For Immediate Release

Contact:

Robin Gordon Jr.

503-890-5393

robindgordon@gmail.com

**“COMMON CAUSE“**

**RIGHTS FREEDOM AND CHOICE**

**E. D. Mondainé**

Last week, America watched in horror as the U.S. House Select Committee Investigating the January 6 attack revealed a shocking collaboration with government officials at the highest levels.

Before we could catch our breath, we were gut-punched again with another, equally noxious infringement - the overturning of Roe Vs. Wade by the United States Supreme Court.

There is an interesting and important overlap here. The reversal of Roe V. Wade and the attack on our Nations Capital share a common element - the ideology of slavery. However, before you claim I am overreaching, please consider this: the racism underlying the entire Trump Movement and the misogyny at the core of the reversal of Roe V. Wade are not ends unto themselves. They are both mechanisms of social control used to subjugate and exploit human beings into forms of property—more on that in a minute.

Many folks have said that Roe V. Wade's overturning is unprecedented in our history. I would disagree. The truth is that this is not the first time SCOTUS has knowingly conspired with conservative social forces to revoke its citizens' civil and human rights. A too-little-known history reveals a clear correlation in the immediate aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation's passing. For a brief time, there was an earnest effort by liberal, Northern elected officials to give formerly enslaved people positions of authority within the newly reconstructed South. This effort was implemented by The Reconstruction Act of 1867.

It resulted in some 1500 African Americans holding various offices throughout the South – from the local level up to the U.S. Senate. Although they never achieved representation in government proportionate to their numbers, this was a period of unprecedented optimism for Black Americans who believed, however, somewhat naively, American democracy would fulfill its promise to create a truly free and equal society.

In the end, we all know what happened. By the time The Emancipation was passed and enacted as law, America had suffered the loss of President Lincoln by assassination.

With V.P. Andrew Johnson in power, the war of resistance against black optimism was already underway. There was no way that Slavery-owning Southerners would allow a group of formerly enslaved people to be their sheriffs or congressional representatives. So they lobbied hard for a different kind of Reconstruction, one that followed more closely the Black Code laws passed right after the Civil War's ending - laws that severely restricted the rights of African Americans.

Once Rutherford B. Hayes, who was sympathetic to the South, was elected in 1877, it's clear to see in the rearview that the naïve optimism of formerly enslaved people was doomed from the start. The Black Code laws then mutated into Jim Crow and were eventually fortified when the "separate but equal" stance of Plessy v. Ferguson, which was upheld by a 7-1 by none other than, wait for it…the Supreme Court of the United States. Civil and Human rights granted. Civil and Human rights revoked.

My point is not to compete but rather to establish a common cause among all who find themselves on the racist, misogynistic end of the SCOTUS.

Even though African Americans are no longer considered separate but equal, and women are permitted to vote and own property, these recent events demonstrate that the biases that made both blacks and women second-class citizens still exist today.

This isn't news to most African Americans. Our view of January 6 is simply that it is yet another reminder that the Civil War never ended. I imagine that the overturning of Roe v. Wade just illustrates how the American patriarchy views women not as autonomous citizens but as baby-making machines subject to and controlled by the laws of the State.

The parallels are relevant here because they speak directly to what is meant when we say we want a free society. In this context, there is another interesting overlap. Fannie Lou Hamer, a pioneering African American civil rights icon, noted that "nobody is free until everybody's free." It is easy to pair this statement with a quote from the trail-blazing women's rights activist Margaret Sanger, who declared in the 1920s that "No woman can consider herself free if she does not own and control her own body." Indeed, Margaret. Not owning and controlling one's own body is something African Americans also understand only too well. And if you are an African American woman with an unwanted pregnancy, this moment is unimaginably cruel and carries statistical and social incarceration.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. penned it this way: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." In many ways, he wasn't saying anything Hamer and Sanger hadn't said decades before he was even born. But subtly and importantly, he added to the conditions of freedom its most essential element – justice. There is no freedom without justice for all, just as there is no justice without freedom for all. In this way, none of us are untouched by recent events.

Every American is affected by the rise of racism in our Nation, just as each individual's freedom becomes hampered when one group's freedom is restricted.

Society shapes our lives, but we, the people, shape society. So our only way forward and most significant asset in this struggle is the recognition that our freedom is not individual but collective. And if our Nation is to survive this moment, we must join forces in unprecedented, intersectional dissent against that which threatens not only our democracy but also our shared humanity.

\*\*\*\*\*

E. D. Mondainé Jr. is an activist, entrepreneur, recording artist, and former president of the Portland Chapter of the NAACP. Founder of the Black American Chamber Of Commerce, he is also Sr. pastor of Celebration Tabernacle Church in Portland, OR and Grace Center, St. Louis, MO.