

THE NEW POLITICS ON ABORTION IN TEXAS AND REMEMBERING ROSIE

by Rogelio Saenz

LET'S REMEMBER ROSIE JIMENEZ... We must because the Texas legislature, which passed an abortion bill this past summer that stands to severely limit the access of women to abortion, apparently could not bring itself to.

Shortly after the Hyde Amendment barred the use of federal funds to pay for abortions in 1977, Rosie became the first woman in the country to die—on October 3, 1977—from a botched and unsanitary abortion that she obtained in McAllen, Texas, because Medicaid would no longer cover abortions.

Ellen Frankfort, author of the book titled *Rosie: The Investigation of a Wrongful Death*, brought attention to the death of Rosie and the events that precipitated it. Frankfort eloquently wrote “Only when there was no Medicaid did Rosie go to an untrained person, knowing that the laws of the womb do not change to accommodate Congress. When lawmakers vote that poor women must carry their pregnancies to term, the cells are not granted the power to veto.”

This comes to mind because the Texas Legislature has created the perfect conditions that will surely result in *more* Rosies. This law restricting abortion occurred despite an eleventh-hour filibuster by state Senator Wendy Davis that thwarted the legislation in a previous special session and as protests against Texas’ war against its women swept the state.

Sadly, the Texas Legislature is a practiced veteran in this war on women’s reproductive health. The abortion bill occurred on the heels of legislation in the earlier legislative session which seriously curtailed women’s reproductive rights and access to birth control. This is just so counter-productive. Limiting access to birth control is likely to result in more unwanted pregnancies, which, in turn, is likely to lead to more abortions.


The abortion bill is the most comprehensive effort to restrict abortions across the country. It draws from piecemeal policies that have been passed in other states to sculpt a policy that will have far and wide impact given the large number of women in Texas affected by this law.

In particular, the bill bars the abortion of pregnancies of 20 weeks or more, demands that abortions be performed in ambulatory surgical centers, requires that physicians performing abortions have admission privileges in a hospital within 30 miles, and stipulates that such physicians are the only ones who can administer abortion-inducing drugs.

The probable result is that eventually only five of the existing 42 clinics (at the time the law was passed) offering abortions will meet standards needed to continue operation. Thus, it is possible that once all of the stipulations of the law go into effect, abortions will only be available in a handful of clinics located in Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio. Put simply, now many women in our vast state have to travel long distances to get



**On October 3, 1977
Rosie Jimenez
died from an
illegal, back-alley
abortion**



Rosie was a 27 year-old single mother who hoped her university studies would be her and her daughter's way out of a cycle of poverty and underemployment. But, she needed an abortion. Her \$100.00 scholarship check had to go for school, and the Hyde Amendment had cut all Medicaid funds for abortion. She went to an illegal abortionist. Infection caused by unsterilized instruments sent her to the hospital the next day. Within a week she was dead.

Rosie was only the first of many victims of the Hyde Amendment cut-off. Untold numbers of women, especially poor and women of color have suffered and died from illegal abortions, because they did not have access to legal ones.

Massachusetts is one of the few states where funding is still provided for women who cannot afford abortion. However, proposed changes to the state constitution threaten to end this funding. Our legislature is overwhelmingly anti-choice: what happened to Rosie Jimenez could happen here. We must work to keep abortion a right for all, not a privilege for some.

It is urgent that we act now!

PRO-CHOICE VIGIL
Monday, October 4
4-6 p.m.
State House steps

The Coalition for Reproductive Freedom
P.O. Box 686 Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
For more information, call 617-552-2542.

The Reproductive Rights National Network (RRNN) is an organization of individuals committed to reproductive freedom for all. We include safe, legal and accessible abortion practices from Massachusetts through the rest of the United States. RRNN will continue to work to ensure that every woman has the right to choose. We will continue to work to ensure that every woman has the right to choose. We will continue to work to ensure that every woman has the right to choose.

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abortion access given current conditions.

Indeed, according to the 2011 American Community Survey, among women of childbearing age (15 to 44 years) living outside of the four urban centers with abortion clinics, poor women are five times more likely not to have an automobile in their homes compared to those who are not poor.

Let’s take a look at Rosie’s home – the Valley. Here, the two clinics that performed abortions no longer do so since the bill went into effect. This just compounds the damage from the closing of six family planning clinics between 2010 and 2012. The lack of access to contraception will surely increase the demand for abortions, in a region that saw approximately 2,600 abortions in 2011. Now Valley women seeking abortions will need to drive 250 or so miles to San Antonio to obtain an abortion. Many simply do not have the means or the resources to make this trip. This trip is still more arduous for undocumented women who must pass through the border checkpoint in Falfurrias along the way to San Antonio.

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region are using “flea-market abortions” in the form of a medication, Misoprostol, designed to avert stomach ulcers, which these women use to induce abortion, according to Esmé Deprez, a journalist writing on this topic.

There couldn't be a more appropriate time to remember Rosie Jimenez. In a different era, but under similar conditions, Rosie became the major focus on the impact of abortion policy on poor women, in this case the Hyde Amendment. She was a 27-year-old Mexican American single mother and a college student at Pan American University.

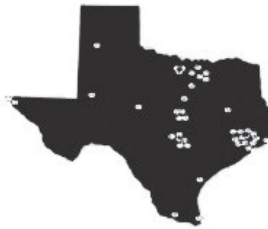
The abortion law of Texas supposedly was designed to improve medical conditions of women who have abortions. However, among the 828,217 abortions that were performed in Texas involving women residing in the state during the period between 2001 and 2011, only five resulted in the death of the woman, according to the Texas Department of Health Services. The last such death occurred in 2008.

In reality, nearly four decades after the death of Rosie Jimenez, the new abortion law will put the lives of women with limited resources at increasing risk of death from unsafe abortions. The bill will affect the lives of Texas women dramatically and will undoubtedly embolden other states around the country to wage war against women and their reproductive rights.

The courts will ultimately decide the constitutionality of this policy. Friends and family of Rosie Jimenez can likely give you an early answer about cause and effect. ♦

Bio: Rogelio Sáenz, a sociologist & demographer, is Dean of the College of Public Policy at UTSA. A shorter English version of this essay was published in the El Paso Times and is available at www.elpasotimes.com/opinion/ci_23745729/new-worry-about-botched-abortions.

THIS IS TEXAS



THIS IS TEXAS ON SB5



Graphic: wholewomanshealth.com

LA NUEVA POLÍTICA DEL ABORTO

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los 828.217 abortos realizados en Texas involucrando mujeres residentes del estado durante el periodo entre 2001 y 2011, solamente cinco resultaron en la muerte de la mujer, según el Departamento de Servicios de Salud del Estado de Texas. La última tal muerte ocurrió en 2008.

En realidad, casi cuatro décadas después de la muerte de Rosie Jiménez, la nueva ley contra el aborto pondrá en riesgo las vidas de mujeres de recursos escasos lo que se reflejará en mayor mortalidad femenina debido a abortos inseguros. Esta legislación afectará dramáticamente las vidas de mujeres de Texas y sin duda envalentonará a otros estados para emprender guerra contra mujeres y sus derechos reproductivos.

Los tribunales decidirán últimamente la constitucionalidad de esta ley. Amigos y familiares de Rosie Jiménez probablemente

pueden dar una respuesta sobre la causa y efecto de esta política. ♦

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CALL FOR ENTRIES!

HOW HAS YOUR COMMUNITY BEEN IMPACTED BY FRACKING IN THE EAGLE FORD SHALE (OR ELSEWHERE)?

The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center wants to hear from you. We are planning an **art exhibit** for Spring 2014 that explores **the complex realities of the fracking boom-- the good, the bad, and the ugly**. We are looking for *creative expressions in all media (photos, stories, songs, drawings, letters, performance) that share your experience of fracking. You don't have to live in the Eagle Ford shale, and you don't have to be a professional artist to submit!* **Todos somos creativ@s.**

DEADLINE EXTENDED to Sat., March 1st!

Questions? Call Marisol Cortez at (210) 228-0201

FRACK-ASO!

Portraits of Extraction in Eagle Ford and Beyond

Exhibit Opens Friday, April 18th, 2014



TO SUBMIT: Send a 1-page info sheet with title, type of work (photo, painting, etc.), description of piece (including size, if applicable) and contact info (name, address, email, phone). EMAIL: esperanza@esperanzacenter.org or MAIL: Esperanza ATTN: Marisol Cortez, 922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212.