



Texas abortion law inspires fear, anger

Staff editorial by the female editors of *The Review*

ILLUSTRATION | Serina Yan

We have no idea how to cover SB-8 objectively.

As journalists, we feel overwhelmed by the Texas Legislature's laundry list of hypocrisies in passing this restrictive anti-abortion law. Which abhorrent aspect should we write about? Do we address how it defies decades of established laws and basic logic in order to further the agenda of power-hungry legislators? Do we comment upon how policymakers cynically eschewed years of scientific research while lobbying for it? Or should we take on the perniciousness of the law's architects, who have meticulously written the law to shield it from scrutiny in the courts?

We'd like to talk about all of it.

Yet as women, we are tired. So unbelievably tired. We are tired of citing statistics that show the enormous risk that an outright abortion ban poses to women's health. We are tired of envisioning terrifying hypotheticals that make the post-apocalyptic world of "The Handmaid's Tale" seem possible. We are tired of the disappointment that comes when our voices are collectively drowned out by Republican lawmakers and the alt-right and religious right base that support them.

Not only is SB-8 an egregious assault on bodily autonomy, but it's also nonsensical and completely unaligned with the supposed beliefs of those who espouse it. How can the same people that raucously assert their prerogative to remain unvaccinated and unmasked also claim the rights to the bodies of Texas women?

At its core, SB-8 endorses state-sponsored bounty hunting. That we must explain its repugnance is absurd.

The law pits neighbor against neighbor and depends on private citizens filing civil lawsuits against anyone they suspect of "aiding or abetting" an abortion after fetal heartbeat has been detected. Indeed, the effectiveness of SB-8 is contingent upon perpetual suspicion and animosity – or, as the *New York Times* put it, the law threatens to create a "Nation of Vigilantes."

To top it off, SB-8 has no basis in science. Because it was originally called the Heartbeat Bill, one would think that SB-8's cardiac activity cutoff is something more than emotional propaganda. This is not the case. A fetal heartbeat is not an irrefutable sign of humanity but an arbitrary milestone of pregnancy. By making cardiac activity out to be a turning point in gestation, SB-8 tugs on the heartstrings of the ill-informed.

In May, after Texas passed SB-8, we saw people posting about their experience with abortion. Democratic lawmakers and high school students alike took to social media to describe their or their loved ones' stories. They explained how the decision to obtain an abortion is heart-wrenching and the reasons are varied and deeply personal. They criticized anti-abortion advocates for their warped view of the importance of human life. Are the lives of the women who seek abortions not equally important as those of the embryos this law supposedly protects?

On Oct. 6, a federal judge temporarily blocked SB-8, but whatever glimmer of optimism this inspired was dashed two days later when the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the injunction. The Supreme Court's refusal to hear a rebuttal on SB-8 is a de facto endorsement.

Amid all this judicial wrangling, we must not forget that this siege of dystopian legislation has been coming for a long time. For as long as anti-choice ideology has infiltrated the legislative sphere, policymakers have been chipping away at abortion rights – especially in Texas.

We also cannot forget that our rage is not just for ourselves but also for those the ban

seeks to delegitimize most.

SB-8 has the potential to exacerbate existing healthcare disparities among low-income and vulnerable populations. By putting clinics that offer abortions in financial distress, the bill prevents women from getting free or affordable cancer screenings and prenatal care. By creating a climate of fear and hostility surrounding access to reproductive health care, this bill puts millions of women, particularly working-class women of color, without life-saving health care.

We remember Rosie Jimenez, a 27-year-old Latina mother who died in 1977 as a result of the Hyde Amendment, which blocked federal Medicaid funding for abortion services. Unable to obtain an abortion, she turned to an illegal abortion provider who botched the procedure. She died a week later from an infection.

Stories like these used to be common and are especially relevant now for those trying to access abortions. Women's health is not a game. Abortion is healthcare – time-sensitive, essential healthcare. And it's being denied to millions of women.

All the so-called heartbeat bill proves is how heartless people can be.

Goodbye, Columbus: Teach the real history of America

By Annie Jones

In fourth grade, my elementary school performed a play about American history. I was cast as an "Indian Girl" (tribe and name unspecified, of course), and my teacher braided my blonde hair before I stepped onstage.

There I stood in my tan polyester dress next to Christopher Columbus and Leif Erikson (who were born over 400 years apart!) holding hands and singing about peace.

The next year, my history teacher said Columbus discovered that the Earth was round.

I raised my hand and asked, "Wasn't that Aristotle?" My teacher doubled down, insisting that not only did Columbus determine the shape of the Earth, but he also discovered the Americas.

Columbus actually underestimated the size of the Earth, and his belief that he could quickly reach Asia via the Atlantic Ocean was founded on this faulty theory. The Italians, Portuguese and English all refused to sponsor his voyage because his calculations of the Earth's circumference

were painfully, obviously wrong. I was told that European nobility were stuck in the past, foolishly refusing to believe that the Earth was round, as if Columbus were a genius ahead of his time. But if the Americas had not been there, Columbus would have run out of supplies and starved on his way to Asia.

Essentially, Columbus failed upward into a national holiday.

At St. John's in ninth grade, my history teacher taught me about "founding myths," the stories that societies tell about their founders. Typically, the purpose of a founding myth is to show how industrious and clever the founders were. By extension, these myths prove that the nation is Glorious, its fathers are the Best and Brightest and its people are Worthy of the land they live on.

I was spoon-fed America's founding myth: As a genius adventurer, Columbus discovered America and ushered in a new era of freedom – for anyone brave enough to make the voyage – like a true American. Columbus found this land for us because

he was smarter than everyone else.

I was taught that this land belongs to us.

Now I know that Columbus never even set foot in mainland America. Even if you ignore the Natives who lived on these continents for thousands of years, Columbus should only be considered the "discoverer" of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

But we will not ignore the Natives any longer.

My seventh grade history teacher taught us that the first Natives that Columbus encountered were called the Taíno, though Columbus called them Indians. He soon claimed their island, declared himself king and summoned reinforcements to attack and enslave them. According to his and his crewmates' journals, he cut off the hands of Natives who did not mine enough gold and burned at the stake those who tried to escape. He even murdered Native infants and gave Native women to his men as rewards.

Columbus was eventually arrested by the Spanish Crown for his brutal treatment

of the Natives – arrested by 15th century colonists for cruelty – and he was stripped of his governorship of the "West Indies," as he called the Caribbean.

I'm grateful to St. John's for teaching me who Columbus really was (though I had to research his more atrocious acts myself), and for giving me the skills to recognize why his story has been twisted into an inspiring tale of hope and freedom. Unfortunately, many others cannot say the same.

I'm not advocating that we teach kindergarteners about rape and genocide, but we need to stop telling children such blatant lies to perpetuate a false image of America. This country was, in many ways, built by hardworking, hopeful pilgrims – but it was also built on the backs of slaves. When we idolize the slave owners for the sake of painting a pretty picture, it is an affront to the enslaved.

We cannot move past our brutal history without recognizing it. Going forward, we should honor Indigenous People's Day – and leave Columbus out of it.