Ransom Notes; Where are the concerned Black voices on Black abortions?


I respect a woman's right to control her own body, but I want any choice that is made to be an informed choice. The numbers I'm looking at suggest that Black women are not informed, and even fewer Black men are informed. I don't think possession of testosterone should disqualify anyone from having an opinion, or having a stake in the outcome.

It was a 7-to-2 decision, but subsequent reopenings of the case in 1989 and 1992 were decided by 5-to-4 margins, and it is widely believed that the Bush Court has the votes to turn the tide. So seven white men and one white woman, and Clarence Thomas, will decide if the decision should be overturned. The 30-year debate on Roe v. Wade won't end with this court. The argument will be kicked back to the individual states. The debate will rage on, because just because abortion might be ruled illegal, it doesn't mean abortion will stop. Spousal abuse is illegal too, and women (and some men) are getting the mess kicked out of them even as I write this. It won't stop because it is against the law, just as abortion went on even before Roe v. Wade was first decided.

George Bush wants a Supreme Court that will cement his legacy. His nomination of John Roberts to be Chief Justice, and Sam Alito to be an associate justice, are designed to change the court, and particularly to reconstitute the majority opinion on one particular case.

Jane Roe v. Henry Wade, District Attorney of Dallas County. The 1973 ruling overturned Texas laws criminalizing abortion, calling them a violation of women's Fourteenth Amendment rights to choose whether to continue a pregnancy.

It is the case that has come to symbolize the great divide in this nation on the subject of abortion. It is also the dividing line between liberal and conservative, left and right, and, unfortunately for both parties, Republican and Democrat.

This past Monday was the 33rd anniversary of the Supreme Court decision, which is construed to be the legalization of abortion.

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But the unfortunate thing is that the debate has not included Black people for quite a long time.

That is especially tragic when viewing the numbers (albeit 2003 numbers) on abortions from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

I thought I was reading a typo, but no, there it is in black and white. While there are more white women having abortions than Black women, it is because there are a lot more white women. Proportionally, Black women are much more likely to have an abortion than white women, according to the CDC. The abortion rate for Black women (the number of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44 per year) was 2.9 times that of white women. Nearly three times as many.

Put a different way (and a much more scary way): for every 1,000 Black women, 32 have abortions, compared to 11 for every 1,000 white women.

In an even scarier view of those numbers; for every 1,000 Black births, there were 543 abortions. For every 1,000 white births, there were 184 abortions.

Those numbers should alarm everyone in the Black community. They should get folks out in the streets, clamoring for some kind of solution to a pandemic that is seeing 5.4 abortions for every 10 births.

Instead, there is no discussion. No street demonstrations. Just a collective "ho-hum" when it comes to abortion.

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There is a pandemic in the Black community, and coupled with deaths due to Black on Black violence, drug abuse, poor health care and just being Black in America, we are losing a generation.

The Black community cannot afford to cede all discussion of abortion to white folks. We cannot back away and let other people decide about something so important. If there are Black voices are out there, pro and con, I don't hear them.

(Lou Ransom is managing editor of the New Pittsburgh Courier.)

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