



## This Texas abortion doctor suffers daily threats and protests — here's why he says he'll never leave

Veronika Bondarenko Apr 19, 2017, 8:25 PM



**Bhavik Kumar works as an abortion provider in Texas.** Courtesy of Bhavik Kumar

Nearly every day on his way to work, a young doctor named Bhavik Kumar passes a

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In the two years since finishing his medical residency, Kumar has performed daily abortion procedures, and fought against an extremely restrictive Texas abortion clinics law that the Supreme Court ultimately [overturned](#) last June.

In the next two weeks, Kumar and his colleagues are reopening one of the more than [19 abortion clinics](#) that [closed across Texas](#) since the law passed in 2013.

Reproductive rights activists call such laws [Targeted Restrictions on Abortion Providers](#), or TRAP laws, because they impose strict requirements on abortion clinics and providers.

Amid daily taunts and the Republican-dominated state legislature's moves to circumvent the Supreme Court ruling with [new abortion bills](#), Kumar has chosen to stay and fight for better abortion access in Texas.

"It may not happen in my lifetime, but I'll die trying," Kumar told Business Insider. "I think we all have to try, if not for ourselves then for the generations that come after us because [restricting abortion access] is unjust."

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A [2013 University of Texas/Texas Tribune poll](#) found that 16% of Texans think abortion

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The number supporting abortion is higher nationwide, with [59%](#) of US adults supporting its legality in general.

After growing up in Texas and completing medical school in Lubbock — a town frequently dubbed "the Buckle of the Bible Belt" — Kumar spent two years finishing a medical residency in New York.

But unlike [many fellow abortion providers who left Texas for more liberal cities](#) like New York, Portland, or San Francisco, Kumar made the choice to stay and continue administering abortions in his home state.

"I kept seeing folks who were like-minded leave the state and not come back," he said.

A protester once came within four feet of him, Kumar said, screaming that he hoped his hands would fall off and he would die because he performed abortions. But he said verbal attacks like that don't deter him from doing his job, because of the patients he needs to treat.

He has seen women who have tried to induce a miscarriage, women who have driven over 200 miles for treatment, and women who have crossed the US-Mexico border all come seeking abortions at the local clinics in San Antonio.

"This is part of my fate," he said, adding that he will often tell patients about different

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**Antiabortion activist Katherine Aguilar holds a crucifix and prays while opponents and supporters of abortion rights gather in the State Capitol rotunda in Austin, Texas in 2013.** AP Photo/Tamir Kalifa, File

Since the Supreme Court ruling, Kumar and his colleagues have celebrated being able to focus on doing their jobs and trying to rebuild the clinics that existed prior to 2013. But with President Donald Trump's stated desire [to overturn](#) the country's pivotal *Roe v. Wade* abortion case, Kumar said, he knows that fight is far from over.

"Unfortunately, we're used to it and we know how to deal with it," he said, adding that comments like Trump [saying \(and later apologizing\)](#) that women should be "punished" for seeking an abortion or Mike Pence telling antiabortion demonstrators that "[life is](#)

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While Texas has always been a more conservative state, with active anti-abortion lawmakers [fighting to "defund" Planned Parenthood](#), for example, it is also home to [significant pro-choice opposition](#) and a growing "right to choose" activist community.

In large part, the patients themselves inspire Kumar to continue doing his profession. The women brave a difficult personal choice and societal stigma to come to him, he said, and many others also come from a history of poverty, violence, marginalization, and medical problems that makes raising an unwanted child even more difficult.

"I think politicians know that," Kumar said. "They know that when [women] don't have access to abortion, it sort of sentences them to a life of poverty and a life that's not within their control."

As for the protests, Kumar has also long accepted them as an inextricable part of his life and profession. While some of the more violent demonstrators will make Kumar reevaluate whether the job justifies the risks to his personal safety, he said, the certitude that he is doing the right thing always returns.

"[Without safe access] abortion goes underground, it becomes dangerous," Kumar said. "Women die."

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