
*Artificial Separations:
Rep. Lindy Boggs Responds to Constituents on Abortion, 1973-1974*

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“No one in Washington has ever been able to say no to Lindy Boggs,” offered one of Lindy Boggs’s colleagues at a celebration commemorating her retirement from the U.S. House of Representatives in 1990.¹ Born Marie Corinne Morrison Claiborne in 1916 on a plantation in rural New Roads, Louisiana, Boggs became the only woman her state ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Her Congressional colleagues and New Orleans constituents remember her for grace in a partisan environment and for her legislative work to gain economic equality for women and minorities. “Grace was in her steps, and heaven was in her eyes,” read the front-page headline of *The Times-Picayune* on August 2, 2013, quoting Rep. John Lewis of Georgia in its report on Boggs’s funeral at St. Louis Cathedral in the French Quarter. “She never gave in. She never gave out. She kept the faith. She kept her eyes on the prize,” continued Lewis in an effusive tribute to his former colleague.²

A lifelong Democrat, Boggs began her twenty-five year political career in Washington, DC as the wife of Louisiana Congressman and eventual House Majority Leader Hale Boggs. After the disappearance of an airplane carrying Hale and three others in the skies over Alaska in 1972, Lindy ran for and won his Congressional seat. She represented Louisiana's second district from 1973 until 1991.³

One of her most significant achievements occurred early in her tenure, when she offered a seemingly minor addition to the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974. Boggs’s edit outlawed discrimination on the basis of “sex or marital status” as well as race and age when applying for loans or credit.⁴ At a time when women often could not obtain financial products such as home loans and credit cards in their own names, Boggs’s small addition was a major feminist victory. However, on other issues, Boggs’s conservative positions would come to disappoint those who had cheered her work for women’s economic rights.

Abortion exploded onto the national scene after the January 22, 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* and went on to become a litmus test of American politicians. Boggs, a lifelong Catholic, opposed abortion throughout her career. By examining Boggs’s responses to constituents in the immediate aftermath of *Roe*, I will examine how Boggs reconciled her support

¹ Frances Frank Marcus, “Lindy Boggs to Quit House, Ending a Louisiana Dynasty.” *New York Times*, July 21, 1990 and Corrine C. Boggs, *Washington through a Purple Veil* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 25.

² John Pope, “‘Grace was in her steps, and heaven was in her eyes’: With Sweet Words, Songs and Tears, New Orleans Expresses Its Love for Lindy Boggs.” *The Times-Picayune*, August 2, 2013.

³ Jason Horowitz, “Alaska Crash a Painful Reminder for Families of Boggs and Begich,” *Washington Post*, August 15, 2010 and Marcus, “Lindy Boggs to Quit House.”

⁴ “Corinne Claiborne (Lindy) Boggs,” *Women in Congress, 1917–2006*, Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007, accessed April 26, 2012, <http://womenincongress.house.gov/member-profiles/profile.html?intIID=15>.

for women with her personal opposition to abortion. Boggs's use of understatement is evidence not only of her genteel style, but part of a larger ideology that privileged economic equality and loyalty to the Democratic agenda over social issues with direct ramifications on women's bodies. Her carefully considered strategy helped her to negotiate the complicated political environment in 1973 and 1974.

When Boggs began her Congressional career, the anti-abortion movement was only just gaining traction. The movement to decriminalize abortion at the state level had energized socially conservative Americans in the 1960s and early 1970s, but a cohesive national anti-abortion movement had not yet formed. Abortion was a developing issue with rapidly shifting political alliances. *Roe v. Wade* spent two years on the Supreme Court's docket; the case "arrived at the Court's doorstep in one world and emerged, twenty-seven months later, into another."⁵ In the early 1970s, support for abortion reform was no more associated with one party than the other. The ninety-third Congress, which met from 1973 until 1975, did not demonstrate a statistically significant correlation between representatives' party affiliation and their votes on abortion. In June 1972, a national Gallup poll determined that 68% of Republicans and only 59% of Democrats agreed that "[t]he decision to have an abortion should be made solely by a woman and her physician."⁶ At the time, most Catholics, like Lindy Boggs, identified as Democrats. In an effort to appeal to socially conservative voters, a faction of the Republican Party began to advocate on behalf of "family values" issues, including support for school prayer and opposition to sex education and abortion. The GOP adopted a pro-life plank in 1976 and strengthened it in 1980, formalizing the script for the so-called culture wars that would recast American partisan politics.⁷ Conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly, herself a Catholic, associated abortion rights with radical feminists and proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment. "Women's libbers are trying to make wives and mothers unhappy with their career . . . They are promoting abortions instead of families," she wrote in the February 1972 edition of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*.⁸ The political environment was volatile, particularly in the South, where white voters who had supported the Democratic Party since the Civil War were breaking away in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Act. As a Democratic in a heavily Catholic district, Boggs was potentially vulnerable on the abortion issue and had good reason to approach it cautiously.

Boggs's opposition to abortion stood in contrast to her strong support for other efforts to promote women's equality. However, her anti-abortion position aligned her with the Louisiana House of Representatives, the Louisiana Senate, and the majority of Louisiana's Congressional delegation.⁹ A 1974 press release from the Louisiana Right to Life Federation claimed "the majority of the state's delegation to Congress is opposed to the United States Supreme Court's

⁵ Linda Greenhouse and Reva B. Siegel, *Before 'Roe v. Wade': Voices That Shaped the Abortion Debate Before the Supreme Court's Ruling* (New York: Kaplan, 2010): 226.

⁶ Greenhouse and Siegel, *Before 'Roe v. Wade,'* 209 and Raymond Tatalovich and David Schier, "The Persistence of Ideological Cleavage in Voting on Abortion Legislation in the House of Representatives, 1973-1988," in *Understanding the New Politics of Abortion*, ed. Malcolm L. Goggin (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1993): 116.

⁷ Sarah Kliff, "Republicans Set to Endorse Abortion Ban, Just As They Did in 2008. And 2004. And 1976." *Washington Post*, August 21, 2012.

⁸ Phyllis Schlafly, "Women's Libbers Do NOT Speak for Us," in *Before 'Roe v. Wade,'* 219.

⁹ State of Louisiana. Cong. House. House Concurrent Resolution No. 155. 1973; State of Louisiana. Sen. Res. No. 90. 1973; Louisiana Right to Life Federation to Lindy Boggs, January 28, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, Series 2: Lindy Boggs, Sub-series 2: Legislation, Hale Boggs and Lindy Boggs papers, 1914-1998, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. (Hereafter "S2s2, HBLBP.")

pro-choice ruling and will support a constitutional amendment guaranteeing life to the unborn child.”¹⁰ The remainder of the document reveals that all but one member of the Louisiana delegation opposed publicly the Supreme Court’s decision.

Immediately after *Roe*, the anti-abortion movement organized an effective, cohesive national movement to reverse newly recognized abortion rights. Advocacy for a constitutional amendment banning abortion, known as the Human Life Amendment (HLA), became the movement’s centerpiece.¹¹ The HLA would have declared the fetus to be a “human person,” thus outlawing abortion as a form of murder.¹² In 1973 and 1974, the HLA stood as a litmus test of both Republican and Democratic politicians’ opinion on abortion. The proposed amendment arose repeatedly in Boggs’s letters to and from constituents both pro-choice and anti-abortion during these years.

Boggs and her extended family were lifelong members of the Roman Catholic Church, a significant consideration in evaluating her opposition to abortion. Catholics were the central organizers of anti-abortion activism in the immediate aftermath of *Roe v. Wade*, and as a result, the Church’s position took on national importance. Fearing laws that could require doctors or hospitals to perform abortions, select Catholic bishops encouraged adherents to engage in acts of civil disobedience. The Church threatened women who underwent abortion with excommunication. Conservative Catholic publications called for the excommunication of Catholic Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, who had voted with the majority on *Roe*. In 1973, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops called on the Catholic-affiliated National Right to Life Committee to organize grassroots pro-life organizations nationwide, and funded the effort with a \$4 million investment.¹³ In light of this, Boggs’s communication with the Louisiana Right to Life Federation and with the Catholic leadership of New Orleans is particularly noteworthy. The Federation press release named Boggs and Rep. David C. Treen of Metairie first among the members of the Louisiana congressional delegation, highlighting their appearance at the first National March for Life on January 22, 1974. After the Right to Life delegation’s visit, the Archbishop of New Orleans wrote to Boggs to thank her for her support.¹⁴

But some evidence suggests that Boggs’s position on abortion was not widely known, even among some prominent Louisiana anti-abortion activists. The Archbishop described the Right to Life delegation as pleased by Boggs’s “willingness” to appear at the March for Life. The secretary of the Baton Rouge Chapter of the Louisiana Right to Life Association, Bea Mapes, wrote to Boggs: “We came to ask your support and found much to our pleasant surprise, that you were not only with us 100% but were an inspiration for us to go back home and work even harder.”¹⁵ Evidently, even Louisiana Right to Life representatives, who perhaps assumed that Boggs supported a woman’s right to choose because of her other work on behalf of women’s

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Wilder, Marcy J. “The Rule of Law, the Rise of Violence, and the Role of Morality: Reframing America’s Abortion Debate,” in *Abortion Wars: A Half Century of Struggle, 1950-2000*, ed. Rickie Solinger. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998): 79.

¹² Rosalind P. Petchesky, *Abortion and Woman’s Choice* (New York: Longman, 1984): 242.

¹³ Eva Rubin, *Abortion, Politics, and the Courts* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982): 88-89 and N. E. H. Hull and Peter Charles Hoffer, *Roe v. Wade: The Abortion Rights Controversy in American History* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2001): 186.

¹⁴ Louisiana Right to Life Federation to Lindy Boggs, January 28, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP and Archbishop of New Orleans to Lindy Boggs, January 30, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP. Editor’s note: We are printing the names of constituents who wrote to Rep. Boggs if they identified publicly as supporters or opponents of abortion. We have withheld the names of those constituents who wrote to Boggs as private citizens.

¹⁵ Bea Mapes to Lindy Boggs. February 11, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

equality, were unaware of Boggs's opposition to abortion until they met with her in person. Despite her position, Boggs declined to commit her name as an "Endorsee for Life" in the Baton Rouge Chapter, claiming she could "best assist the overall pro-life effort" if she was "not exclusively associated with any one particular group."¹⁶

A certain amount of reticence about abortion served Boggs well in what had rapidly become a polarized political environment. Her motivations for opposing abortion and her reluctance to address it straightforwardly are visible in the replies her office sent to dozens of constituents who wrote to her about abortion. Boggs's office replied to constituents who supported and opposed abortion, but an overwhelming majority of constituents who wrote to Boggs in 1973 and 1974 opposed legal abortion. In 1973, only six constituents wrote in favor of abortion rights.¹⁷

Anti-abortion constituents who wrote to Boggs in 1973 and 1974 frequently maintained that a constitutional amendment was essential to restore American values. They used dramatized rhetoric, such as a handwritten note from the sisters of Mount Carmel Convent in New Orleans condemning the "'Murder' of innocent children" (underlining and quotation marks original).¹⁸ One New Orleanian with a flair for description wrote, "Mrs. Boggs, this is America — apple pie, Declaration of Independence, American Revolution, Veterans, New Orleans Saints etc. and beautiful, wonderful CHILDREN!"¹⁹ Some letters appeared to be the result of organized mailing campaigns. A notation in Boggs's 1973 records documented the receipt of 22 identical postcards depicting aborted fetuses in a trash bag.²⁰ In early 1974, many anti-abortion constituents explicitly timed their letters to coincide with the one-year anniversary of the Roe ruling. The author of another fetus-photograph postcard states this intention, and the discrepancy between its January 22 date and its January 17 postmark further indicate the significance of the date to its sender.²¹

Boggs's office staff replied to many anti-abortion constituents in Louisiana. Although Boggs's signature appears on most of the replies, the letters themselves were usually composed by legislative staffers, who employed a selection of stock phrases. The responses from Boggs's office were generally supportive in tone, but measured in content. The Mount Carmel Convent received a typical response letter after two residents wrote to the Congresswoman about their opposition to abortion. The letter from Boggs's office explains, "I firmly believe in the God-given right to life, and the necessity for protection of the unborn."²² Boggs's reply to Bea Mapes, secretary of the Baton Rouge Right to Life Association, used identical wording.²³ Reply letters highlighted Boggs's legislative efforts against abortion, including signing "a discharge petition to bring legislation proposing a Constitutional Amendment to guarantee the right to life to the unborn to the House floor" and co-sponsoring a "'Freedom of Conscience' amendment to the Health Programs Extension bill," giving medical personnel a right to refuse participation in

¹⁶ Lindy Boggs to Dr. Redfield Bryan, May 6, 1974, Folder 10, Box 1751, S2s2, HBLBP.

¹⁷ Folders 6 and 11 Box 1741, S2s2, and Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

¹⁸ Sister name withheld, and second person, name withheld, to Lindy Boggs. February 4, 1974. Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

¹⁹ Name withheld to Lindy Boggs, October 23, 1973, Folder 6, Box 1741, S2s2, HBLBP.

²⁰ Folder 6, Box 1741, S2s2, HBLBP.

²¹ Name withheld. to Lindy Boggs, January 22, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

²² Lindy Boggs to Sister Name withheld, and second person, name withheld. February 12, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

²³ Lindy Boggs to Bea Mapes, February 20, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

abortion-related procedures.²⁴ These practically-minded responses were removed from the intensely moral language of anti-abortion constituent letters, and prove more notable for what they did not say. Boggs focused on her legislative work and avoided blaming the Supreme Court, sidestepping anti-abortion activists' anger at the *Roe* decision. Though she repeatedly used the phrase "God-given right to life," Boggs never elaborated on the nature of her moral convictions or their religious inspiration. A concluding paragraph that appeared in many replies read, "I wish to urge you to also support legislation in the fields of health, job training and placement, education, economics and social services that will keep women of whatever age, condition or marital status from the drastic solution of abortion."²⁵ This statement, which could come as easily from a proponent of "safe, legal, and rare" abortion, listed issues of economic and social privilege that condition demand for the procedure. By consciously drawing focus away from the emotional debate, it served to introduce Democratic-sponsored programs on poverty, health care, and education as potential remedies for abortion. Boggs emphasized her support for federal programs aimed at abortion prevention and the collective social duty to help women at risk of poverty, illness, and unintended pregnancy. From another perspective, however, this statement could be interpreted as disregarding women's personal reasons for seeking abortions and as an attempt to suppress debate between supporters and opponents of abortion rights. Crucially, it avoids promising that *Roe* could be overturned or that abortion could be outlawed again. Boggs's response to anti-abortion activists among her constituents was focused on achieving the possible, not the ideal. Savvily invoking the Democratic agenda, Boggs indicated that abortion was not her only concern. Her strategy promoted realistic expectations to single-issue constituents and simultaneously suggested that supporting Democrats was itself a way to oppose abortion.

Boggs's replies to pro-choice constituents read quite differently. The phrase "God-given right to life" was still used occasionally, but rote phrases such as "what final action will be taken on [pending bills] is extremely difficult to say," and "my personal feelings on this issue run contrary to yours" were much more common.²⁶ As in replies to anti-abortion constituents, Boggs's letters were calm and professional in tone. Certain replies, however, made creative use of facts in their attempt to satisfy petitioners. Mrs. Russ Herman, State Legislation Chairman of the Greater New Orleans Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, wrote to every member of the Louisiana Congressional delegation in opposition to a proposed ban on the use of Medicaid funds for abortion.²⁷ In her reply, Boggs did not mention a "God-given right to life," and failed to state her own opposition to abortion at all. Instead, she recounted her work with charity organizations for troubled girls and pregnant women. Describing this as "preventative care to avoid various social ills, including unwanted pregnancies," Boggs claimed, "I understand fully the difficulties of problem pregnancies, and also the need for therapeutic abortions where the life of the mother and the unborn child are threatened . . . [E]ach proposal will have my most careful attention, bearing in mind your reservations to anti-abortion legislation."²⁸ This letter paints a very different picture of Boggs's views than those written to anti-abortion constituents. Mrs. Herman might reasonably have believed that Boggs was a moderate who supported abortion under some circumstances, as well as the use of federal funds to perform them. In fact,

²⁴ Lindy Boggs to names withheld, January 30 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

²⁵ For example: Lindy Boggs to Mr. and Mrs. Fred Caro, February 19, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

²⁶ For example, compare Lindy Boggs to name withheld, May 16, 1974 and Lindy Boggs to name withheld, July 15, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

²⁷ Mrs. Russ Herman to Lindy Boggs, January 21, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

²⁸ Lindy Boggs to Mrs. Russ Herman, January 30, 1974, Folder 1, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

Boggs voted in favor of banning Medicaid funding for abortion.²⁹ This ability to conciliate by omission was essential to a Catholic Representative who hoped to enjoy the support of the National Council of Jewish Women. Indeed, some letter-writers acknowledged the religious tensions of Boggs's position on abortion. "I understand the pressure you are under both as a woman and as a member of a delegation from a Roman Catholic area," wrote a constituent from New Orleans, who proceeded to moderate her demand accordingly: "If you must vote for Right-to-Life legislation, at least support that which is reasonable."³⁰ In her reply to this constituent, Boggs acknowledged her contrary views and repeated her history of work with women's social support agencies, adding a sentence which echoes the concluding paragraph of many anti-abortion replies: "I believe we must work to create the kind of total environment - cultural, economic, social and physical - in which a woman would not feel compelled to seek so drastic a solution."³¹ As in letters to anti-abortion constituents, Boggs sought to pull the debate away from personal and moral questions about abortion and the role of religion in politics. Her vague conception of a "total environment" to discourage abortion brought a debate framed by the right to privacy into the public, where, she assumed, everyone could agree.

The wisdom of the conciliatory approach, as well as its potential for extreme awkwardness, is visible in letters exchanged between Boggs and a pro-choice constituent from New Orleans. This constituent received one of Boggs's standard replies to constituents in favor of an anti-abortion amendment, but he returned it with a short addendum: "Please let us get the record straight — I have always been a non-supporter of [the Human Life Amendment] and . . . a strong backer of any legislation supporting abortion."³² The New Orleanean proceeded to attack New Orleans' anti-abortion activists, whom he identified as conservative Catholics: "I have never written you in regard to the above matter but someone has made use of my name in a very underhanded and dishonest manner, which reflects the attitude of many right wing Roman Catholics in this city." Sending the wrong message to pro-choice constituents risked angry backlash and an outburst of the religious tension. In a second reply to the pro-choice constituent, the set phrases Boggs employed in response to pro-choice constituents reappeared. "Although my personal feelings on this issue run contrary to yours, I can assure you that I will bear your recommendations well in mind," Boggs wrote, again observing that the final outcome "is extremely difficult to say."³³ Such a response must have seemed woefully inadequate in the wake of Boggs's mistaken first letter, which announced that she was "pleased" to advance a bill for an anti-abortion amendment and that she would "vote to guarantee the right to life."³⁴ Boggs's exchange with the pro-choice constituent illuminates the divergence in messages Boggs communicated to pro-choice and anti-abortion constituents. Anti-abortion constituents received a positive reception, though Boggs limited herself to commenting only on legislation in which she was directly involved. Pro-choice constituents received a polite and subdued denial, or even an implication of support, always accompanied by the promise to consider their opinions during the legislative process. Boggs's replies were intended to please everyone, and became distinctly awkward when they missed their mark.

²⁹ "Corinne Claiborne (Lindy) Boggs," *Women In Congress, 1916-2006*.

³⁰ Name withheld to Lindy Boggs, August 30, 1974, Folder 2, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

³¹ Lindy Boggs to name withheld, September 10, 1974, Folder 2, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

³² Name withheld to Lindy Boggs, December 18, 1973, Folder 2, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

³³ Lindy Boggs to name withheld, January 2, 1974, Folder 2, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

³⁴ Lindy Boggs to name withheld, December 12, 1973, Folder 2, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

Very seldom did constituents pick up on the reluctance with which Boggs revealed her whole opinion. Rev. August J. Deasio received a reply from Boggs, but wrote back, “After reading your letter carefully, I find that the original question has not been answered. Are you for or against abortion?”³⁵ In a brief reply, Boggs was uncharacteristically forthcoming about her position: “I understand the medical necessity for therapeutic abortion in extreme instances. I am for the Right to Life of the unborn and am against any further reform of abortion.”³⁶ The wording of this reply, particularly the use of the phrase “Right to Life” and the limitation of permissible abortion to “extreme” cases, contrasts sharply with Boggs’s letter to Mrs. Russ Herman of the National Council of Jewish Women. However, Boggs did not explain the discrepancy between her acceptance of abortion in cases of medical emergency and her support for a Human Life Amendment outlawing abortion completely. (A version of the amendment permitting abortion when a woman’s life was in danger was not proposed until almost two months later.³⁷) It was also uncommon for constituents to call out Boggs for the discrepancy of her position on abortion compared to other “women’s issues.” One New Orleans feminist did not shy away from this accusation. “Certainly all Louisiana women have been proud of your support of women’s issues and we are dumfounded [sic] at your signature on this proposal [the Human Life Amendment],” she wrote.³⁸ She encouraged Boggs to speak to a mutual friend, whose “story of surgery at the hands of someone who must harbor the same kind of repressed hatred for women that is the hallmark of the right to lifers would really appall you.”³⁹ Boggs’s reply to this constituent was the only letter written between 1973 and 1974 in which she specified the result she hoped for on the pending legislation. Calling the amendment “the only available legislative instrument,” Boggs wrote that while it “presently does not provide for therapeutic abortions, it can be amended on the floor during debate.”⁴⁰ The discussion of a mutual friend makes it likely that Boggs knew this constituent personally, and it was perhaps because of their relationship that she was willing to speculate on the outcome of legislation she had so often called “extremely difficult” to predict. To most letter-writers, Boggs demurred on the nuances of her position. The messages they received were conditioned by their own opinions on abortion, more so than Boggs’s own.

Boggs’s handling of constituent letters about abortion demonstrated her political savvy, as well as the Southern manners for which she was known in Washington. Her strategy of culling economic issues from the sharply personal and moral language of anti-abortion activism played to the major theme of her legislative career, as well as the strengths of the Democratic Party. It remains impossible for anyone to judge the true nature of a political figure’s personal convictions. However, I find it highly likely that Boggs’s position on abortion was sincere. The Boggses did not shy away from dramatic changes of opinion; Hale Boggs signed the pro-states’-rights Southern Manifesto in 1956, but went on to speak in favor of civil rights legislation in 1965.⁴¹ Lindy Boggs never publicly changed her view on abortion, even after the immediate post-Roe furor subsided. After retirement from Congress, she served as US ambassador to the Vatican, hardly a likely position for someone who wished to take advantage of the exit from political life to espouse unorthodox views. I respect Boggs personally for the apparent sincerity

³⁵ Rev. August J. Deasio to Corinne C. Boggs, March 27, 1973, Folder 6, Box 1741, S2s2, HBLBP.

³⁶ Lindy Boggs to Rev. August J. Deasio, April 2, 1973, Folder 6, Box 1741, S2s2, HBLBP.

³⁷ Rubin, *Abortion, Politics, and the Courts*, 117.

³⁸ Name withheld to Lindy Boggs, April 21, 1974, Folder 2, Box 1752, S2s2, HBLBP.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Lindy Boggs to name withheld, April 25, 1974, Folder 6, Box 1741, S2s2, HBLBP.

⁴¹ Boggs, *Washington through a Purple Veil*, 146; 202.

of her views, without overlooking what I consider a lack of holistic understanding about being a political woman. By this I do not mean to critique the rationale of her position on abortion, since I lack the information to do so. Instead, I wish to criticize her separation of women's economic rights from women's bodily rights—advocating the former in clear preference to the latter, and attempting, in letters to constituents, to obscure or subsume the issue of abortion under its contributing socioeconomic factors. Inherent in this separation is an artificial division between the public and private lives of American women, and an unwillingness to engage with the idea that “the personal is political.” In none of her letters did Boggs attempt to argue that her position represented the best choice, or to lay out a framework of reasoning for other women who, like herself, supported the women's movement but felt a conviction to oppose abortion. In later years, anti-abortion politicians would find it near-impossible to nuance their position with the understanding that abortion could be reduced, if it could not be eliminated. Lindy Boggs missed an opportunity to be a voice for a group of moderate women and men whose views were increasingly squeezed out of national politics. Had it been applied with more conviction, this outstanding Representative's legacy of grace and political skill could have had a lasting influence on one of America's most heated and divisive issues.