

FACTSHEET | AUGUST 2022

Key Points for the CERD Committee's Review of the United States¹

Abortion Restrictions Violate the Right to Health of Women of Color and Perpetuate Racial Discrimination

Women and adolescents of color disproportionately suffer as a result of abortion restrictions.

- Women of color have a greater need for abortion care due in large part to the social, economic, and geographical barriers that limit access to healthcare, including contraception.
- Systemic racism in the US criminal legal system means that women of color face a heightened risk of criminal prosecution for abortion. Pregnant people, particularly Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous women, are already policed and criminally punished for pregnancy outcomes.
- Being forced to carry a pregnancy to term is especially dangerous for **Black women in the US**, who **are three times more likely** than white women **to die from pregnancy-related causes**.
- The economic costs and unpaid care burden of forced parenting are more challenging for women of color than for white women - women of color are already more likely to live below the poverty line, receive low wages, experience unemployment and suffer labor discrimination than white women.

US foreign policy (including the Helms Amendment) severely undermines access to abortion for women and damages the health and lives of Black and brown women in Global South middle-and low-income countries.

Recommendations

- **Take federal and state legislative steps to guarantee effective access to affordable, legal, and quality abortion care.**
- **Remove the Helms Amendment restrictions on US foreign aid to ensure that development assistance and global health funds provide safe and quality abortion care and information.**

Racial Inequalities in Cervical Cancer Mortality

Cervical cancer is highly preventable and treatable, yet **Black women in the US are nearly twice as likely to die from cervical cancer than white women**. Lack of health insurance coverage, state failure to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, and systemic discrimination and bias in the healthcare field against women of color are significant barriers to cervical cancer prevention and treatment.

Recommendation

- **Support US states to promote community health workers and community-based approaches to reproductive health that address healthcare access and the social determinants of health.**

Shackling of Pregnant Prisoners

Shackling pregnant prisoners during labor, delivery, and postpartum recovery has long been condemned as a human rights violation, but the practice persists across the US. **Black women are disproportionately subject to shackling**, as they are **incarcerated at nearly twice the rate of white women**, and shackling is itself a vestige of chattel slavery in the US.

Recommendation

- **Eliminate the practice of shackling pregnant women and all other pregnant people in jails and prisons and standardize human rights compliant care for incarcerated pregnant people.**

1. Full submission here: https://www.globaljusticecenter.net/files/SBRWI_HRW_GJC_AI_CERDShadowReport.pdf