The Art of Resistance Four Years After Dobbs

Artists across the country have channeled rage and disappointment at the overturn of Roe v. Wade into activism.

BY JULIANN VENTURA, THE LATEST | AUGUST 12, 2026 12:00 AM

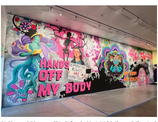
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At seventeen years old, Lady Pink learned she was pregnant. The New York-based artist had known from an early age that she didn't want to have children, so in 1981, she opted for an abortion—less than a decade after the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the right to the procedure in *Roe v. Wade*. It was the correct decision, Lady Pink recalls to *The Progressive*, and one she didn't take lightly.

So more than forty years later, when the Latina muralist watched the Supreme Court strike down the Constitutional protection on abortion in its 2022 ruling on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, she was devastated. Within days of the Court's decision, guided by both heartbreak and rage, the artist picked up a paintbrush and got to work.

"I've learned that I'm an activist," Lady Pink says, "and if I have a platform like a mural, I will use it, and if I can tell a story in my own paintings, I will do that."

In the four years since *Dobbs*, Lady Pink has used her artwork to represent women's empowerment and advocate for reproductive rights, among other issues. One of her more recent murals at the Marie Walsh Sharpe Gallery in the Ent Center for the Arts at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, is titled "Overturn This, It." The mural contains boldly painted phrases like "Reproductive rights are human rights," as well as "Roe v. Wade overturned." In bright red paint reminiscent of blood-like streaks, which takes aim at the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision.



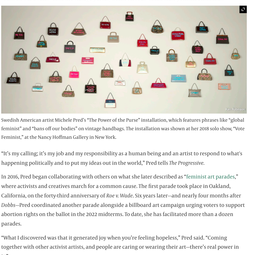
Courtesy of Lady Pink

New York artist Lady Pink's mural, "Overturn This, It.," at the Marie Walsh Sharpe Gallery in the Ent Center for the Arts at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. The mural appeared in the 2025 collaborative exhibition, "Justice of the Piece: Resistance and Unity in the Art of Lady Pink, Sydney G. James, and Gone Lowe."

"I want all my sisters to have the freedoms that I had as a kid . . . and it rips my heart out that these are being taken away," Pink says, "One step forward, two steps back."

Like Lady Pink, many creatives around the country and the world have used their craft to criticize the Trump administration's relentless targeting of reproductive health care and restriction of abortion access. As of April, more than a dozen states have implemented a total or near-total abortion ban, some instating certain exceptions to prevent the death of the pregnant person. Only nine remaining states and Washington, D.C. maintain no restrictions on access to abortion—a seismic shift from just four years earlier.

Swedish-American artist and activist Michele Pred, who grew up in both Sweden and Berkeley, California, during the height of the student-led Free Speech Movement of the 1960s, says politics and world events were typical dinner table subjects with her social scientist father. Now, in her career as a conceptual artist, she makes reproductive rights a focal point of her work. Her decade-long running series "The Power of the Purse," features double-sided handbags with the words "you" on one side and "choice" on the other. Pred has expanded the project, fashioning phrases like "global feminist" and "bans off our bodies" onto the vintage purses, which serve as "small-scale political billboards."

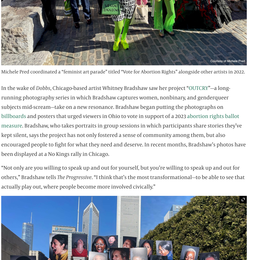


Swedish American artist Michele Pred's "The Power of the Purse" installation, which features phrases like "global feminist" and "bans off our bodies" on vintage handbags. The installation was shown at her 2018 solo show, "Vote Feminist," at the Nancy Hoffman Gallery in New York.

"It's my calling; it's my job and my responsibility as a human being and an artist to respond to what's happening politically and to put my ideas out in the world," Pred tells *The Progressive*.

In 2016, Pred began collaborating with others on what she later described as "feminist art parades," where activists and creatives march for a common cause. The first parade took place in Oakland, California, on the forty-third anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. Six years later—and nearly four months after *Dobbs*—Pred coordinated another parade alongside a billboard art campaign urging voters to support abortion rights on the ballot in the 2022 midterms. To date, she has facilitated more than a dozen parades.

"What I discovered was that it generated joy when you're feeling hopeless," Pred said. "Coming together with other activist artists, and people are caring or wearing their art—there's real power in it."

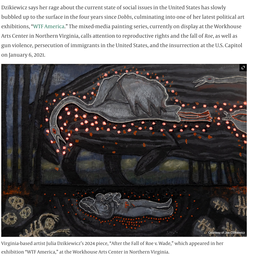


Courtesy of Michele Pred

Michele Pred coordinated a "feminist art parade" titled "Vote for Abortion Rights" alongside other artists in 2022.

In the wake of *Dobbs*, Chicago-based artist Whitney Bradshaw saw her project "OUTCRY"—a long-running photography series in which Bradshaw captures women, nonbinary, and genderqueer subjects mid-scream—take on a new resonance. Bradshaw began putting the photographs on billboards and posters that urged viewers in Ohio to vote in support of a 2023 abortion rights ballot measure. Bradshaw, who takes portraits in group sessions in which participants share stories they've kept silent, says the project has not only fostered a sense of community among them, but also encouraged people to fight for what they need and deserve. In recent months, Bradshaw's photos have been displayed at a No Kings rally in Chicago.

"Not only are you willing to speak up and out for yourself, but you're willing to speak up and out for others," Bradshaw tells *The Progressive*. "I think that's the most transformational—to be able to see that actually play out, where people become more involved civically."

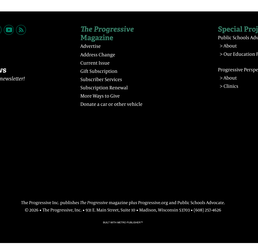


Protesters at a No Kings rally in March 2026 stand at the Art Institute of Chicago holding photographs from Chicago-based artist Whitney Bradshaw's project "OUTCRY."

But creating political art can be challenging, especially during times of uncertainty, says Virginia-based artist Julia Dzikiewicz. Artists whose work deals with political themes are grappling with funding cuts impacting museums and galleries, as well as fears over whether their exhibitions could be shut down if the content is deemed too controversial or at odds with the administration's agenda.

"It's hard to show political art now," Dzikiewicz tells *The Progressive*. She points to the International FLETCHR Exhibit, an annual showcase of socially and politically engaged art that had been hosted at the Reece Museum at East Tennessee State University for more than a decade, until it was cancelled last year and relocated following scrutiny over some of its content criticizing prominent conservative political figures, including Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk.

Dzikiewicz says her rage about the current state of social issues in the United States has slowly bubbled up to the surface in the four years since *Dobbs*, culminating into one of her latest political art exhibitions, "WTF America." The mixed-media painting series, currently on display at the Workhouse Arts Center in Northern Virginia, calls attention to reproductive rights and the fall of *Roe*, as well as gun violence, persecution of immigrants in the United States, and the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.



Courtesy of Julia Dzikiewicz

Virginia-based artist Julia Dzikiewicz's 2024 piece, "After the Fall of Roe v. Wade," which appeared in her exhibition "WTF America," at the Workhouse Arts Center in Northern Virginia.

Even amid harsh restrictions in many states, recent data shows an uptick in total abortions since *Dobbs*, according to the Society of Family Planning #WeCount project. The organization, which has been tracking abortion access since April 2022, reported in June that while the majority of abortions nationwide are provided in person, the rate of telehealth abortions grew from 5 percent of all abortions in April 2022 to nearly 30 percent by December 2025.

A recent Pew Research analysis of abortion data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which covered Washington, D.C., and thirty-one states, showed that nearly 40 percent of all women who had abortions in 2022 were non-Hispanic Black. Nearly one-third, 32 percent, were non-Hispanic white, compared to roughly one-fifth, 21 percent, who were Hispanic and of any race. Seven percent were of other races.

"We are not seeing much equality at all," Lady Pink says of health care disparities impacting women of color. Resolute, she looks forward and waves her hand as if to clear the air. "But anyway, the fight's not done."

Juliann Ventura is a political reporter whose byline has appeared in The Washington Post, POLITICO, *ProPublica and numerous state and local publications. With experience reporting from various regions across the U.S., she has held leaders accountable through her work covering power and influence, money in politics, the defense industry, as well as many other storylines.*

by Juliann Ventura

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