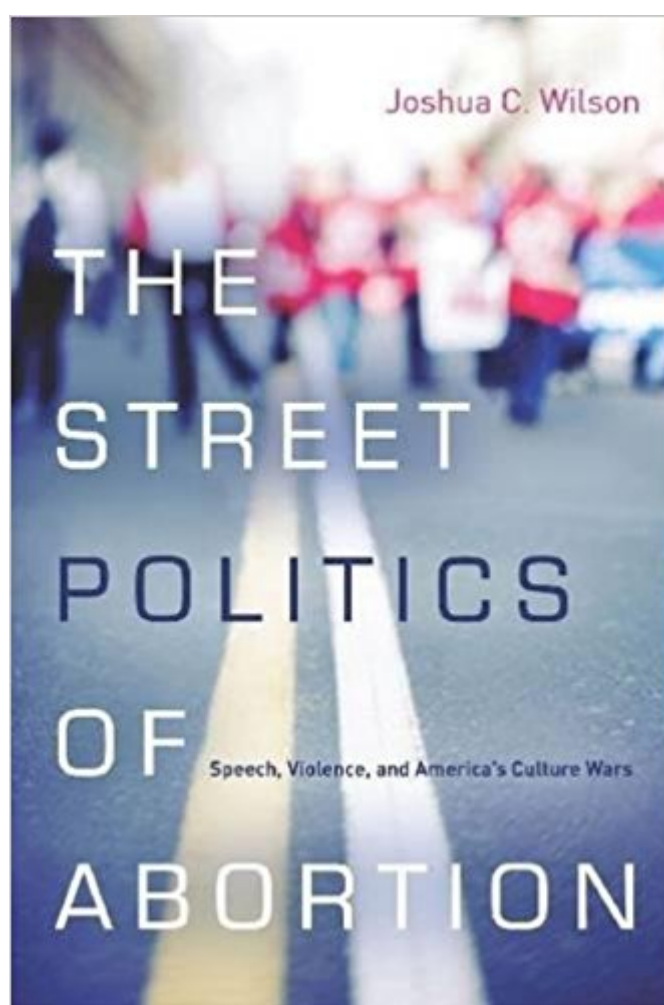


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# The Street Politics Of Abortion: Speech, Violence, And America's Culture Wars (The Cultural Lives Of Law)



## Synopsis

The U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* stands as a historic victory for abortion-rights activists. But rather than serving as the coda to what had been a comparatively low-profile social conflict, the decision mobilized a wave of anti-abortion protests and ignited a heated struggle that continues to this day. Picking up the story in the contentious decades that followed *Roe*, *The Street Politics of Abortion* is the first book to consider the rise and fall of clinic-front protests through the 1980s and 1990s, the most visible and contentious period in U.S. reproductive politics. Joshua Wilson considers how street level protests lead to three seminal Court decisions—*Planned Parenthood v. Williams*, *Schenck v. Pro-Choice Network of Western N.Y.*, and *Hill v. Colorado*. The eventual demise of street protests via these cases taught anti-abortion activists the value of incremental institutional strategies that could produce concrete policy gains without drawing the public's attention. Activists on both sides ultimately moved—often literally—from the streets to fight in state legislative halls and courtrooms.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Street Politics of Abortion adds much to our understanding of dissent, abortion, politics, and the evolution of new Christian conservative leaders, institutions, and tactics." (Laura R. Woliver *Tulsa Law Review*) "Beautifully written and tremendously accessible, *The Street Politics of Abortion* offers new insight into how lawyers—especially those assigned to cases rather than taking them as part of their political commitments—understand their role as trial lawyers and social

movement actors. This excellent book is analytically important, methodologically innovative, and breaks new ground in the study of social movements, legal consciousness, and the first amendment." (Laura Beth Nielsen Northwestern University, American Bar Foundation, author of License to Harass: Law, Hierarchy, and Offensive Public Speech)"On about as hot a subject as a scholar can take on, Joshua Wilson has sensitively and exhaustively shown how activists' 'stories' about the law shape the everyday politics of abortion. Blending political science and sociology, this is modern legal scholarship at its very best." (Steven Teles Johns Hopkins University, author of The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement)"Joshua Wilson shows how the interactions of protesters at abortion clinics and their legal defeats actually helped to institutionalize the anti-abortion movement. This important new work on abortion politics greatly advances our understanding of movement/countermovement dynamics and the power of law." (Suzanne Staggenborg University of Pittsburgh)"[The events of the American anti-abortion movement] are the subject of Joshua C. Wilson's book, *The Street Politics of Abortion*, and involve the intersection of four topics: political movements that involve litigation; anti-abortion activism; First Amendment doctrine and judicial decision making; and legal consciousness, in particular the evolving view of law of various elite and non-elite actors. This combination makes for rich and fascinating subject of study and promises Wilson's book a wide audience . . . Wilson lets the various actors speak for themselves. As a result, the reader gets a good sense of the motivation and thinking of the activists on both sides." (James Daniel Fisher *The Law and Politics Book Review*)

Joshua C. Wilson is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Denver and is also the author of *The New States of Abortion Politics* (Stanford, 2016). His work has been discussed on NPR and in *Time Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *Macleans*, and *Deseret News*. He has also placed pieces in *Newsweek*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Washington Post*'s *Monkey Cage*, and elsewhere.

This is a simply fabulous book, for three reasons. First: it offers a tremendously thorough accounting of the politics and law of abortion post-Roe, with a focus on an under-studied aspect of legal developments: the use of street politics and protest by anti-choice/right to life activists. Second: it takes those activists seriously, and treats with respect their claims about and on the law. Third: it develops a theory of legal consciousness that travels beyond street level activists on this issue, and one that should inform others studying and writing about social movement actors. It is a joy to teach - and important to grapple with, whether you are an activist (of any persuasion on the issue), a first

amendment junkie, or a law and society scholar.

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