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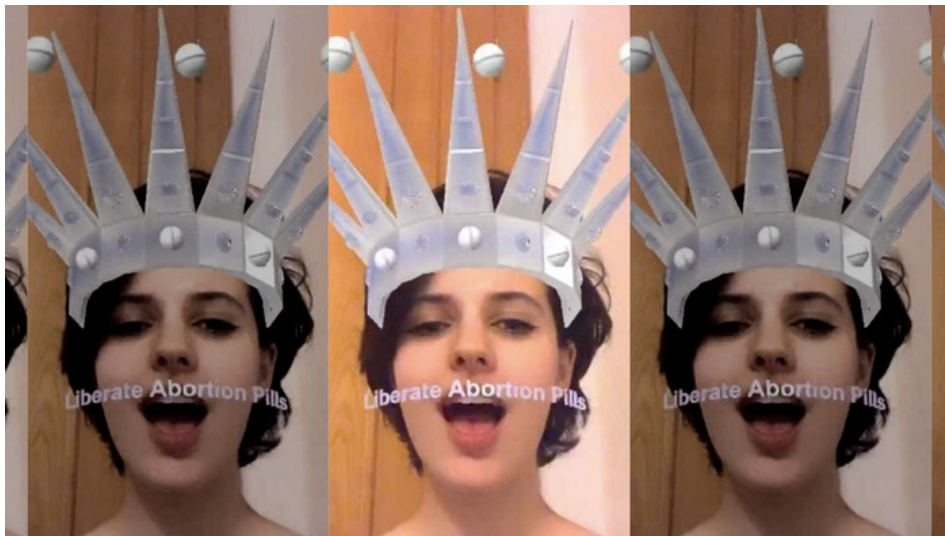
Health

Instagram Rejected a Pro-Choice Face Filter

The platform says the filter – a crown of abortion pill packs – is a violation of its policies.

By **Marie Solis**

Mar 3 2020, 9:20pm   



COURTESY OF WOMEN ON WEB

Instagram is blocking an abortion rights filter from its platform, stating that the selfie filter—which places a crown of abortion pill packs on users' heads—is a violation of its policies. The filter displays the words "liberate abortion pills" and the crown releases pills when users open their mouths.



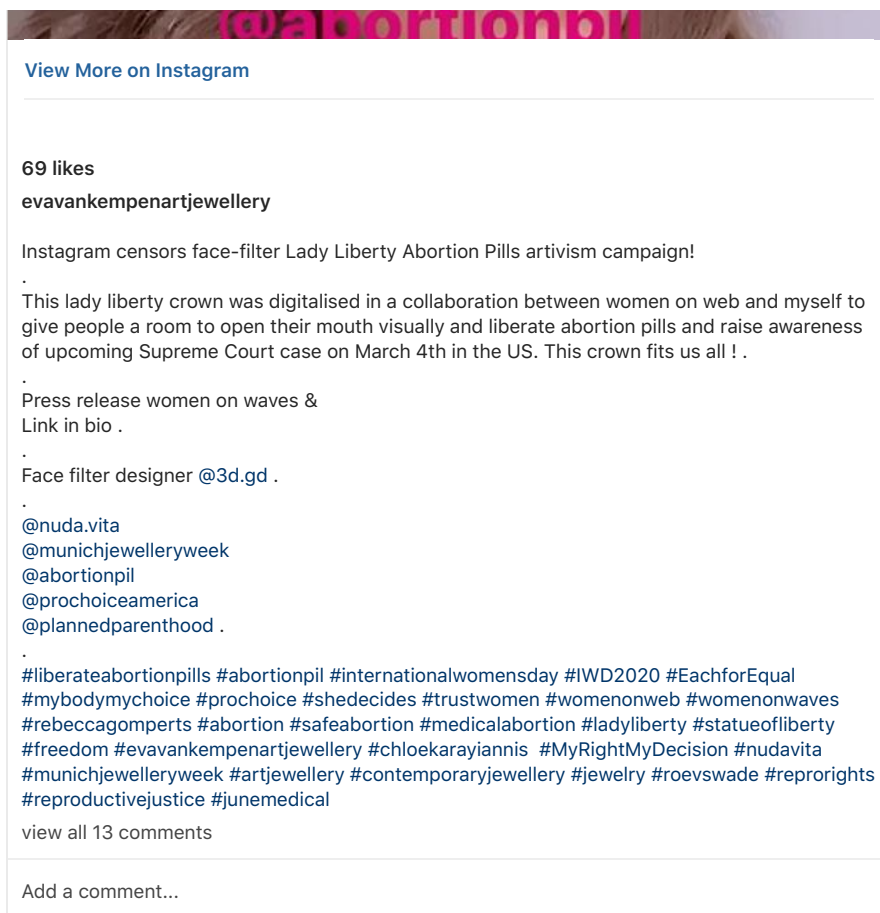
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MARIE SOLIS

An Instagram spokesperson confirmed that the filter was blocked and said any non-sponsored content promoting pharmaceutical medical products is banned from the platform. But the reproductive health advocates and artists who collaborated on the filter say the design isn't meant to "promote" the purchase of abortion pills; their hope in releasing the filter—on the eve of a pivotal Supreme Court case—was to raise awareness about a method of abortion that remains highly restricted in the United States.

"I think it's very appropriate for Instagram," said Eva van Kempen, the Amsterdam-based jewelry designer who created the physical abortion pill crown in the vein of the Statue of Liberty that the selfie filter is based on. "It's important for people to be aware of what's happening."





Van Kempen had been making jewelry for years when she fell ill and had to be hospitalized. While she was there she noticed nurses throwing out unused medical supplies: intravenous tubes, hypodermic needles, and expired medications. A doctor let her take some of the discarded materials home, and when she was well again, van Kempen began incorporating them into her jewelry, fashioning pill packs and other supplies into chokers studded with the pearls and gemstones she used in her commercial designs.

As a supporter of reproductive freedom, van Kempen decided to focus on

contraceptives and abortion pills: Her designs include necklaces of birth control pills, IUD pendants, and an emergency contraception bracelet. Van Kempen had already been in touch with Rebecca Gomperts, a Dutch doctor who runs an online service prescribing abortion pills to people in the U.S., about working together. They brainstormed a few ideas that didn't pan out, but recently decided to take one of van Kempen's designs and turn it into an Instagram selfie filter.

They intended for the filter, which was created by graphic designer Chloe Karayiannis, to go live by this Wednesday, when the Supreme Court will hear arguments on an abortion case that could decide the fate of federal abortion rights. But then the platform blocked it.

The case revolves around a Louisiana abortion law that is identical to a

Texas law the Supreme Court struck down in 2016. In that landmark case, *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, the court ruled that the law put an “undue burden” on people seeking abortion care. If the court overturns its own precedent, the justices would be sending a signal to state legislators across the country that *Roe v. Wade* is virtually unenforceable, giving them license to pass severe restrictions and near-total bans on the procedure. If the court rules in Louisiana's favor, it could also be much more difficult for states to challenge abortion restrictions, thanks to a loophole hidden in the law. (A decision isn't expected until the end of the court's term in the summer.)



The FDA Is Restricting Access to the Easiest, Safest Form of Abortion

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But even with *Roe* in effect, millions of Americans are unable to access abortion services, often because of factors like cost or distance to a clinic. The Food and Drug Administration's longstanding restrictions on medication abortion (another term for an abortion with pills) have also made

it so that the safest, easiest method of abortion remains out of reach for many people: Because the FDA's policy requires specially licensed providers to dispense the pills in person, at a hospital or clinic, patients who are hours from the nearest clinic and can't afford to travel to it will find it nearly impossible to access the pills the way the FDA mandates.

In an America where *Roe* has been gutted or overturned, abortion pills will be how many more people access abortion care, making it vital to lift the restrictions, according to reproductive rights activists, many of whom also agree that the restrictions on the pills are medically unnecessary.

With so much at stake, van Kempen and Gomperts aren't accepting Instagram's rejection of the filter. They have appealed the decision on the basis of the rights to freedom of information and freedom of expression guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights.

“[We're] not promoting a medical product,” Gomperts said. “It does not mention the names of the pills. [The filter] is similar to saying, ‘Cancer

treatment should be for free.' I will appeal Instagram again."

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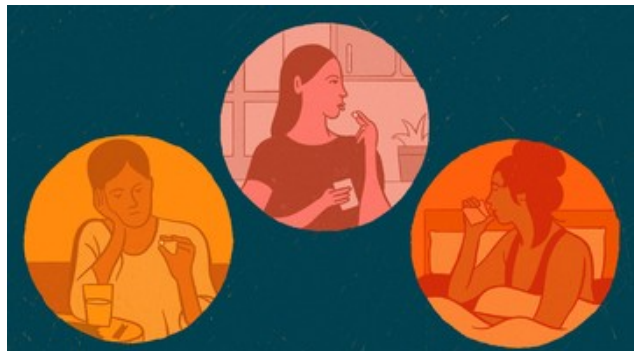
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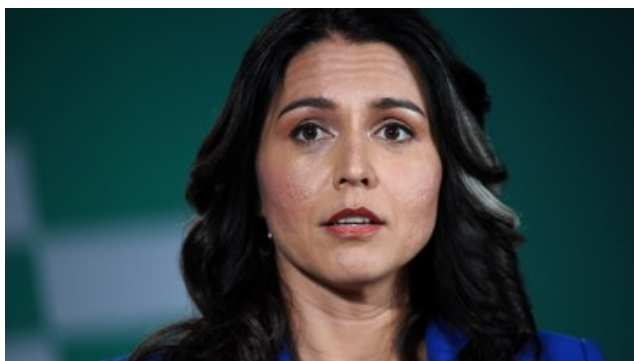
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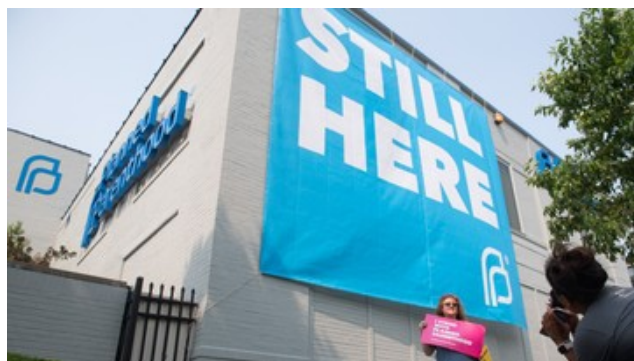
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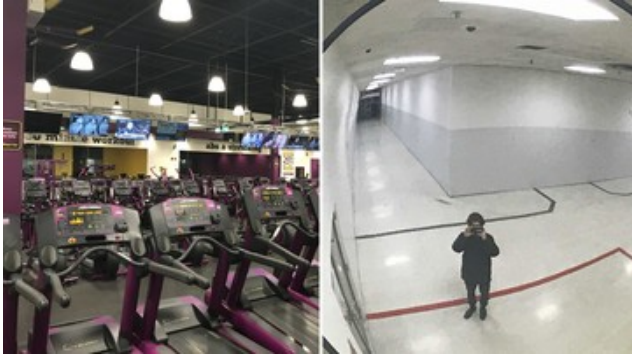
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By [Marie Solis](#)




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