm Delyanne Barros. This is Diversifying.

00:02:02

Protestors

We want justice. We want it now.

00:02:13

Alana Edmondson

Having a baby was always a dream of mine, too, is still a dream. Yeah. You kind of had to make some choices on which dream I could have at which time.

00:02:22

Delyanne Barros

Abortion access has made a huge impact in Alana Edmondson life. Right now, she's working on getting her Ph.D. in literature at Yale University.

00:02:32

Alana Edmondson

You know, writing was just something I was always really good at. And then I had the right teacher who told me that I should pursue graduate studies. It's been my dream for a very long time and I worked really, really hard to get here.

00:02:44

Delyanne Barros

Alana's career has always been a priority, but she did have a few setbacks along the way.

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Alana Edmondson

I did get pregnant twice on the way here.

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Delyanne Barros

The first time she got pregnant, she was 21, working retail at Abercrombie and Fitch.

00:03:00

Alana Edmondson

I was making, I think, \$11 an hour. I did have health insurance, but, you know, it's \$11 an hour and I'm 21 years old. So, I knew that if I did decide to be a mother, I would be stuck in poverty. It would just be very, very difficult. Especially with like the prices of daycare, I mean, even feeding somebody else. I think this is still the time in my life, you know, when I would I would overdraft my account for some nachos because I just didn't have enough money, you know?

00:03:28

Delyanne Barros

Alana just couldn't see a way through her financial situation. As a black woman, she was also determined to overcome generational poverty.

00:03:37

Alana Edmondson

I thought really hard about it. I spent five weeks debating on whether or not I was going to get an abortion at all and whether or not I was going to adopt. I spoke to, you know, a family friend who said that they would raise the baby. My older sister offered to raise it as her own, and ultimately I knew that if I stayed pregnant, I was going to have the baby.

00:03:57

Delyanne Barros

She just couldn't imagine having a child and giving it away. So she decided to have an abortion instead and wait for the right time to have children. She was in Seattle, Washington, a pretty liberal state. But on her first try, she ended up at a crisis pregnancy center.

00:04:15

Alana Edmondson

I thought that I was going there to, you know, discuss my options and that's not what happened.

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Delyanne Barros

Crisis pregnancy centers are set up to look like abortion centers, but they're not. The people who run them are trying to convince patients to not have abortions.

00:04:32

Alana Edmondson

I mean, in the lobby, they have like these little binders, kind of like a catalog of families that want to adopt and, yeah, ended up getting a ultrasound that I didn't consent to. I walked away with an ultrasound picture, some baby booties and a baby blanket, and the little tiny rubber baby that they said was about the size of the embryo inside of me.

00:04:55

Delyanne Barros

Alana says she later found out that the rubber toy they gave her was actually way too big, given how early she was in her pregnancy. And it was too early to even hear a heartbeat. So her next stop was Planned Parenthood, where she was finally able to schedule a procedure.

00:05:13

Alana Edmondson

My partner at the time split the price of the abortion with me, thank goodness, because I probably couldn't have afforded it otherwise. It was, I think, like \$650 or something. I've never felt so happy to feel empty before. To know that I wasn't being occupied anymore. And then afterwards, I was just, yeah, I was just so happy. I felt like I had my future back. I knew I wanted to have a kid eventually, but that wasn't the time.

00:05:44

Delyanne Barros

Alana had her second abortion when she was 28.

00:05:48

Alana Edmondson

I was in school. I was like on my way towards my dream at the University of Washington. And I had a partner that I really, really loved.

00:05:56

Delyanne Barros

Although she was in a more stable position financially than she had been at 21. Having this baby would have derailed her plans to complete her Ph.D..

00:06:06

Alana Edmondson

Yeah, I thought that I could do it, but I also knew that it wasn't really the time to do it. The time I was working, maybe two or three jobs going to school full time, you know, I'd get off work at the bar like two or 3 a.m. and go home and translate some Cicero till like 6 a.m. wake up again at nine to go to class and then go to work. I thought that I could do it if I had to, but also, I mean, it wasn't very practical. I would have had to give up something. So it would have been my income. It would have been my education. I'm not a mother yet, but I understand that the child becomes the priority. It becomes everything. And so for me, I already had an everything, that everything was my education.

00:06:51

Delyanne Barros

Alana's story isn't uncommon. In fact, nearly one in four women in the United States will have an abortion by the time they reach 45. This stat comes from a 2017 study by the Guttmacher Institute, the organization that researches abortion. Think about that. One in four women. If you haven't had an abortion, it's pretty likely you know somebody who has.

00:07:17

Alana Edmondson

The idea of other people not being able to make the choices that I had. I mean, it's devastating.

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Delyanne Barros

There are still a lot of ways that this ruling could play out. Appeals, new laws, challenges, protests. But what we do know is that while it's common to need an abortion, in some places actually getting one is going to be a lot harder. What happens when a nation of women can no longer make the bodily and financial decisions that make the most sense for them? When we come back, we'll talk about the economic impacts of losing this choice with the CEO of the Black Women's Health Imperative.

00:08:11

Delyanne Barros

This is Diversifying.

00:08:13

Linda Goler Blount

When critical bills are at stake or being discussed or critical measures, changes in policies. There's usually one black woman in the room and it's me.

00:08:24

Delyanne Barros

Linda Goler Blount is the president and CEO of the Black Women's Health Imperative. They're the only national nonprofit focused on black women's health and reproductive justice in the country. Linda and her team jumped into action after Roe was overturned, pushing back against the ruling and marshaling resources for women who need abortions.

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Linda Goler Blount

We need more people to do this work, obviously, but we're not going to give up. And we're fighting for black women's health every single day.

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Delyanne Barros

Thank you again for the work that you do. I brought you on today because obviously I wanted to talk about Roe being overturned and when it had happened, and I heard about it, I immediately became very triggered. It brought back a lot of the feelings that I had when I was an undocumented immigrant. I grew up undocumented. I moved to United States when I was eight years old, and it made me feel unseen, uncared for and I would say I was almost grieving this loss. Right. Can I ask you where you were and how you felt when you heard the news?

00:09:31

Linda Goler Blount

Ironically, I was actually at my gynecologist's office for my annual exam.

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Delyanne Barros

That is ironic. Wow.

00:09:41

Linda Goler Blount

And she came in and said, did you hear? And I said, no, because I was driving and then came in and she said, Oh, it's done. And we both sat there for about three or four minutes, just in complete silence. Neither one of us could say anything. And then her assistant came in and just saw us, and she just stood there. And I think she intuitively must have known what was going on. And so then after just a few minutes, we each sort of took a deep breath. And I remember her saying, Well, okay, I've got my work cut out for me. And I said to her, I cannot imagine how my mother feels. I mean, I just that's where my mind went, was when I was a little girl, I remember my mother talking to her friends around that, you know, the black women's rights movement and the women's rights movement and how celebratory they felt and how they acted when Roe was passed. And all I could think of is how must my mother feel?

Delyanne Barros 00:10:53 Obviously abortion is a political issue. It's a health issue, but it's also an economic issue, which is why we're talking about it here on a personal finance podcast. For people who might not have thought about it in those terms, in terms of finance, can you explain why that connection is there?

Linda Goler Blount 00:11:12 The number one reason, not just black women, but women give for choosing abortion care is that they can't afford to have a child at that time. The majority of women who choose abortion care already have children, and they realize the financial toll it would take on them to have another child. Models show us that if women can't have access to abortion, and I'm thinking particularly in the South, it's going to contribute to the poverty rate among black and brown women. So already we've got one in five black women living in poverty. But importantly, it's the effect on the children as well. There are studies that go back several years that show a child born into poverty has less than a 4% chance of ever leaving poverty. So by removing this ability to make the best health and financial decision from a woman, you condemn her, her family, and future generations to persistent poverty from which they can't escape. So think about what that does in the black community, where a woman, even if she's not making a lot of money, is taking care of her family, but oftentimes she's taking care of the extended family. She may be taking care of some neighbors. We saw this with COVID-19, that broad care network that black women were responsible for and engaged in. When a black woman is thrown into poverty. There's this huge ripple effect. Women who want the best for their children, it becomes impossible for them to achieve the best for their children because they simply can't afford it.

Delyanne Barros 00:12:49 Earlier in this episode, we heard from Alana Edmondson. She's currently getting her Ph.D. at Yale. She's had two abortions in her life. And I'd like to play you a clip of her description about the choice that she made the first time that she knew she needed an abortion.

Alana Edmondson 00:13:06 I was making, I think, \$11 an hour. I did have health insurance, but, you know, it's \$11 an hour and I'm 21 years old. So I knew that if I did decide to, you know, be a mother, it would just be very, very difficult, especially with like the prices of daycare. I mean, even feeding somebody else. I think this is still a time in my life, you know, when I would I would overdraft my account for some nachos because I just didn't have enough money, you know?

Delyanne Barros 00:13:33 So this is very much in line with what you were saying about having to take that balance into consideration of can I even provide for this life, you know, that is being forced upon me? What's your reaction to Alana's story?

Linda Goler Blount 00:13:49 Alana's story is the story. This is the reason that women make this choice. Alana was making the logical, sensible and healthiest choice, both emotionally and physically for her, she knew. She knew what she could expect. And the other piece I would add to her story is being pregnant is not cheap. So it's not just, well, I can't afford to have the child at \$11 an hour. She couldn't even afford to be pregnant. How is she going to pay for the visits, the transportation, the time off from work, the prenatal vitamins? And please don't let her have a complication. There's no way she could afford it.

Delyanne Barros 00:14:32 No, if she needs to be on bed rest and she can't go to work or she has, yeah, any kind of preeclampsia and she can't work, it's game over.

Linda Goler Blount 00:14:40 It's game over. Exactly right. So she was looking at her life and understanding, I want a better future for myself and children. Should I make that choice. So this is the decision to make, and I'm happy that she was able to make that decision.

Delyanne Barros 00:14:57 Yeah. I mean, I was talking to my mom and she lives in Brazil, I'm Brazilian, where unfortunately abortion is unlawful and is a crime. But the country does provide paid maternity leave. Again, I'm not agreeing that it should be unlawful, but there are other things that even as Americans we don't offer. Right. We do not have paid maternity leave. So when I told her that, she was shocked.

00:15:22

Linda Goler Blount

Yeah, well, people are shocked. They assume in the United States that, of course, pregnancy is revered. And of course, they care for pregnant women and postpartum women. The U.S. is rock bottom of developed countries. Maternal mortality has been increasing. Every place else it's decreasing. It is only increasing in the US. We don't have paid family leave universally. We make it hard on people who are giving birth. We make it hard for people who choose not to give birth. The message is, as a woman, you're not of value. As a person who can give birth, you are not of value.

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Delyanne Barros

Let's talk about the actual cost of obtaining an abortion, particularly for people who now have to travel out of state. Can you explain why this is such a barrier?

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Linda Goler Blount

So if one wanted to pay for an abortion just out of pocket, the rates vary. But you're looking at anywhere between four and \$700 just for the procedure. That's for surgical abortions. Let's assume you've got children. Now, you've got to find childcare because you've got to drive out of state or fly out of state. That's expensive. You've got to find a place to stay, a hotel cost. You may have to wait a couple of days just to make sure everything's fine after your surgical abortion. You've missed work. So depending on your job, you may not get paid. So the full cost in total for an abortion for someone who has children could comfortably be \$2500. And you'll remember a while ago, there was a study that asked for emergencies. What percentage of Americans could come up with \$400 to deal with an emergency?

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Delyanne Barros

Yeah.

00:17:05

Linda Goler Blount

Well, even fewer come up with \$2500. It would be well out of reach for the vast majority of people seeking abortion care.

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Delyanne Barros

Right. And so people would be like, well, just put it on a credit card. Well, one, credit cards are problematic for people who don't have the money to pay for it. So now you're stuck in this cycle of debt. And, like you said, taking the time off from work is a challenge in and of itself. And now we have employers deciding how they're going to cover this procedure, whether they're going to cover it, which, again, is putting so much power in the hands of corporations, which I think is a huge problem. So now we're like, okay, we don't want the government to decide, so we're going to let these corporations decide instead, that's way better.

00:17:50

Linda Goler Blount

Can you imagine, Delyanne, and I'm not telling you anything you don't know. But imagine that corporation says, hey, we're going to pay for abortion care for those women who choose it. You know who is going to take them up on that offer? It will not be black and brown women. It will not be women whose documentation might even be remotely in question because black and brown women don't want people knowing their business. As generous as it may seem, it doesn't solve this issue because we can't afford to have people know our business like this and we're not going to take them up on that offer.

00:18:24

Delyanne Barros

I agree. I think it's incredibly invasive. I don't understand how it's not a HIPA violation. You know, I'm a former employment attorney. I'm looking at it from that angle. So I'm seeing employers offer these travel benefits and people are applauding them. Right. There was this big feature in a big newspaper the other day listing all the companies that are offering them and I'm like, this is a huge issue because now you're having to disclose to your employer that you're having this procedure and many employers will discriminate against a woman for having an abortion, which, yes, it's unlawful to discriminate under federal law. So FYI if you didn't know that, being discriminated against in the workplace for having an abortion is a violation. But guess what? Employers break the law all the time. They discriminate all the time. So now here's an additional hurdle that you have to deal with in the workplace. You come back from having your procedure. All of a sudden you're being marginalized, you're not being invited to certain meetings, you're not given certain leads. Nobody comes out and says, We don't want you here anymore because you got an abortion. These things are very you know, it's not as blatant as it is and it's very systematic. And so I see this as a huge issue in the future.

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Linda Goler Blount

I do, too. And I'm so glad you said that, because there's far reaching consequences of not being able to choose to have an abortion in the privacy of your own life. Now you've got to disclose this, which means you may be trading off your career.

00:20:00

Delyanne Barros

I know I'm feeling I have moments where I feel hopeless, where I feel helpless. But we are not. There are things that we can do. There are things that our listeners can do about this. So please share some, you know, action items with us. What is it that we can do so that we can channel our frustration into action and into change?

00:20:21

Linda Goler Blount

Well, you know, the first thing I'm going to say is vote. Vote. Vote. Vote. And vote.

00:20:26

Delyanne Barros

All elections. Local. City.

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Linda Goler Blount

Every single one from the school board on up. And it is more important than ever that you vote in state elections because the Supreme Court handed this issue of access to abortion to the states. Be aware of this coming election where the candidates stand. Every election year the Black Women's Health Investigative produces black women vote as a health policy agenda. We will do one again this year, comes out in September. Obviously, reproductive justice is going to be front and center and there's always a scorecard on the key issues. Know where your candidates stand on the issue of a woman's right and ability to choose what's best for her health. So you can vote accordingly. And I would say also contribute to abortion funds. They are more critical now than ever, these funds that will provide resources for low income women to get to the places they need or get access to medication abortion. My organization, the Black Women's Health Imperative, is going to work with other organizations to try to buy up medication abortion and Plan B pills and stockpile them and make them available to women who need them.

00:21:39

Delyanne Barros

I'm seeing a lot of people clean out shelves at CVS and Walgreens and stocking up Plan B. What if you're a woman right now who is in a state where abortion has just been made unlawful? What can these women do if they're in a state where that right has now been stripped from them?

00:21:57

Linda Goler Blount

As much as I hate to say it, if they can't get medication abortion sent to them, then they will have to go to where abortion is. Those 24 states where they can still get a safe abortion. I would also ask them to reach out to their nearest abortion fund and see if they can get some financial assistance. Reach out to the Black Women's Health Imperative and we will, on our website have some resources listed so that they can get some help. But I would say please, please, please try not to suffer in silence. I mean, this is one of these situations, particularly if you're in one of those states, where you're going to have to ask for help.

00:22:40

Delyanne Barros

Linda, thank you so much for taking the time to come talk to us about this issue. I'm sure we have a long fight ahead of us, but it is one worth fighting. And I look forward to hearing more about the Black Women's Health Imperative and all the work that you're doing. Thank you again and let's keep fighting.

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Linda Goler Blount

Thank you, Delyanne. I'm happy to be in this fight with you.

00:23:03

Delyanne Barros

That was Linda Goler Blount, CEO and president of the Black Women's Health Imperative. Her organization has some great resources, so make sure you go check them out. If you find yourself unable, for whatever reason, to get access to an abortion, here are a few more. PlanCPills.org has information on how to find abortion medications and how to use them, If/When/How has a free and confidential help line for anyone seeking to have an abortion, and if you can't afford the abortion you need or any associated costs, check out the National Network of Abortion Funds. They can connect you with a local organization that will help you pay for it. It's an understatement that this decision will harm countless women, and it's easy to get caught up in the despair of that fact. But there are ways to push back and keep working to create change. Use your platforms to advocate if you have one. Demand that your favorite influencers and celebrities speak up about this issue. Like Linda said, ask for help if you need it and keep fighting. We're going to keep talking about the intersection of childbearing and finance on our podcast. We've got an episode coming up on the truly insane cost of childcare in the U.S. But next Monday we're talking about money scams, how to spot them, and, of course, how to steer clear of them.

00:24:41

Vivian Tu

It's so scary because they get so good at this. Our brands are our faces. People will associate that with us when it's very clearly a scammer.

00:24:55

Delyanne Barros

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