Goodbye, Columbus: Teach the real history of America

By Annie Jones

I

n 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. 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 doodled 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 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 to death. 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 enormity of a risk that an outright abortion ban poses to women’s health. We are tired of envisioning this from the perspective of the ill-informed. 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. 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?

The law pits neighbor against neighbor. At its core, SB-8 endorses state-sponsored bounty hunting. That we must explain its supposed beliefs of those who espouse it. How can the same people that rancously assert their prerogative to remain unvaccinated and unmasked also claim the rights to the bodies of Texas women?

Not only is SB-8 an egregious assault on bodily autonomy, but it’s also nonsensical and completely without precedent. The law’s architects, who have meticulously written the law to shield it from scrutiny in the courts?

Seeking 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.

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.

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