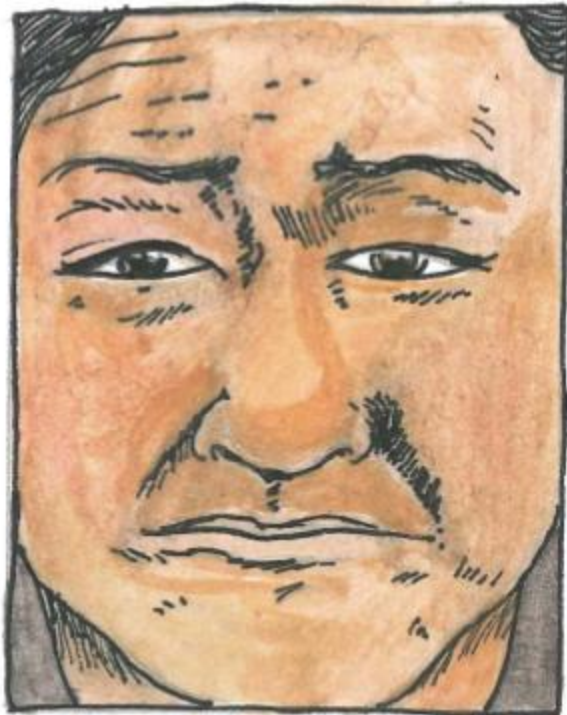


ALLIES IN THE CULTURE WAR



VOLUME 1 - ISSUE 2 - WINTER 2012



LIFE MATTERS JOURNAL



This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars, that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, half-way attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called "Left" or "Right", and instead embrace a consistent life ethic toward *all* victims of violence.

We are Life Matters Journal, and we're here to defang the viper that is legalized homicide.

# LIFE MATTERS JOURNAL

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Winter 2012 - Volume 1 - Issue 2

INTRODUCTION	2	Who's Who of Life Matters Journal (part 2)
	3	Letter from the Editor: On the Make it History campaign
	4	Letters to the Editors
	7	Meme for Life <i>by Benjamin McLean</i>
CURRENT EVENTS	8	Commentary on the Davis & Brewer Execution <i>by Nicholas Neal</i>
	9	On Drones and Due Process <i>by Nicholas Neal</i>
	10	Penn State: Evidence of a Larger Problem <i>by Aimee Bedoy</i>
	11	Lessons from Mexico <i>by Nicholas Neal</i>
ESSAYS	13	Towards a More Consistent Feminism <i>by Nicholas Neal</i>
	15	A Disturbing Trend: Pro-Choice Activists are Admitting that Abortion is Murder <i>by Sarah Terzo</i>
	19	A Preemptive Death Penalty <i>by Nicholas Neal</i>
"WE HOLD THIS TRUTH" SERIES	21	Introduction
	22	Side-stepping the Culture War: The Future of the Pro-Life Movement <i>by Kelsey Hazzard</i>
	26	No Aggression, No Homicide: Being Libertarian & Consistent Life <i>by Nicholas Neal</i>
	28	Divide Issues, Not the Movement: A Reflection on Being GLBT & Pro-Life <i>by Anne Sauber Kuntz</i>
	32	Respect for Life: The Consistent Life Ethic in Catholic Social Teaching <i>by Julia Smucker</i>
	39	Quakers Need a Pro-Life Peace Testimony <i>by Rachel MacNair</i>
MEDIA REVIEWS	43	On "A Heart for Freedom" <i>by Carol Crossed</i>
	44	The Unexpected Truth in "The Ides of March" <i>by Aimee Bedoy</i>
FICTION	47	Never a Disappointment: A Short Story <i>by Angel Armstead</i>
POETRY	52	No Mad. <i>by Lisa Groves</i>
	53	Wrappings <i>by Aimee Bedoy</i>
...AND ONE LAST THING	54	What Drove Them Away <i>by Aimee Bedoy</i>

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Life Matters Journal is a new publication dedicated to opening a forum for discourse on all issues related to human life and dignity. It will be published quarterly in an online format, with the option to buy a hardcopy through MagCloud.com. Send correspondence to [lifemattersjournal@gmail.com](mailto:lifemattersjournal@gmail.com), and visit [www.lifemattersjournal.org](http://www.lifemattersjournal.org) to read the web copy of the journal.



## INTRODUCTION - WHO'S WHO OF LIFE MATTERS JOURNAL

Lilianna Serbicki, Fiction Editor

Lili is a graduate (Magna Cum Laude) of Franciscan University of Steubenville with a BA in Communication Arts and a Minor in Philosophy. From 2009-2011, she served as the Web/Sales Coordinator at WTOV9 News, the Ohio Valley's NBC affiliate. She is currently teaching AP English Language, AP English Literature, and Creative Writing. Writing is her first love; she believes that it is "an exploration of humanity, a way to seek to express what is incommunicable in us - the beauty and dignity of the individual." She and her husband Aaron (videographer/video production artist) live in Steubenville, about 30 minutes west of Pittsburgh. She recently bore their first child, Luke, who was born in September.

# WHO'S WHO OF LIFE MATTERS JOURNAL (PART 2)

Lisa Lindstrom, News Editor

Lisa is a member of Consistent Life, Feminists for Life, CareNet of Puget Sound, Operation Nightwatch, and the Sandwich Ministry of St. James Cathedral, Seattle. She is also involved with children's and refugee issues in the Seattle area. She and her husband are pacifists and vegans who rescue animals from high-kill shelters in Southern California and re-home them in rescues and homes in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. They are Greek Orthodox and are members of St. Demetrios Church in Seattle, where she is a member of the Philoptocos Society. Lisa is earning her master's degree in public policy and administration at Northwestern University.

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Aimee Bedoy, *Executive Editor*

Nicholas Neal, *Managing Editor*  
John Whitehead, *Deputy Editor*  
Lisa Lindstrom, *News Editor*

Lilianna Serbicki, *Fiction Editor*  
Sara Tang, *Media Editor*  
Marie Mashyna, *Photography Director*

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### DISCLAIMER:

The views presented in the journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the consistent life ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.



Dear readers, supporters, and friends,

We at Life Matters Journal desire to see an end to all legalized violence, as well as cultivate a culture of respect for human dignity. Like we now see legalized slavery as a thing of the past, we want future generations to look back on ours as the one who strove unceasingly to "Make it History."

Because we aren't a group of people just to talk without walking the walk as well, I am announcing a new initiative of the Life Matters Journal -- consider it the arm of activism in the world for the brain of this publication. The "Make it History" campaign will be an ongoing initiative, in which we will work with all of the members and readers of our publication to promote activism, to discuss the failings, the successes, the problems and the points of contention in different means of protest, volunteerism, forums, and community events.

This is where you, as a reader and activist come in: we hope that opening up this section of the journal will promote your involvement! We invite you to submit letters or essays about your experiences in any of the areas of the consistent life effort. Whether you held a speaker and forum on human trafficking, did a die-in and graveyard of the innocents on abortion, or you did tabling and a graphic presentation of the Exonerated and death row discrepancies, we hope that you will write about your experiences and help other members of the movement learn from your ventures and help grow the movement as a whole!

Because we have a responsibility to protect and defend human life and dignity, we have a responsibility not only to discuss and ruminate over the issues of our culture and the various life matters, but also to involve ourselves in activism. Discourse is important, but activism is just as vital, if not moreso -- we have the power to reach those people who need to hear the message most through our activism. If we want to "Make it History," we must also engage our community in the discussion as well. The "Make it History" section of the Life Matters Journal will make its debut in the March issue, and we hope that you will send in your submissions -- together, we can work to make abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, human trafficking, and unjust war a thing of the past. We can make it history.

For peace and all life,



*Aimee Bedoy*  
Executive Editor

A graphic with a green background. On the left, the words "MAKE IT HISTORY!" are written vertically in a bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of this text, a list of social issues is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font: "abolish abortion.", "discontinue the death penalty.", "eradicate embryonic stem cell research.", "undo unjust war.", "abrogate abuse.", "end euthanasia.", "terminate torture.", "halt human trafficking." Below the list, the website address "www.lifemattersjournal.org" is written in a black, sans-serif font.



# LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

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## ON THE FIRST ISSUE

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Overall the first (hopefully of many) issue of Life Matters was a good read. I can tell that all the authors sincerely believe what they are writing about and they bring up valid points in each article.

I agree that war is unjust and should only be used in defense of one's country (I look to Japan's constitution as an example, although I am sure there are other countries that have similar clauses against initiating war.) I agree that a preemptive defense is not a just motivation for war, but just a euphemism for a surprise offense. I don't find the reference to the Catholic Church's stance on "Just War" to be very compelling as a policy that fails to prevent war in modern times. I find it irrelevant simply because the beliefs of the Church have little sway in the foreign policies of most countries. For example, if North Korea attacked South Korea, I would not be horribly disappointed in the Catholic Church for not preventing the war via the "Just War" policy. It's not that I disagree with the good intent behind the Church's stance, I just didn't really find it important. I like the idea of using it as an example of war policy in the middle ages, or as a model for countries to work towards with good intent.

Abortion is something I have no decided stance on and is an ongoing thought process. I can see how those who support pro-choice would value a utilitarian approach of placing the greatest value on suffering. If a embryo/fetus is killed before it even has a nervous system and brain, it can't feel any pain. In that case, I cannot feel that killing an unfeeling human made of a handful of cells can hold much weight against the suffering of a woman who must nurture a baby against her will. It's something that could be devastating to a young woman who isn't mentally or emotionally ready to bear children. I've also heard of the right to privacy argument, but to me

that works as well as saying "in the privacy of my own home, I can kill who I want."

However, at what point does that little cluster of cells become a thinking/feeling creature? I agree that human beings have a right to live and then I must face the important question: at what point between the day of conception and the day of birth do pro-choicers say that it's not ok to kill a human being? If it were up until the day of birth, well, there isn't a whole lot of development in the course of a day, right? Why not let the mother have the choice to kill a baby a day after it was born? It's a very slippery slope argument, but one that I have never quite found a valid answer to (though to be fair, I haven't looked too hard). So overall, this issue is one I still must research and decide upon once I have a better understanding.

What I don't care for (as far as argumentative methods go) is stories about people who might have been aborted but ended up not being aborted and went on to great things. So what? Yeah, it's great Steve Jobs didn't die, but then again nobody's celebrating that Hitler or Stalin wasn't aborted either. Good people might be aborted, but so can bad people, so saying the world has so many great people as a result of not choosing abortion doesn't really sway me. The Potential human argument doesn't work to well either, since you are consciously choosing to prevent a potential human being from existing every time a form of birth control is used during sex. That seems to be only slightly better than killing something that is incapable of feeling, thought, or desire. To me the issue is the balance of suffering of the child and mother, and the child's right to live. Lastly, the debate over personhood is pointless as an argument for either side. What does personhood even mean? You are right that it isn't defined in the Constitution by age, creed, size, etc. On the other hand it doesn't define personhood by species either. Are cows and pigs persons? Do they not have the right to life liberty and property? Shouldn't we "be careful when proclaiming personhood" since we can't know when personhood is conferred to humans, let alone animals. I obviously don't truly support giving animals the same rights as humans; I like tri-tip too much for that. My point is



I just wish the world were perfect and everyone properly used birth control until they were ready, but you can't have everything I suppose.

Lastly, I have some comments about using the constitution as a basis for an argument. The constitution is a moral compass that reflects the will of the people...at the time. Saying the constitution is based on moral absolutes is a bit odd, since it can be, and has been, changed several times to reflect the will of a changing nation. There is no single, perfect source of morality dictating the contents of the constitution. It had to be ratified by nine of thirteen states and can only be amended through a vast majority of approval from a combination of state legislatures, Congress or State conventions (I figure you know the actual nitty gritty details outlined in the constitution). You can bring up the thirteenth amendment as a moral absolute granting rights to former slaves but that was only brought about after beating up the half of the country that liked having slaves. Was the Constitution not an absolute source of morals then but it is now? In 1919 many people clamored for the end of alcohol sales, only to have that amendment repealed because everyone found out it didn't work. Many of the changes were based on moral principles, which is great, I like that. But that does not mean that the constitution is free from public pressure, instead it is the result of the growth of our society.

Matthew Yunge  
Pasadena, California

*worker must give the benefit of the doubt to the chance of life and not destroy the building. In the same sense I would say that your ambivalence toward unborn worth and unborn personhood should cause you to give the benefit of the doubt to the chance of human life in the womb.*

*Now in regard to the worth of the preborn child, you point to the early stages of embryonic development, and ask if the embryo's lack of thinking ability should disqualify him or her from being considered a person. We consistent-lifers say "no", because we don't measure human worth on the issues of size, level of development, environment or degree of dependency. We instead see human worth as intrinsic to humanity itself. That being a human being is enough. This of course leads us to your issue with what I call the "future cancer curers" argument. This is an argument put forward by some pro-lifers that abortion is wrong because it might kill a future cancer curer. I would not use this argument, and there are other pro-lifers like Josh Brahm (who's not necessarily a consistent life ethicist) who would not use it either. The reason goes back to how consistent life ethicists value humanity. We do not value human beings because of what they will grow up to be. We instead believe that human worth is intrinsic. That is the heart of the consistent life ethic.*

*We at Life Matters Journal definitely appreciate your letter, and hope to receive more questions about the issues of life in the future. Thank you!*

*A response from Nick Neal, Managing Editor:*

*Dear reader,  
You appear to express some genuine ambivalence about the humanity and worth of the unborn. What I would say as a response to this is that ambivalence should give the benefit of the doubt to the life side. Let us say a construction worker is about to destroy a building. If there is a chance that there is still a human being in the building, than the construction*



ON "FAMILY PLANNING FREEDOM"

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*One last note from Aimee B., Exec. Editor,*

*There have been many different responses to Mary-Krane Derr's piece "Family Planning Freedom is Pro-Life," spread out over online and personal interaction. We have had some people respond with vitriol and others in gratitude for accepting such a piece for this journal.*

*There are those in the pro-life world who attest that contraception is anything but pro-life, and others who believe that it can be a great boon to the pro-life movement. While the journal itself holds no particular position on contraception, we value your input and hope that those who disagree would be willing to contribute a well-researched essay backing up their argument. Indeed, this journal was created to present a forum for dialogue and such dialogue cannot happen if we have readers who are only willing to complain about the pieces they don't like instead of engaging in the conversation.*

*When we started this journal, it was a goal to engage people of all beliefs, faiths, lifestyles, and creeds. We hope that we can be this sort of forum and outlet for discussion among all aspects of the consistent life movement. We do not exist to censor some and laud others -- we are here to give you the opportunity to present your arguments, commentaries, fiction, artwork and essays on all issues of life.*

*All in all, the first issue was very well received and I am truly glad to be the current chief of this amazing project. People from all sides of the issues, some ambivalent about abortion or war, have come to me personally and thanked me for the work that we do in presenting such a body of work. While they may not agree with everything, there is truly a testament to be heard in that they are willing to listen. I could not be more thrilled to know that our work is reaching beyond the people we had originally hoped to touch with our work.*

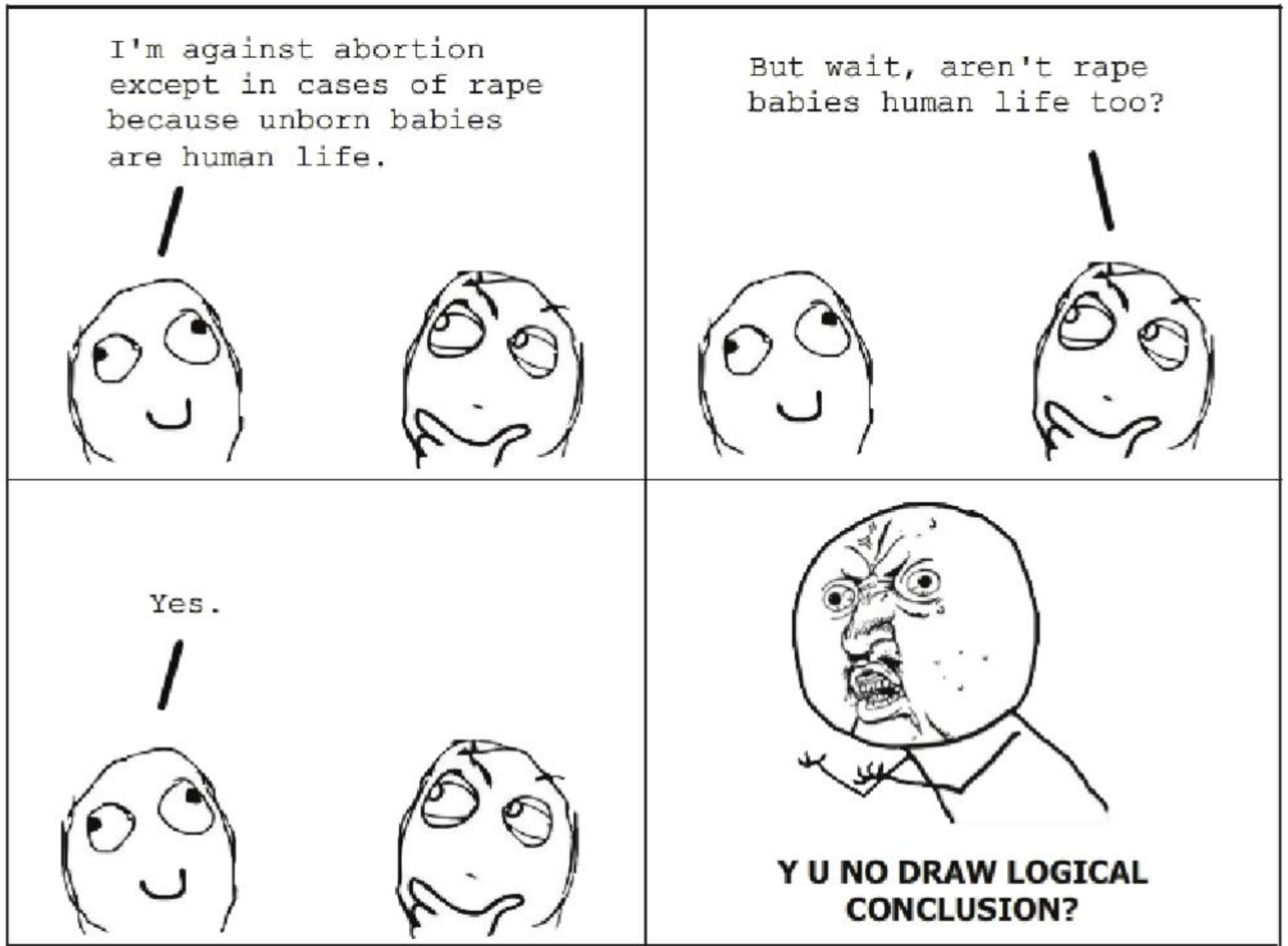
*And I hope that you know, as readers, that if you have something to say, I entreat you to write a letter to the editor or suggest and write a piece of your own for the journal. We could not exist without you, and we truly do exist for you and for all those who are victims of violence the world over.*

Have a letter for the editors here at Life Matters Journal? Please write us at **[lifemattersjournal@gmail.com](mailto:lifemattersjournal@gmail.com)** to let us know what you think.

Just put in the subject line "Letter" and we will post it in our next issue along with our responses.



# MEME FOR LIFE



by Benjiman McLean,  
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# CURRENT EVENTS AND CONSISTENT LIFE

## COMMENTARY ON THE DAVIS AND BREWER EXECUTION *by Nicholas Neal*

On September 21, 2011, Troy Davis was executed after failing to appeal to the supreme court for a 22 year death row case that brought the flaws of the death penalty to the nation's consciousness. Seven witnesses had recanted their testimony thus casting serious doubt upon the case. The fact that he was executed despite this doubt in a deep south state also brings up the death penalty's controversial record of disproportionate black executions. Finally this execution in which we are not sure of the culprit's guilt, shows how the death penalty opens up the possibility of terrible mistakes that can never be reversed. A guilty Davis in prison, would have been more ethical than an innocent Davis executed. Several anti-death penalty, as well as civil rights groups, have rallied around this case. They point to it as an obvious case of the dangers of legalized homicide and demand for the death penalty's abolition. Troy

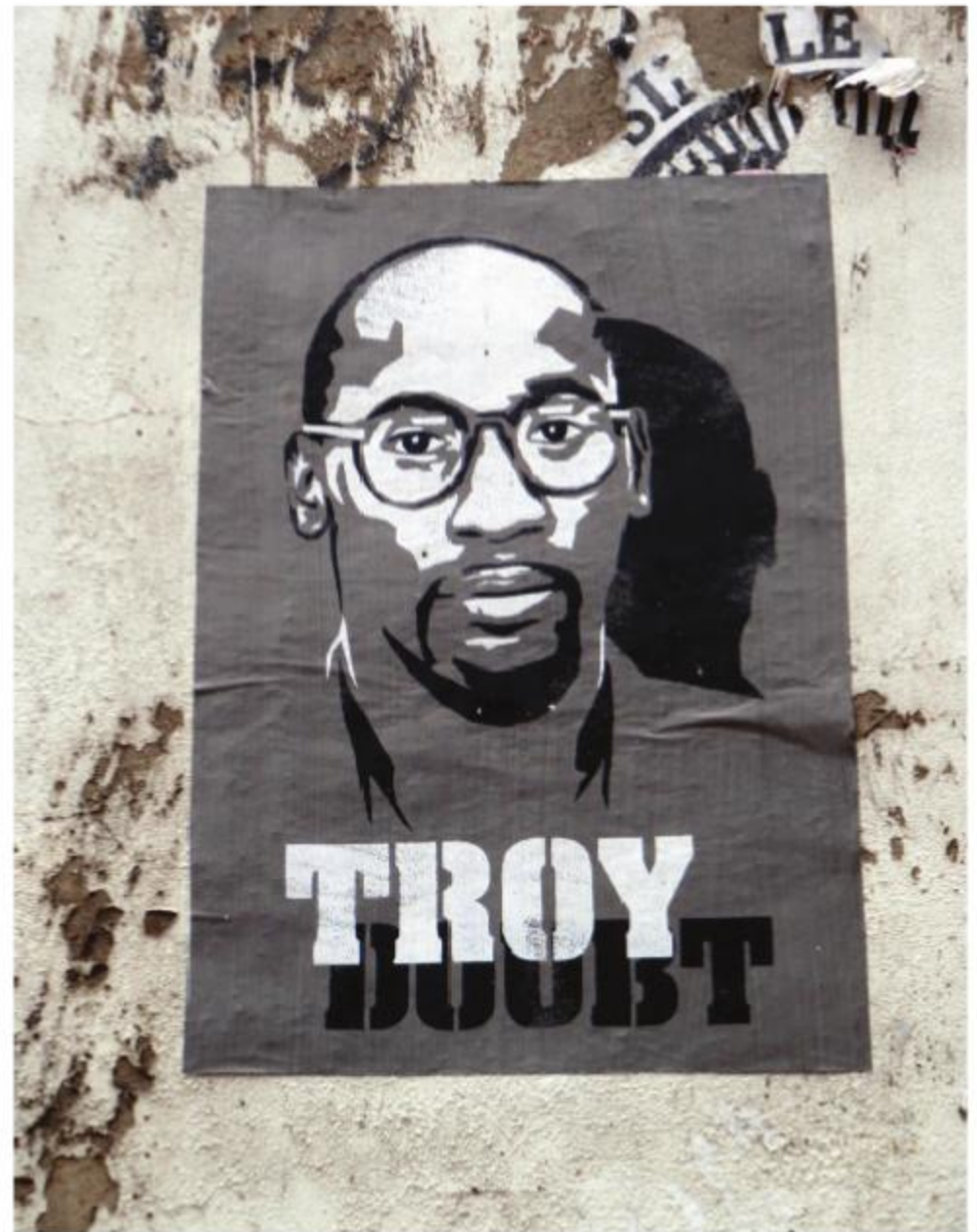


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Davis will forever be remembered as a martyr against the irrationality of the death penalty.

On the same day Lawrence Brewer, a white supremacist gang member, was executed for dragging a black man to death in 1998. Supporters of the death penalty often pointed to this as somehow a rebuttal to the argument that the death penalty is an immoral system. However one of the people who protested the execution was Dick Gregory, a veteran civil rights activist. Gregory has also spoken out against abortion, even endorsing a human life amendment, which leads us to believe that he certainly has sympathies with the consistent life ethic. The fact that a African-American from the civil rights era was willing to protest the execution of a white supremacist is something that could be called Christ like. It truly is a virtue worth meditating on. Now in regard to executing guilty people, one of the things we must remind ourselves of is *why* was it wrong to drag that man to death. The answer is because it was a non-defensive homicide. It was an act of aggression against another human being. Those of us, who oppose executing the guilty, point to the same principle. I will not argue that the execution of Brewer is as *equally* immoral as killing an innocent person. I will instead argue that any non-defensive homicide is unnecessary, especially when we have a prison system that can hold the guilty for life, and an unnecessary homicide is an immoral homicide. By rejecting non-defensive homicide, our society becomes more morally separated from the evils of what Brewer did.

*For more information on the Troy Davis story visit:* <http://abcnews.go.com/US/troy-davis-executed-stay-denied-supreme-court/story?id=14571862#.TtVrJbIk67s>

*Or for a report on Dick Gregory's protest of Lawrence Brewer's execution, visit:* <http://www.khou.com/home/Well-known-civil-rights-activist-Dick-Gregory-visits-Jasper-to-protest-execution-130285813.html>

## ON DRONES AND DUE PROCESS

*by Nicholas Neal*

In 2011, one the greatest blows against the sanctity of human life and the rule of law was struck. On September 30th, the Obama administration authorized the assassination of the American born Al Qaeda operative Anwar al-Awlaki. The drone strike in Yemen which killed Awlaki also killed Samir Khan, another U.S. citizen who had been an editor for the Al Qaeda magazine *inspire*. Two weeks later Anwar al-Awlaki's 16 year old son was killed in a drone strike meant to target another Militant. Despite the fact, that the 5th amendment protects "persons" not just citizens, proponents of torture always pointed out that these practices were being performed on non-citizens. However the Obama administration's new step in authorizing the targeted killing of *citizens* without due process shows how far the erosion of the rule of law that started with Bush has taken us.

Obama merely had to go to panel that he self appointed to decide the legality of this action. Thus making the old accusations of "death panels" more real. A foundational issue for the consistent life ethic as well as the general rule of law is what boundaries should keep a government from killing its own citizens. I have no doubt that al-Awlaki was a terrorist, but he should have been dealt with arrest and due process. Yes such a process is clumsy, but it is not as dangerous as a government with the authority to kill it's own citizens. The Obama administration has broken its promise to uphold constitutional liberties in this move and it sets up a dangerous precedent that many of his would be successors would love to continue.

*For further reading:*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/middleeast/anwar-al-awlaki-is-killed-in-yemen.html?pagewanted=all>

<http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/u-s-drone-strike-kills-16-year-old-american-citizen/>



## PENN STATE: EVIDENCE OF A LARGER PROBLEM

*by Aimee Bedoy*

The cult of celebrity reaches far and wide and covers a multitude of sins, it seems. At least in the United States, fans seem willing to forgive their favorite celebrities their wrongs and will often continue in reverence towards individuals who have been responsible for the harm of others. This has been evinced by Chris Brown's relationship with Rhianna, Ben Roethlisberger's continued fame after sexual assault, and most recently, the defense of Joe Paterno on the Penn State campus, where many students outrageously rioted and proclaimed that it "wasn't fair" that JoePa was being fired for his involvement in the Sandusky scandal.

After many allegations and at least 10 men have come forward to accuse Jerry Sandusky of molestation, sexual assault, and rape in prior years through his job as assistant football coach at Penn State, he has been arrested and the campus went into an uproar. It became clear after investigations that Joe Paterno was fired for his lack of responsible action upon discovery of Sandusky's actions -- both child rape and other instances of sexual assault against children had been reported within the Penn State football program, and yet it had yet to reach the police until very recently. Some assistant coaches and other members of the Penn State program claim to have witnessed these brutal actions and reported them to those above them in the hierarchy of the organization, and yet in the end it resulted in no major repercussions or formal reports to the responsible authorities.

Joe Paterno's attitude towards the rape and assault of young, impressionable and innocent boys is indicative of a larger issue at hand in our world: sexual assault is not seen as a serious offense, when in fact it

can be one of the most damaging and defining events of a person's life. It is both shameful to the perpetrator and painful for the victim, and so often our culture is willing to turn a blind eye to assault and resume the adoration of our favorite celebrities. When in fact, I would argue, not a single person who condones or does not act to stop or prevent sexual assault and abuse is not deserving of an ounce of reverence or celebrity that we give them. We must demand that our entire culture hold these people responsible. Whether that means a boycott or a protest or any number of other things, we have a responsibility to our fellow human beings to change the culture we live in that says you can get away with rape or assault if you make a certain amount of money or hold the public eye due to celebrity.

The event's at Penn State have shown me that our world cares more about football titles and Hall of Fame status than the lives, bodily integrity, and psychological well-being of victims of abuse. I daresay that we have the responsibility to change this mindset or we will too be culpable for the injustice.

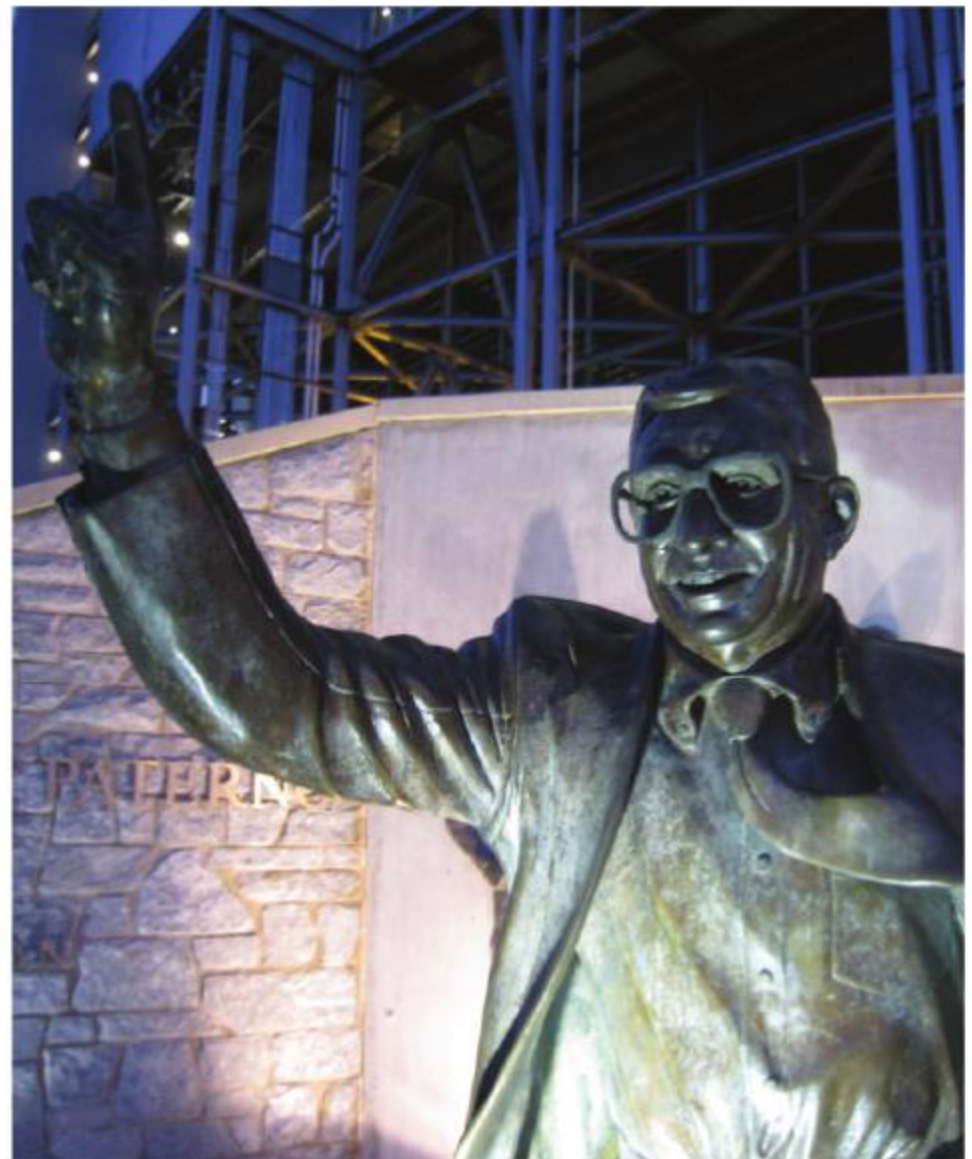


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## LESSONS FROM MEXICO

*by Nicholas Neal*

There have been some victories and losses this year in regard to personhood. The two major victories were in two states of Mexico, Baja California and San Luis Potosi in September, and the loss was in Mississippi during November.

The Mexican Supreme court ruled that Baja California's personhood amendment was constitutional based on the federalist principles that abortion was under the legislative prerogative of the states within Mexico[1]. This is the exact opposite of what the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade*, in which the federal court struck down state level legal protection for the unborn. Days later the Mexican State of San Luis Potosi passed its own personhood amendment stating: "The State of San Luis Potosi recognizes life as the foundation of all human rights, for which reason it respects and protects it from the moment of its beginning in conception. The death penalty is prohibited, and cannot be applied in any situation." [2.]

This amendment is particularly encouraging from a C.L.E (consistent life ethic) stand point. It means that this state government has recognized the link between these two acts of homicide and has prohibited both of them. American Pro-lifers may want to take note of this.

Unfortunately such efforts were not successful in the United States. The personhood amendment in Mississippi failed to pass in November. This was primarily due to the controversy over whether or not it could be interpreted to ban certain types of birth control. The lesson to learn from this failure is that if there are rumors that a certain pro-life legislation will ban a type of non-violent birth control, we



photo by Ed Uthman, some rights reserved

should amend the legislation to make it clear that it will not. This way the argument will be purely over abortion, unborn rights and fetal humanity. When the focus is on abortion in and of itself the pro-life arguments win, because our's is the only side that addresses the reality of what abortion is and who it kills.

- [1.] Ertelt, Steven. LifeNews.com. 29 September 2011. < <http://www.lifenews.com/2011/09/29/mexico-upholds-pro-life-amendment-prohibiting-abortion/> >
- [2.] Ertelt, Steven. LifeNews.com. 30 September 2011. < <http://www.lifenews.com/2011/09/30/mexico-supreme-court-upholds-second-state-abortion-ban-law/> >



advertisement

# Consistent Life 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference

*Embracing the Consistent Life Ethic*

March 9-11, 2012

National 4-H Youth Conference Center, Chevy Chase, MD

- ☒ Meet a diverse group of national/international Consistent Life Ethic (CLE) supporters for mutual support and encouragement, and to consider ways to forward the CLE message
- ☒ Hear speakers who embody the CLE message
- ☒ Learn how to actively engage CLE in your group or religious body

## Some Program Highlights

- ☒ Historical retrospective of CLE and Consistent Life
- ☒ Integrating faith (and secular views) with the CLE
- ☒ Youth education including "CL kids" outreach
- ☒ Nourishing the CLE in today's political climate
- ☒ CLE activities of the next generation, and what we can do today for peace, justice and life
- ☒ Constituency gatherings in the community, at local churches and other locations
- ☒ Public witness action on the CLE (optional)

## Some Plenary Speakers



**Dr. Catherine Meeks** is retired as Clara Carter Acree Distinguished Professor of Social Science and Professor of Socio-Cultural Studies at Wesleyan College. Dr. Meeks' books include *Standing on Their Shoulders: A Celebration of the Wisdom of African American Women* and *Bears and Butterflies: A Way to Listen to Your Hearts*. She currently has her own consulting and coaching business, Kayma and Associates. She writes regularly for *The Huffington Post* and *The Telegraph* (Macon, GA). Dr. Meeks has won numerous awards, including NAACP Outstanding Community Service Award, W.E.B. Dubois Award for Outstanding Service to the African American Community, and Georgia Sociologist of the Year.

**Aimee Bedoy** is a 2011 graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, with a B.A. in Ethics, History and Public Policy. She served as President of the CMU Life Matters Club for two years, and helped usher in the CLE as the primary dialogue within the pro-life movement on campus. In August 2011, she founded *Life Matters Journal*, and currently serves as its Executive Editor. This quarterly journal is dedicated to opening a forum for discourse on all issues related to human life and dignity. Ms. Bedoy seeks to unify the movement for all human life across boundaries of religion, politics and lifestyle. She will speak on reaching the younger generation about the CLE.



## Additional Conference Information

**Registration:** By 1/31/11: \$100, students/low income \$50; After 1/31/11: \$150, students/low income \$60. On-line registration available soon. Contact us to receive a hard copy registration form or notification when registration is available.

**Meals & Lodging:** All meals and lodging are available at the Center

**Conference Web site:** <http://cl25conf.wordpress.com/>

**Opportunities for Organizations:** Exhibit space and program ads available

**For more information:** Email [cl25@consistent-life.org](mailto:cl25@consistent-life.org) or call 1-866-444-7245. We welcome volunteer assistance, and additional ideas for workshop topics and leaders.



ESSAYS

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# TOWARDS A MORE CONSISTENT FEMINISM: A COMMENTARY ON “FEMINISM IS FOR EVERYBODY” *by Nicholas Neal*

The most important point in Bell Hooks' chapters 11-15 of *Feminism is for Everybody* is the connection between violence and patriarchy. The reason why this is more important than say, her attempts to set a distinction between sexual liberation and sexual promiscuity, is that she references violence's connection to patriarchy both in her chapter about ending violence and in her chapter about parenting. This is also important because it is the issue in which she is most critical of her fellow feminists, yet Hooks' own accusation of inconsistency can be used against her as well as the entire Left/Right paradigm.

Hooks supports her argument by explaining that the philosophic justification used for “domestic violence” (she prefers to call it “patriarchal violence”) is the patriarchal idea that those who have more strength have the right to initiate violence against those who are physically weaker than them (61). Thus the roots of violence are sexist power structures within families (Hooks 66). Hooks however makes it clear that patriarchal violence is not limited to male-on-female violence. She goes on to explain that the phenomenon of female violence against children is another example of patriarchal violence, in which someone initiates violence against another human simply because the victim is physically weaker than the oppressor(62). Hooks even condemns what

would be considered minor corporal punishments of children like pinching (74). She claims that violence against children is just as wrong as violence against women, and it is on this point that Hooks is rather critical of her fellow feminists. She states that historically feminists have not placed female violence against children on equal footing with male violence against women (63).

I agree with Hooks that ending violence is crucial to equality. This is because the attempted justification for violence is almost always couched in dehumanization of our fellow human beings. Dead foreigners are considered “collateral damage”. Dead prisoners are considered “monsters” (even when there is evidence of his or her innocence.) Dead preborn children are considered “parasites”, “trash” and “unwanted.”

It is in regard to the last sentence however where Hooks' falls prey to the same inconsistency that she criticizes her fellow feminists of. In her 15th chapter titled “A Feminist Sexual Politic”, Hooks bemoans the fact that in discussions over abortion, the “question” of whether or not abortion is homicide takes precedence over the question of abortion's effect on female sexuality. Now Hooks never gives an answer to the question of whether or not abortion is homicide. She implies however, that the question



isn't crucial to the abortion debate. She certainly wouldn't say it's *overridingly* crucial. The contradiction is that if, as Hooks says, "it is *crucial* for feminist movement to have as an *overriding* agenda ending *all* forms of violence" (62) then the question of whether or not abortion is homicide must also be overridingly crucial (emphasis added.)

Now I can't read Hooks' mind but, I think that the reason why she doesn't want to discuss whether abortion is homicide is that as an intellectual, she probably knows what virtually every embryologist agrees to. That since the fetus is an offspring of two human parents with a human genetic code, it is scientifically impossible for him or her to be anything else but a human being.

When we recognize the humanity of our own offspring, we can look at Hooks' writing and actually see that abortion fits under her own definition of patriarchal violence. It involves initiating violence (usually by dismemberment or poisoning) against a victim simply because the victim is weaker than the aggressor (Hooks 61). It makes children "property of their parents to do with as they will" (Hooks 73). These preborn children "have no organized collective voice to speak the reality of how often they are the objects of female violence." (Hooks 63). Most pointedly of all, feminist have failed at "placing it on equal footing with male violence against women" (Hooks 63). The lethal ageism that Roe v. Wade institutionalized is simply not compatible with the ideas of non-violence and children's rights that Hooks claims to uphold. If female violence against children is patriarchal violence, then why should it not still be patriarchal violence when the child is smaller, younger and in a different location?

I don't want to give the impression that Bell Hooks and the feminist movement are the only ones with these types of inconsistencies. Unfortunately most of the mainstream pro-life movement also contradict themselves when they claim to uphold the sanctity of human life while at the same time supporting unjust

photo courtesy of A. Bedoy



wars of aggression as well as citizen assassination, torture, and the death penalty. Our entire Left/Right paradigm is plagued by this contradictory thinking in regard to legalized homicide. The only solution to this inconsistency is to embrace a "consistent life ethic" that values the lives of all human beings and rejects abortion, war, capital punishment, euthanasia, assassination and all other forms of patriarchal violence.

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Hooks, Bell. *Feminism is for Everybody*. South End Press. Copyright 2000.



# A DISTURBING TREND: PRO-CHOICE ACTIVISTS ARE ADMITTING THAT ABORTION IS MURDER *by Sarah Terzo*

**I**t is usually assumed, in the abortion debate, that the fundamental difference between the pro-life and pro-choice position is the question of when life begins. Pro-life people point to the scientific fact that the life of each organism begins at conception, when the sperm and egg meet to form a new individual with its own DNA different than that of the mother and father. As this new life implants and begins to grow, it has its own circulatory system, heartbeat, and developing body, making it an independent organism and a very young member of the human species

Pro-choice activists, on the other hand, argue that the fetus in the womb is not a person, not a baby, just a “thing” that will eventually become a human being. However, in a disturbing new trend, more and more pro-choice activists are changing their tune and admitting that an unborn baby is a person, and that their pro-choice stand is based not on the belief that the baby is inhuman, but rather that killing the baby is okay.

This opinion was perhaps first expressed in Naomi Wolfe’s essay “Our Bodies, Our Souls: Rethinking Pro-Choice Rhetoric.” Her essay, which appeared in the October 16, 1995 issue of *The New Republic*, says:

“It was when I was four months pregnant, sick as a dog, and in the middle of an argument, that I realized I could no longer tolerate the fetus-is-nothing paradigm of the pro-choice movement. I was being interrogated by a conservative, and the subject of abortion rights came up. “You’re four months pregnant,” he said. “Are you going to tell me that’s not a baby you’re carrying?”

The accepted pro-choice response at such a moment in the conversation is to evade: to move as swiftly as possible to a discussion of “privacy” and “difficult personal decisions” and “choice.” Had I not been so nauseated and so cranky and so weighed down with the physical gravity of what was going on inside me, I might not have told what is the truth for me. “Of course it’s a baby,” I snapped. And went rashly on: “And if I found myself in circumstances in which I had to make the terrible decision to end this life, then that would be between myself and God.”

While many pro-life readers found this revelation shocking, some pro-choice activists criticized Wolfe. Having a fellow activist suddenly proclaim that yes, a fetus was a baby all along, was jarring to them. They saw her rhetoric as a threat to abortion rights. But despite the outcry from some feminists,



others have echoed her sentiments. For example, abortion supporter Judith Arcana recently said at a seminar:

“I performed abortions, I have had an abortion and I am in favor of women having abortions when we choose to do so. But we should never disregard the fact that being pregnant means there is a baby growing inside of a woman, a baby whose life is ended. We ought not to pretend this is not happening.”(1)

This feminist, herself an abortionist, readily admits that abortion kills a baby. She clearly feels that abortions are justified, even though they kill human beings. She has no problem with the belief that a woman has the right to murder her own children for personal reasons.

Julia Black echoed these sentiments in an interview in which she discussed “My Fetus” a pro-abortion movie that she directed. In an interview with ABC’s Tony Jones she said, bluntly:

“[the idea of] dismembering a baby and pulling it out in pieces... is obviously horrific. But at the same time, it is easy to get caught up in that emotion.”(2)

Julia Black implies that while abortion does indeed kill a baby by dismemberment, this act is nothing to be concerned about. The baby is expendable. What is important is the mother’s desire not to be pregnant. Those of us who are troubled by the thought of a baby being violently torn apart are overreacting and overemotional. We should “get with the program” and accept abortion. As shocking as this concept is, this opinion is being advanced more and more often in the pro-choice movement.

Is this callous attitude limited to only a few pro-choice advocates on the outer fringes? To answer that question, one need look no further than the words of Faye Wattleton, the former president of Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is the leading provider of abortions in America. Its legal arm is active in

fighting pro-life legislation on both the state and federal level. Planned Parenthood has successfully campaigned against parental notification bills, laws requiring a woman to be shown a sonogram before consenting to an abortion, and even bills requiring abortion clinics to be licensed and regulated. However, the woman who served as president of Planned Parenthood for years, has written the following in her book “How to Talk to Your Child About Sexuality:”

“There are many sperm cells in the [seminal] fluid. If one of them meets an egg cell inside the mother, new life can begin to grow... if one of your friends is pregnant, ask her to let your child feel the baby move... a baby grows in a special place inside the mother, called the uterus -- not in her stomach. In nine months, it is born...”(3)

Wattleton, who presided over the most active pro-abortion organization in the country, freely admits that the being developing in a woman’s womb is a baby -- not a mere clump of cells or subhuman organism. Yet despite this knowledge, she fought to keep abortion legal and to advance legislation to keep women uninformed of its true nature. Wattleton campaigned against laws that would have required an abortion provider to offer any information on the fetus to his/her patients. We can only imagine how vehemently she would have fought against a law requiring him to refer to the fetus as a “baby.” Yet in her book, she does just that. This quote from Wattleton, once one of the most prominent pro-choice activists in the country, shows that the pro-choice movement as a whole is well aware that what abortion really does, as well as increasingly unafraid to say it.

In 2003 another prominent pro-choice advocate, Kathleen McDonnell, wrote in her book:

“Abortion is in some sense an act of violence, and indisputably results in the termination of a life.”(4)

McDonnell continues to support legalized abortion despite this admission.



The trend of pro-choice activists admitting in public that abortion kills babies is not unique to America. In Australia, pro-choice author Leslie Cannold stated, in her book "The Abortion Myth: Feminism, Morality, and the Hard Choices Women Make":

"Any woman who has felt a baby stir inside her [and] any man who has seen the tiny heart pulsing on an ultrasound screen knows that abortion is about ending a life."(5)

The same book quotes a British author and pro-choice activist, Eileen Fairweather, saying:

"...It is possible for people to support a woman's right to choose whether they believe that abortion is killing or not."(6)

The message is clear -- abortion is permissible even if it's killing a child. These women believe that it is perfectly acceptable to kill babies and their mothers' wombs. One needn't even bother trying to hide the fact that abortion kills a baby. The public should just accept that abortion is fine - even knowing that it is murder.

Creator of "The Abortion Diaries" Penny Lane says, in an article in Salon Magazine:

"Most of the abortions in America are about convenience. People need to accept abortion for what it is: a valid part of the reproductive spectrum. I want it to be seen as normal; if 1.3 million women in this country have one every year, it's gotta be normal."(7)

Yet later on, in that same interview, she says:

"I remember feeling conflicted about the magic of being pregnant. I felt electricity running through my body. Not for a minute did I not think of it as a life. I knew it was a baby."(6)

In one breath, abortion is an acceptable, common occurrence that shouldn't bother anyone. In the next, it

is the murder of a baby.

One of the most prominent pro-choice activists of the current decade is Jennifer Baumgardner. She is the creator of the "I Had An Abortion" T-shirt and a campaign surrounding it. She frequently speaks at pro-choice functions and fundraisers. She describes what happened to one such event in her book "Abortion & Life":

"I had my own moment of truth during my fifth month of pregnancy in May 2004. A small moment, but it changed me. I was speaking to a group from Barnard's College Students for Choice when I referred to the object in one's uterus when one is pregnant as a "baby."

A nurse practitioner who was speaking after me interrupted "Fetus, you mean. You said baby, but it's a fetus."

"Oh, right," I stammered, blushing. "Oops." I felt foolish, caught in an ignorant mistake. Later, though, I realized that I had always thought of my pregnancy as carrying a baby- that was the word I wanted to use- and I was forcing myself to say "fetus" out of fear. ...I thought of other phrases that I forced myself to use too, like "so-called partial birth abortion" and "antichoice." These phrases suddenly struck me as legal jargon, words in the service of arguments that weren't themselves always meaningful. Suppressing language, policing ourselves so we don't slip up and say "baby" continues the split between our politics and our lives."(9)

Jennifer Baumgardner, one of the most active new faces in the pro-choice movement, is continuing a trend that is becoming more and more blatant in the movement and in our society as a whole. We have gone from engaging in the mental gymnastics of denying the obvious -- the humanity of the unborn child -to advocating murder outright, admitting that abortion kills babies and that's perfectly fine.



As if that wasn't enough, pro-choice leader Loretta Ross, who is the national coordinator of SisterSong: Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective, is also quoted in Baumgardner's book referring to the unborn child as a "baby." (10)

Are pro-choice activists so confident of their victory in making abortion legal that they have abandoned any pretense that abortion isn't murder? Have they finally come to the point where they are no longer attempting to deceive the public into believing unborn babies aren't people? And is our society so far gone that the public will accept the fact that yes, abortion kills babies, but that there's nothing wrong with that?

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# A PREEMPTIVE DEATH PENALTY

*by Nicholas Neal*

**D**uring a discussion of abortion, one of my classmates—a political progressive—stated that abortion was needed in order to reduce crime. I was shocked. My classmate was most likely opposed to capital punishment and yet she was using reasoning similar to that of death-penalty proponents. Unfortunately this was not the only time I have heard this argument in my discussions with others on abortion. It is more prevalent than I would have expected. This is truly sad, because not only is this argument statistically false, it is morally wrong--especially from an anti-death penalty perspective.

This claim that abortion reduces crime comes from the work of Stanford University Law Professor John Donohue and University of Chicago economics professor Steven J. Levitt, who together looked at the drop in crime during the period from the 1970s to the 1990s and claimed that this drop was due to legalized abortion. The crux of their argument is that “unwanted” children would be raised in more dysfunctional homes and thus be more likely to commit crimes as they grew older. The killing of these children through abortion prevented this. However, their argument was debunked in a study by John Lott, a senior research scientist with the University of Maryland Foundation, and Australian economist John Whitley. Contrary to the Donohue-Levitt theory that crime would drop among those born after *Roe v. Wade* because those people would be “wanted,” Lott and Whitley found that the crime rate among the post-*Roe* generation was the last to drop. In fact, national murder rates among people in their late teens skyrocketed in the mid-1980s and early 1990s. This does not mean that abortion is increasing crime, because correlation does not equal causation, but it certainly suggests abortion is not reducing crime.[1.]

Further, even if abortion did reduce crime, it does not

change the scientific fact that our offspring are human beings, nor does it change the moral principle that it is wrong to initiate homicide against another human being. We would never accept this argument as a justification for killing unwanted infants; why accept it when the infants are younger? In fact, this argument goes against the basic moral principle that you should not be punished—let alone be executed—for a crime that you have not yet committed. In the last issue of *Life Matters Journal*, I talked about how I had worked with liberal groups such as the ACLU to abolish the death penalty in Illinois. I closed that article with the reminder that there was still another death penalty being carried out in hospitals and abortion clinics around my state. I now see that I was not merely being metaphorical in characterizing abortion as a “death penalty.”

The moral problem behind the argument that abortion reduces crime should be especially blatant to death penalty opponents. This argument falls on the contradictory notion that we should kill people to stop killing people. That we’ll just move all the violence to a different group of people, who we judge will *grow up* to be criminals. It is bizarre that leftists are arguing for essentially a *preemptive* death penalty. Because of the inconsistent Left/Right paradigm that we live under today, however, we have the awkward situation where liberal death penalty opponents use the principles they so despise to support killing little “future criminals.” This is why we need the consistent life ethic in politics, so that we can truly abolish the death penalty, instead of just moving it to an earlier age group.

[1.]Randal K. O’Bannon and Laura Antkowiak, “Abortion Link to Crime Decrease Debunked” <<http://www.nrlc.org/news/2001/NRL06/randylaura.html>>



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on *personal beliefs*  
in faith or politics,

**we hold this truth:**

that *all* human beings  
are deserving of the *right to life*.



# SIDESTEPPING THE CULTURE WAR: THE FUTURE OF THE PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

*by Kelsey Hazzard*

“**W**e systematically vilified the Catholic Church and its “socially backward ideas” and picked on the Catholic hierarchy as the villain in opposing abortion. This theme was played endlessly. . . . And the media drum-fired all this into the American people, persuading them that anyone opposing permissive abortion must be under the influence of the Catholic hierarchy . . . An inference of this tactic was that there were no non-Catholic groups opposing abortion. The fact that other Christian as well as non-Christian religions were (and still are) monolithically opposed to abortion was constantly suppressed, along with pro-life atheists’ opinions.”

Dr. Bernard Nathanson (1926-2011), former abortionist and co-founder of the abortion lobbying group NARAL.<sup>1</sup>

For the past forty years, the battle over abortion has been situated within a broader culture war, pitting godless liberals against right-wing theocrats.<sup>2</sup> As the above quote by the late Dr. Nathanson illustrates, this understanding of the abortion issue has been deliberately encouraged by abortion advocates, who utilize religion as a distraction from the fundamental human rights claims at stake. Their approach has been remarkably successful. Pro-life victory depends upon the re-casting of abortion as more than a mere “religious issue.” Today’s pro-life students, who are more religiously diverse than previous generations, have a unique opportunity to challenge stereotypes, change the course of the debate, and make abortion unthinkable.

## **The Status Quo**

Although over 75% of Americans are at least nominally Christian,<sup>3</sup> the pro-life position is held only by a slim majority or plurality of Americans (depending on the poll used).<sup>4</sup> Since Dr. Nathanson’s day as a NARAL activist, the face of the pro-life movement has expanded somewhat: the media now acknowledges evangelicals in addition to Catholics. Despite this improvement, discussion of abortion is repeatedly relegated to the realm of a “religious issue.” To cite just one example of this phenomenon, during the national debate over abortion coverage in health care reform, media coverage consistently focused on opposition from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, even though



surveys showed that a large majority of Americans were opposed to government funding of abortion.<sup>5</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, religion is a major influence on Americans' view of abortion. In an attempt to quantify this influence, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life found that 26% of opinion on abortion is attributable to religion; education accounts for 23% and personal experience for 17%.<sup>6</sup> The influence of religion can be positive or negative, depending upon the teachings of a person's religious denomination, but tends to work in the pro-life direction.<sup>7</sup> Among atheists, who have been bombarded with the message that the pro-life position is only held by Catholics and evangelicals, no more than one in seven are pro-life.<sup>8</sup>

For the past forty years, it appears that the pro-life movement has been content to let the pro-abortion movement keep non-religious Americans. Many major pro-life organizations have a religious affiliation, and some require an affirmation of faith to join or to participate in volunteer activities. In addition, many pro-life organizations combine their pro-life stance with conservative religious positions on other "culture war" issues like gay marriage, even though those positions may not be shared by pro-life atheists and adherents of more liberal faiths.<sup>9</sup>

This would be a defensible strategy, if the pro-life movement were able to win a majority solely through appeal to conservative Christians. That is not the case. Instead, as a minority or plurality, we have struggled for decades to pass incremental legislation—and those hard-won victories have been made possible in large part by support, or at least acquiescence, from lukewarm pro-choicers.<sup>10</sup> A strong pro-life majority is needed if we are to fully restore the fundamental right to life for unborn children. Pro-life leaders have recognized this need, and in recent years the pro-life movement has made considerable progress in changing public opinion.<sup>11</sup> These gains have come largely from an unexpected source: Americans under 30, possibly the least religious generation in American history.

### Inevitable Change

The current generation of teens and young adults is the most pro-life generation since *Roe v. Wade*. Young Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 are "trending more anti-abortion"—fewer than one in four supports the standard pro-abortion-choice view, held by organizations such as Planned Parenthood and NARAL, that abortion should be legal "in any circumstance."<sup>12</sup> In the words of David Bereit, the director of the nationwide Christian prayer vigil organization 40 Days for Life, youth are not merely "the future of the pro-life movement—they are the pro-life movement."<sup>13</sup>

This young pro-life generation presents striking religious demographics that will stop four decades of pro-abortion propaganda in its tracks. A quarter of American young adults claim no religious adherence at all!<sup>14</sup> As Weekly Standard commentator Fred Barnes put it, "Millennials haven't grown more religious, politically conservative, or queasy about gay rights. Nor do they go out of their way to vote for pro-life candidates. But they tend to see abortion as a human rights violation. Thus their resistance to abortion is gradually increasing."<sup>15</sup>



photo courtesy of SecularProLife.org



This shift has already received some media attention. As these young people become the visible leaders of the pro-life movement, it will become impossible to ignore. The sooner that happens, the sooner we can put to rest the destructive myth that the struggle for right to life is solely the territory of conservative religious groups. This will allow the pro-life movement to make abortion unthinkable for *everyone*.<sup>16</sup>

### Conclusion

On the fair assumption that members of the pro-life generation prefer to donate to organizations that share their values, we can expect secular and single-issue pro-life groups to rise in prominence over the coming years, as pro-life teens and young adults enter the workforce and acquire disposable income. Of course, there will still be a place for established conservative religious organizations like the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Alliance Defense Fund, and the Family Research Council, among others. How these established groups react to the influx of less religious pro-life advocates may be the difference between victory and defeat for the pro-life movement.

Conservative Christian pro-lifers can view their non-Christian counterparts in two possible ways: as a liability, or as an asset. The first option would cause the pro-life movement to fracture, and some non-religious pro-lifers would reduce or cease their activism out of simple frustration with the establishment. But happily, the positive reception given to Secular Pro-Life and similar organizations suggests that pro-life atheists and religious minorities are instead viewed as an asset.

Younger, less religious pro-lifers not only bring their enthusiasm to the table: they also provide a strong defense against pro-abortion groups' strategic stereotyping of pro-lifers as old, white, male, and Catholic. Older, more religious pro-lifers provide a wealth of knowledge, of the kind that can only be acquired through years of experience in activism. Together, in cooperation across religious and generational lines, the pro-life movement will finally end the national tragedy of abortion.

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[8] *Id.*

[9] Only 42% of the general American population supports same-sex marriage, but support is high among Jews (76%), atheists and agnostics (82%), and the "unaffiliated" (62%). The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Support for Same-Sex Marriage Edges Upward* (2010), available at <http://pewforum.org/Gay-Marriage-and-Homosexuality/Support-For-Same-Sex-Marriage-Edges-Upward.aspx>. The same report shows that a generational divide is at play, with 53% of Millennials supporting same-sex marriage. Since a majority of Millennials are pro-life (as discussed in more detail below), there is evidently a fair amount of overlap, with some young adults supporting both same-sex marriage and the right to life.

[10] For instance, 86% of self-identified pro-choicers break with the abortion lobby in supporting informed consent; 60% support a 24-hour waiting period before a woman can obtain an abortion, and 60% support requiring parental consent for minors seeking abortions. Lydia Saad, *Plenty of Common Ground Found in Abortion Debate* (2011), available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/148880/Plenty-Common-Ground-Found-Abortion-Debate.aspx>.

[11] See Saad, *supra* note 4 (showing dramatic increase in pro-life opinion since 1995, when only one third of Americans were pro-life).

[12] Lydia Saad, *Generational Differences on Abortion Narrow* (2010), available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/126581/Generational-Differences-Abortion-Narrow.aspx>. By contrast, in the early 1990s, 36% of Americans between 18 and 29 supported abortion in all cases.

[13] *The Tide is Turning: Students for Life of America* (2011), 1:39, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjq2LK7Wqzw>.

[14] The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Religion Among the Millennials* (2010) ("Fully one-in-four adults under age 30 (25%) are unaffiliated, describing their religion as 'atheist,' 'agnostic' or 'nothing in particular.'"), available at <http://pewforum.org/Age/Religion-Among-the-Millennials.aspx>.

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# NO AGGRESSION, NO HOMICIDE: BEING LIBERTARIAN & CONSISTENT LIFE

*by Nicholas Neal*

“T he consistent right-to-life position should be to protect the unborn and oppose abortion, to reject the death penalty, and to firmly oppose our foreign policy that promotes an empire requiring aggressive wars that involve thousands of innocent people being killed. We would all be better off for it, and a society dedicated to peace, human life, and prosperity would more likely be achieved.” -- Ron Paul, *Liberty Defined*

The above quotation--the closest that any candidate of a major party has come to endorsing a consistent life ethic--was uttered by one of the standard bearers of libertarianism in American politics. Is there some overlapping relationship between the philosophy of libertarianism and the philosophy of the consistent life ethic, two philosophies that are both considered outside the standard American political camps? I will argue that there is. In fact, the overlap between the libertarian principle of non-aggression and the consistent life ethic principle of non-homicide is generally what makes up my own political worldview.

I probably started down the path of libertarianism when discussions of a national ID card began to take place on the political scene. I was already a consistent life ethicist, but was inclined to accept Mary Meehan's version of the consistent life ethic, which focuses mainly on opposition to legalized homicide, rather than Joseph Cardinal Bernadin's version, which includes concerns not only about legalized homicide but also about social conditions. What I

thought about the right to life was (and still is) pretty firm, but I had not yet formed a firm view on the right to liberty and property. I knew I was firmly against the national ID card, yet, to my surprise, many “small-government” conservatives seemed sympathetic toward it. They claimed it would help solve the problem of illegal immigration. It was from that experience that I gained a healthy distrust of the state which led me to study libertarianism. I looked into Ron Paul's career and saw that he was the only candidate of any major party that was anti-abortion, anti-war, anti-death penalty and anti-euthanasia (I should note that this is not an official endorsement of Ron Paul by Life Matters Journal, it is merely how I personally found a connection between the consistent life ethic and libertarianism). It was through studying Ron Paul that I stumbled upon Lew Rockwell's blog, which had several articles that were sympathetic to the consistent life ethic. Finally, it was in those articles and essays that I found out what the heart of libertarianism was.



Libertarianism is *not*, as many have claimed, being fiscally conservative and socially liberal. There are both pro-life and pro-choice libertarians: it is a very divisive issue among them. Libertarianism is based on the principle of non-aggression, which prohibits the initiation of violence, theft, or fraud against other human beings. This is why libertarians have such a negative view of the state, because when it jails people for non-violent activity, takes money from people by threat of force, and kills foreigners, it commits aggression. While libertarians do not support making laws against non-violent activity such as drug use, we do support laws against violent activity. Even anarcho-capitalists believe in laws against violence (though they want the enforcement of said laws to be paid for voluntarily). This is why legal protection for the unborn is in line with libertarian principles: it is merely a prohibition on violence.

libertarians should be opposed to. All the forms of legalized homicide that our society has endorsed are a threat to our natural rights. This is where libertarianism and the consistent life ethic overlap. Libertarianism opposes the violence of the state, and the consistent life ethic opposes the violence of legalized homicide. These are both anti-violence philosophies. While libertarians probably cannot agree with all of Joseph Cardinal Bernadin's version of the consistent life ethic, they can agree with Mary Meehan's version, which focuses on the core of the consistent life ethic, opposition to legalized homicide. I am not saying that these two groups outside the political mainstream will agree on everything. However, I have no problem calling myself both a libertarian and a consistent life ethicist, because I dream of a society in which both legalized aggression and legalized homicide are a thing of the past.

However, it is not just the homicide of abortion that



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# DIVIDE ISSUES, NOT THE MOVEMENT: A REFLECTION ON BEING GLBT & PRO-LIFE

*by Anne Sauber Kuntz*

**T**ake a moment and think of one of your favorite pro-lifers. Maybe it's an internationally recognized leader in the movement; maybe it's your friend or relative. Maybe this person saved you from abortion, or saved your child from abortion, or provided an example of strength at a time when you desperately needed one. Think of someone whose influence on your life has been positive and lasting. Think of someone whose very existence makes you thankful or inspired.

Now imagine that this person has something to tell you. Maybe you're being told personally, or maybe you're reading it on the Internet along with thousands of others. Maybe this news will be a shock, or maybe it will be something you've wondered about for a long time. Either way, this person – this influential pro-lifer who has changed your life for the better – has something to say.

He's gay.

She's a lesbian.

He's bisexual.

She's transgender.

This revelation could make you overjoyed and eager to offer congratulations on coming out. Or it could make you sad, devastated, upset, or even angry. People have different views and beliefs about sexuality and gender. Whatever you would feel about the

news, however, one thing would not change: it would not undo the help, strength, and inspiration that this person gave you.

He still talked you out of getting an abortion, and your child is still a four-year-old drinking juice at the kitchen table.

She still told your birth mother she would adopt you, and you're still alive.

He is still the person who told you that you could find healing and forgiveness after your abortions and the reason why you have gone three years without thinking about how to kill yourself.

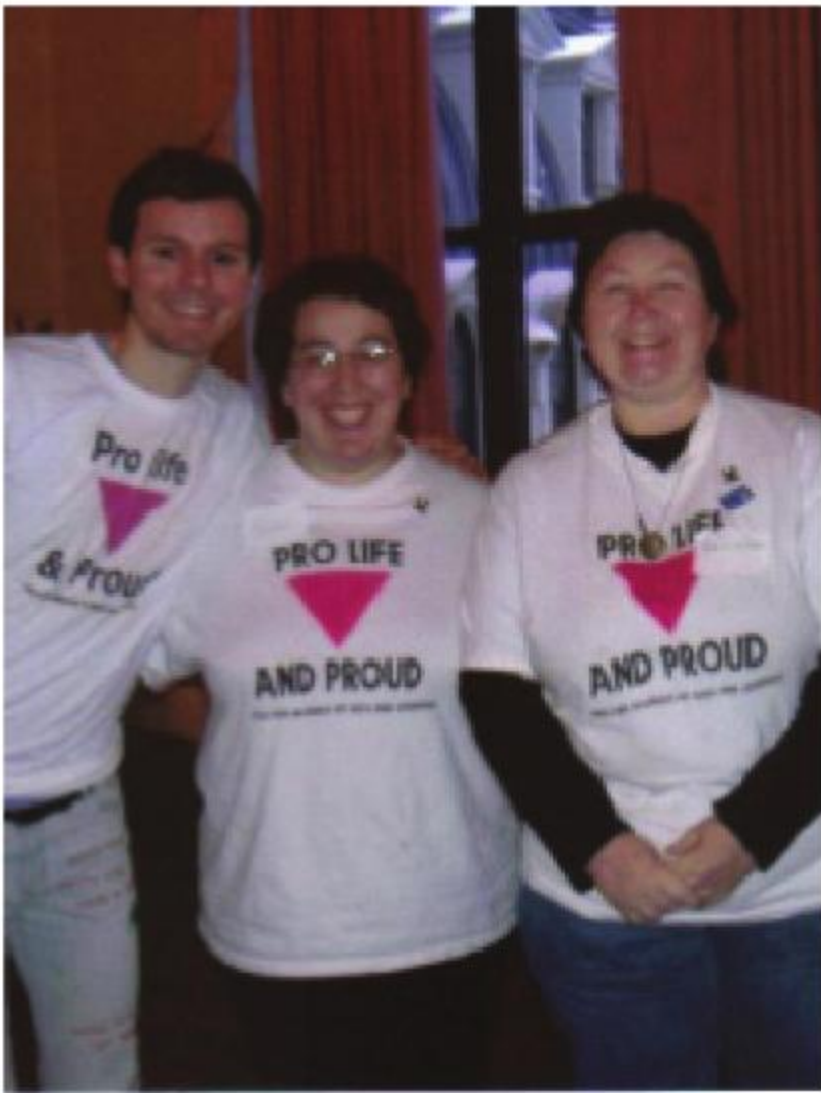
She still showed you, when you were a teenager, that it was possible to be a kind, funny, compassionate, and “cool” pro-lifer, even though all your other friends told you pro-lifers were religious weirdoes who hated sex, hated women, and stopped caring about babies once they were born.

Every pro-life person who makes a positive difference in the world makes that difference, no matter who they are. So why are so many parts of the movement so hostile to GLBT pro-lifers?

I wish I didn't speak from personal experience about this topic, but I do. Although I was aware as a teenager that some of my fellow pro-lifers had moral objections to homosexuality, bisexuality, and sexual reassignment surgery, I knew that this



photo courtesy of PLAGAL.org



difference between us didn't make them mean people or bad people. After all, I spent kindergarten through twelfth grade at a Catholic school, where we talked in religion class about the importance of human life and the computer lab had a poster about praying the rosary to end abortion. By and large, the pro-lifers who disagreed with me about GLBT issues were very nice people. They didn't stop speaking to me when I came out as bisexual – in front of the entire class, no less – and whenever they talked about how they didn't share my opinions, they were always respectful. You got the feeling that if they ever accidentally made someone feel unwanted or like a lesser human being, they would feel just horrible. And they would certainly never make someone feel that way on purpose.

I went to college at a GLBT-friendly school that turned out to be very unfriendly toward pro-lifers, so when I went to law school I chose to attend a Catholic one that had both a pro-life group and a GLBT group. I regret to say that I didn't spend very much time with either. Law school was hard, and I was afraid that if I spent much time around the other law students,

they would find out just how hard it was for me and I would look like an idiot. I was bullied as a kid and I've had depression for over half my life, so I'm very sensitive to the risks of being vulnerable. I did want to get more involved in the pro-life movement, though, so I turned to the Internet. I wasn't out to be a visible bisexual pro-lifer, or convince anyone that there's nothing wrong with being bisexual. I was there to help save babies.

I got familiar with the popular sites and blogs and started reading them on a daily basis. It wasn't long, however, before I discovered that some of them had material that, as a lawyer might put it, was "beyond the scope." The stated purpose of these sites was to post pro-life news or discuss topics related to abortion. So why were people using them to denounce same-sex marriage, or voice objections to gay couples adopting, or say that being transgender was freakish? Weren't those subjects that belonged on a different site? What perhaps bothered me the most was how some sites and bloggers categorically stated, over and over again, that GLBT people were pro-choice and didn't respect life. I knew that wasn't true, so, without trying to change people's opinions, I added a comment saying that I was a bisexual pro-lifer.

Saying it once didn't stop people from making the untrue generalization. I had to keep doing it over and over again, every time another "GLBT = pro-choice" post appeared, before I had any evidence that someone was noticing my comments. All I could think of was some gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender kid looking to get into the pro-life movement, finding these posts, and concluding that they were unwanted. Some of the people who responded to my comments were respectful, like the people I knew back in high school. Others expressed doubts that I was really pro-life or started quoting Bible verses. One thing that really struck me was that a lot of people in the second group didn't know what "bisexual" meant, though they thought that they did. They would say things that made it clear they believed I was having sex with both



men and women. This was not even close to the truth. I fell in love with a straight girl in high school, got over the heartbreak, and fell in love with my boyfriend; we've been crazy about each other ever since.

In the end, I had to stop visiting some of these sites. A lot of the people there were great, but there were too many who were outwardly hostile. It wasn't enough for them to agree to disagree and get back to helping babies; they wanted to keep stating things that I knew were false, such as that GLBT people were out to defy God or were incapable of committed relationships. Many of them were rude, defamatory, insulting, and unkind. The entire experience taught me something very important that I want other pro-lifers to realize: when pro-life groups criticize GLBT people, GLBT people don't want to associate with them. And seeing as human lives are at stake, I really don't think the pro-life movement can afford to alienate people.

While so many pro-lifers have been defining the movement as categorically anti-GLBT, pro-choicers have been defining their movement as categorically pro-GLBT. They're being friendly and welcoming towards GLBT people, especially young people, and advocating the idea that they're the ones who really care. If you're a junior in high school, who are you going to want to associate with: the pro-choicers who smile at you or the pro-lifers who scowl at you? Who are you going to believe?

I believe that pro-lifers should be able to object to various sexual orientations. Their objections should be personal opinions that belong to another movement, however, rather than opinions incorporated into the pro-life movement. The fact that a pro-lifer thinks homosexuality is a sin should be as separate from the pro-life movement as the fact that this same pro-lifer thinks cats make better pets than dogs. People are pro-life for various reasons. Not everyone who opposes abortion does so because of Judeo-Christian teachings, and characterizing the pro-life

movement as a movement that also believes homosexuality is a sin is an immense disservice to the diversity of pro-life opinion.

Polls show that American society as a whole is becoming both more secular and more pro-life. The best thing the pro-life movement has going for it is the scientific fact that a new, unique human life is created at conception. This is true whether you believe the Angel Moroni visited Joseph Smith, the Angel Gabriel visited Mohammed, or no angel visited anybody because you believe angels are a total fiction. I have a feeling that over time there will be more and more non-religious pro-lifers, as well as more religious ones who belong to denominations that don't view GLBT people as having inherently sinful orientations. Trying to cram pro-lifers into one mold is a waste of time, and alienating different types of pro-lifers is harmful not only to the movement, but to the children we're trying to save. People may not get along and remain pro-life, but they won't remain united as a movement. Over the last few years, I've run across several people saying that if GLBT pro-lifers *really* cared about saving babies, they would work through mainstream pro-life organizations and just learn to deal with being characterized as sinners, deviants, perverts, and corrupters of youth. This is absurd. Being part of the





pro-life movement should be a welcoming experience, not some sort of extended hazing ritual.

What has really astounded me is the level of dehumanization I've seen some pro-lifers show towards GLBT people. They seem to be approaching the subject as a purely ideological one instead of something that involves real people, real feelings, real love, and real pain. Indeed, as we've seen too many times over the last couple of years, a lack of compassion towards GLBT people too often leads to real suicide. Why do some people find it acceptable to rejoice in the life of a baby, only to call that baby a pervert, a freak, or worse when he grows up to be gay? The established, religious part of the pro-life movement has been noticeably quiet about the suicides of GLBT teenagers, and many GLBT people have noticed. I can't count the number of times I've run across some variation of the comment, "If pro-lifers are so pro-life, where is the outcry over gay kids killing themselves?"

Silence sends a message. By not acknowledging the deaths of GLBT children and the bullying that drove them to despair, pro-lifers, even those who have never said an unkind word to anyone, are sending the message that these deaths are just not quite as important as others. There is a pro-life graphic online that shows a picture of an unborn baby and says, "Pretend I'm a tree and save me." Maybe we need one that shows a teenager in a rainbow-striped t-shirt that says, "Pretend I'm a fetus and save me." In light of all the cruelty and mean-spiritedness I've seen from alleged Christians, we could do with one that shows the same teenager and says, "Pretend Jesus is here and welcome me."

For Christians, Jesus is always here, in every human being. It's past time some of them started acting on this belief. This isn't about asking anyone to change his or her beliefs on sexuality; it's about embracing every pro-lifer who fights for the cause, acknowledging that the movement doesn't have a universal

opinion about sexuality, and setting aside differences to save lives. If you want to work against same-sex marriage or GLBT rights, do it through an organization that exists for that purpose. If you want to save babies, come sit by me and let's get back to work.

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# RESPECT FOR LIFE: THE CONSISTENT LIFE ETHIC IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

*by Julia Smucker*

Life issues, in any form, have typically proven divisively controversial in general public discourse, and they have been no less so among Catholics, in particular. A more all-encompassing respect for life, which has been articulated in recent decades as a “consistent life ethic,” is therefore both a telling indicator of intra-church polemics (particularly in terms of its reception) and a much-needed third way between them. While advocacy of the consistent ethic of life can be found among a diverse and growing group of scholars and activists committed to the connections among peace and life issues,<sup>1</sup> its promulgation in the Catholic world has been most commonly associated with Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, who famously advocated the idea in the 1980s using the metaphor of a “seamless garment” (a Biblical reference to the robe worn by Christ, for which Roman soldiers gambled at the crucifixion). Despite a deeply entrenched tendency to separate certain issues that was revealed by the predictably split reaction of some of Bernardin’s fellow bishops,<sup>2</sup> this more holistic ethic is in fact well grounded in the social tradition of the Catholic Church.

Bernardin’s eloquent call to consistency, then, was not an entirely new idea; rather, his innovation was to systematize the connections that had been at least implicitly present in Catholic social teaching since its modern origins. Beginning with Leo XIII in the late 19th century, the popes have put forth systematic articulations of church teaching on social issues. In papal documents on a wide range of subjects, the

values from which the consistent life ethic arises are undeniably present, even if the consistent life ethic as such has not been systematically explicated. The complementary issues examined in the documents are connected, at times explicitly, by a principled respect for the intrinsic and God-given dignity of all human life.

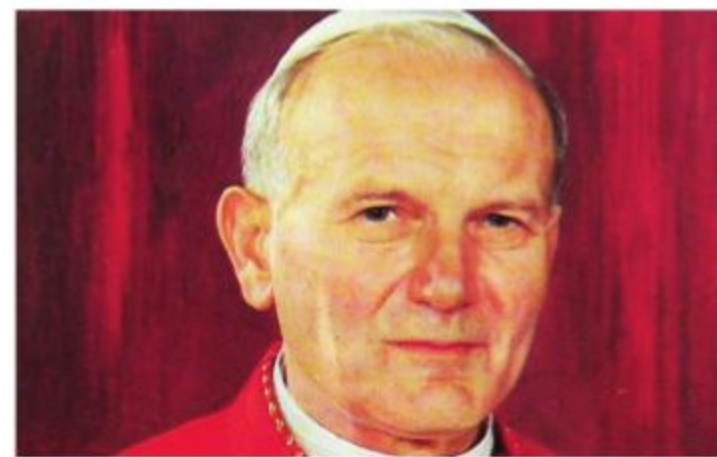
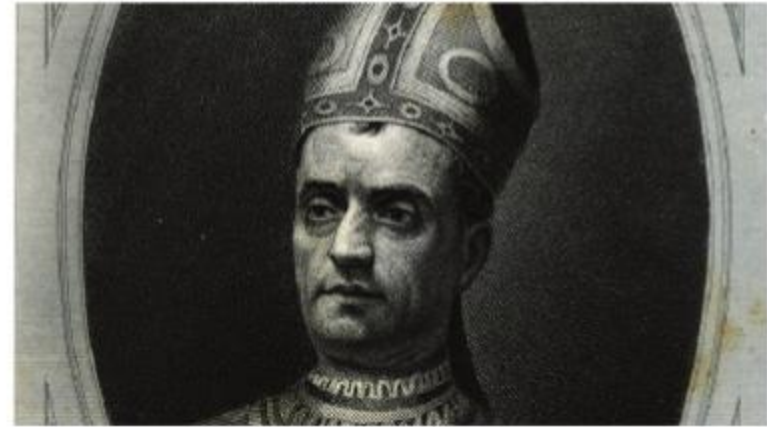
The concept of human dignity is a strong theme throughout the social documents of the Catholic Church, and it is this theme that serves as a starting point for the Church’s commitment to the protection of life. The *universal* dignity of all human persons and peoples is, in its broadest sense, the fundamental principle that underlies everything the church teaching has to say about human lives and their value. As soon as one begins to unpack this principle, its connections to a broad range of specific life issues are immediately apparent. This is evident, for example, in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, in which Pope John XXIII notes the impossibility of any natural superiority of some people over others, “since all enjoy an equal natural dignity.” He then immediately applies this statement on an international scale, concluding “that countries too do not differ at all from one another in the dignity which they derive from nature.”<sup>3</sup> Three decades later, John Paul II writes in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* of “a human dignity common to all,” which leads him to emphasize dialogical rather than polemical approaches to conflict, and to call peace and prosperity “goods which belong to the whole human race.”<sup>4</sup> The explicit foundation of John Paul’s



recognition of universal dignity here is the very traditional belief in the *imago Dei*, the belief “that every individual... bears the image of God and therefore deserves respect.”<sup>5</sup> This belief also served as a basis for the theological anthropology of the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*.<sup>6</sup> As we will continue to see, the universality of human dignity leads to a wide-ranging respect for life in the social documents.

In paradox with this universality is a certain particularity of emphasis: while Catholic social teaching consistently affirms that all human beings bear equal dignity as creatures made in the image of God, it also manifests a specific concern for those whose dignity is in danger of being violated. Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, widely considered the foundation of Catholic social teaching, focused specifically on the rights of workers. Leo portrayed the right to a living wage as not only a justice issue but also a life issue by naming the exploitation of workers through the imposition of inhumane conditions as a form of violence.<sup>7</sup> Leo’s influence is clearly reflected in the writings of John Paul II during his papacy a century later, in which he similarly connected the living wage to basic principles regarding respect for life, pointing to just wages and working conditions as both the measurement of a just system and the best means of preventing violent uprising,<sup>8</sup> as well as making the logically obvious but sometimes omitted inference that the responsibility to earn a living presupposes the right to do so.<sup>9</sup> John Paul also echoed Leo’s emphasis on workers’ rights and the dignity of work, which has its source in the dignity of the person.<sup>10</sup>

Paul VI also built on the principle of the dignity of workers, applying the principle to a specific social issue by calling on Christians in all countries to recognize the humanity of those who migrate in order to find work. Such recognition is particularly important considering that such people are often put at a disadvantage by immigration policies.<sup>11</sup> This call is a natural result of what he refers to as the “duty of solidarity” with all who suffer from any form of impoverishment, a duty he applies to individuals as



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well as nations.<sup>12</sup> The moral duty of individuals and governments to support the poor is well-founded in the Catholic social tradition from Leo XIII to Vatican II and beyond.<sup>13</sup> Far from being tangential to the protection of life, the tradition’s discussion of responsibility toward the economically disadvantaged points toward a broadly holistic life ethic.

It is because such an ethic is rooted in universal human dignity that the social documents are able to articulate a broad, robust understanding of “the right to life.” In a key development of this concept, John XXIII broadens it well beyond a right simply to remain alive to include a right to the necessary means for living a *dignified* life.<sup>14</sup> In the same way, John Paul II makes it clear that one’s right to life extends through the entirety of one’s natural lifespan and includes the rights to develop in the womb and be born, to grow up in a healthy environment, to develop one’s abilities through education, and to earn a living to support oneself and one’s family. While he is clearly speaking here of the rights of the



individual, he immediately connects these rights to the need to be honored within socio-political systems in view of the common good. The common good “is not simply the sum total of particular interests; rather it involves an assessment and integration of those interests on the basis of a balanced hierarchy of values; ultimately it demands a correct understanding of the dignity and the rights of the person.”<sup>15</sup> Thus a pro-life perspective, in its fullest sense, is inseparable from a concern for social justice.

The current pope, Benedict XVI, affirms “the strong links between life ethics and social ethics”<sup>16</sup> in *Caritas in Veritate*, in which he explicitly draws on various sources within the social tradition marked out by his predecessors. He eventually expands these links to include ecological concerns: while continuing to affirm the uniqueness of human dignity, he also points out the interdependence of human life and the entire created order: “Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others.”<sup>17</sup> This development of church teaching on life issues further underscores their interrelatedness.

When dealing with such a complex web of inter-related issues, attempts to achieve consensus within magisterial bodies can sometimes reveal the unfortunate artificial divisions that often separate among these issues. In view of this, however, the well-rounded articulation of reverence for life in the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) is all the more impressive. Starting from the biblically grounded assertion that “the love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor,”<sup>18</sup> the Council boldly notes that there are no exceptions to the forms in which one’s neighbor can appear: a neighbor can be “an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord: ‘As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my

brethren, you did it for me’ (Matt. 25:40).” In a more negatively but equally consistent statement, they condemn a broad range of personal and systemic forms of violence:

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on the body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.<sup>19</sup>

Viewed in its broader context, this statement emphasizes all the more strongly the Council’s reaffirmation of the breadth of every person’s right to life, which includes the right to a life worthy of one’s intrinsic human dignity in service of the common good.<sup>20</sup>

A similarly broad perspective was articulated by the 1971 Synod of Bishops convened by Paul VI as an implementation of Vatican II’s call for increased collegiality.<sup>21</sup> This synod produced the document *Justice in the World*, which articulated a view of large-scale justice as integral to the message and calling of the Gospel. Within a context of describing various dimensions of social injustice, the synod names opposition to both abortion and war as “significant forms of defending the right to life.”<sup>22</sup> While it is evident from the statement’s immediate context as well as from elsewhere in the Catholic social tradition, that a respect for life grounded



in a recognition of human dignity is significantly broader than these two particular issues, these issues have often received a great deal of attention, both in the social documents and in wider public discourse. Given these issues tendencies to elicit polemics, the connection drawn between them by the 1971 synod was a significant statement. Such polemics unfortunately become more readily apparent in the U.S. bishops' extensive treatment of peace and life issues, however. This may point to a particular set of pastoral concerns that need to be addressed among American Catholics, not the least of which is this very polarization between different groups concerned with defending life.

One additional concern that is apparently on the bishops' minds is how to address with pastoral sensitivity those members of the Catholic Church who are also members of the armed forces, or whose employment is otherwise dependent on the nation's military apparatus, while also attempting to move the church's teaching on peace toward a more consistent and prophetic call. For this reason, the U.S. bishops' 1983 letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, is remarkably nuanced in many places, with the validation of Catholic members of the military appearing almost as a pastoral disclaimer within a message advocating nonviolence as normative. Yet when they rightly attempt to draw connections among the various phenomena that endanger life, particularly war and abortion, as part of the application of this basic nonviolent principle, they are clearly struggling for a balanced perspective. It is at this point that the document becomes most contradictory, noting in certain places how both war and abortion (among other forms of violence) can desensitize society to the dignity of human life, but then disconnecting the issues by yielding to the perennial temptation to debate which is worse.<sup>23</sup>

This discontinuity, which likely reflects some division among the bishops on these issues, is made all the more apparent by the statement that immediately precedes the section in which they deal with abortion: an admonition to pacifists not to "insist on

conclusions which may be legitimate options but cannot be made obligatory on the basis of actual Church teaching."<sup>24</sup> Granted, they are aiming here for a middle ground between absolute pacifism and a more hawkish extreme, but this particular nuance unfortunately leads them into inconsistency in the defense of life. Calling for a consistency that they themselves are missing, the bishops "plead with all who would work to end the scourge of war to begin by defending life at its most defenseless, the life of the unborn."<sup>25</sup> While such a connection between life issues is commendable, it would be a much stronger statement if juxtaposed with a plea in the other direction, for those who would defend unborn life to also concern themselves with the promotion of peace.<sup>26</sup>

Although these issues, as previously noted, have not been systematically connected within the Catholic social documents, there is nevertheless a precedent for drawing such connections. It is worth noting that abortion and arms races are both referred to as "scandals," the former by John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus*<sup>27</sup> and the latter by Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*.<sup>28</sup> Lest it be thought that such statements reflect differing personal obsessions of these popes, it may also be recalled that Paul VI devoted an entire separate encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, primarily to reproductive issues and that John Paul II situated the "scandal of abortion" in a broader social context by demonstrating clear connections between reverence for life and social justice.

As we have seen, John Paul articulates the "right to life" in its broadest sense, applying it both to the entire natural span of life and to "the right to live ... in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person."<sup>29</sup> In speaking of the tragically manifold ways in which this right is violated, he makes clear that he is "referring not only to the scandal of abortion," but also to the loss, even in democracies, of "the ability to make decisions aimed at the common good."<sup>30</sup> Even when focusing on abortion in particular, John Paul does not speak about it in a vacuum,



but rather contextualizes it ecologically and economically. Flowing out of concerns about the arrogant and short-sighted anthropology that results in environmental destruction, John Paul’s discussion of procreation and the family is grounded in the need for what he terms “an authentic ‘human ecology.’” He identifies as a problem a mechanized and monetized (that is, non-ecological) conception of human individuals and societies, in which children may be perceived as mere market commodities. In this way, his critique of the widespread recourse to abortion flows into an equally strong critique of the “‘idolatry’ of the market.”<sup>31</sup>

Paul VI, for his part, is perhaps most infamously known for his controversial stance on artificial birth control in *Humanae Vitae*. It is unfortunate that this controversy has largely overshadowed his strongly prophetic statements on the duty to the poor that exists on the part of individuals and nations. Speaking of this duty in terms of international justice and peace leads him to pronounce a ringing denunciation of the wastefulness of militarism:

When so many people are hungry, when so many families suffer from destitution, when so many remain steeped in ignorance, when so many schools, hospitals, and homes worthy of the name remain to be built, all public or private squandering of wealth, all expenditure prompted by motives of national or personal ostentation, every exhausting armaments race, becomes an intolerable scandal. We are conscious of our duty to denounce it. Would that those in authority listened to our words before it is too late!<sup>32</sup>

The buildup of armaments, then, is a twofold threat to life, both because of armaments’ use and because of expenditure on armaments that results in failure to meet genuine human needs. In response, Paul proposes a concrete twofold solution involving “world-wide collaboration” to reallocate funding being spent on arms to the serve the world’s poor.<sup>33</sup>

This suggestion is one of many examples of the

movement toward a stronger endorsement of non-violence throughout Catholic social teaching. This teaching has undergone a subtle yet significant shift throughout the 20th century from a prioritization of just war doctrine toward a more holistic integration of justice and peace.<sup>34</sup> To describe this development as a shift means that it has not entailed a discontinuous break from previous teachings. Properly understood, even the Augustinian just war tradition was never meant to be a *means* of justifying war (let alone a *carte blanche*), but rather a set of *conditions* imposed on any recourse to violence in order to limit its inevitably harmful effects. At the same time, the ease and frequency with which the just war tradition has been misappropriated through the former interpretation has given rise to the need to rearticulate it in a way that narrows the concessions made to violence. In light of this need, the progress that the magisterial teaching has made in narrowing the allowances for armed conflict (and consequently legitimating, even if not necessitating, a pacifist position) is not negligible. Yet this progress still leaves considerable room for development of Catholic doctrine toward a more consistent refutation of violence, which, as John Paul II insightfully noted,



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“always needs to justify itself through deceit, and to appear, however falsely, to be defending a right or responding to a threat posed by others.”<sup>35</sup>

The occasional gap in consistency is at times particularly pronounced when the magisterial stance toward armed violence, which can be seen as either nuanced or compromised (or perhaps both), is juxtaposed with the more unequivocal stance taken regarding issues related to procreation. Still, the issues here are more complex than is often appreciated by Catholics of all political persuasions. While the popes and bishops do tend to display a noticeably more uncompromising attitude toward abortion than other forms of violence,<sup>36</sup> they also tend, for the most part, to address it in relation to other social issues rather than in the decontextualized manner in which the subject is too often approached in the political sphere. We have seen a strong example of this in John Paul II’s broadly defined pro-life position articulated in *Centesimus Annus*.<sup>37</sup> His successor Benedict XVI, in *Caritas in Veritate*, attempts to maintain the same breadth<sup>38</sup> while also confronting the difficult problem of overpopulation – a challenge that had previously been taken up at Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes*, with very similar conclusions. Population growth poses an unshakable dilemma for the consistent life ethic and perhaps its greatest challenge, inasmuch as the defense of life in this context contributes to an unsustainable rise in the human population that in turn becomes a new threat to life. Both Benedict and the Council recognize that this is problematic; the closest either manages to come to a proposed solution is to place responsibility for procreative decisions in the hands of parents rather than the state.<sup>39</sup> There is indeed no clear and easy answer to the population dilemma, but Catholic social teaching affirms that no solution that regards any category of human life as inherently expendable can be morally permissible.

The refusal to allow for the expendability of any human life, which is axiomatic for the consistent life ethic, ultimately ties back in Catholic social teaching to *its* axiom of the intrinsic *dignity* of all human

life as created in the image of God. The primacy of human dignity within church teachings, as we have seen, leads to a broadened view of what it means to respect life, necessarily encompassing the right of all human beings to live according to that dignity. Through this fundamental principle, the Catholic tradition offers a relatively balanced perspective that is unfortunately lacking in much of popular discourse, both among Catholics and in the broader civil sphere. The current challenge to the application of consistent life principles, particularly in the United States, is therefore the artificial compartmentalization of life-related “issues,” which are too often split along the lines of highly politicized ideologies.<sup>40</sup> What is needed in order to transcend such polemics is an increase in voices, at both grassroots and magisterial levels, capable of prophesying from the center. Catholic social teaching offers a clear precedent for such a prophetic stance. Perhaps the next step should be a more systematic articulation of the life-affirming principles contained in the social tradition, with a view to furthering the church’s commitment to opposing all types of violence – or, more positively stated, to respecting the fundamental dignity of human life in all circumstances.

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*Julia Smucker is an MA student at Saint John’s School of Theology in Collegeville, Minnesota. She is honored to count herself among a small but growing number of Mennonite Catholics, and to have been dubbed the Anti-Dichotomy Queen.*

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- [11] *Populorum Progressio*, 68-70; *Octogesima Adveniens*, 17.
- [12] *Populorum Progressio*, 45-49.
- [13] See especially *Rerum Novarum* 23-24, *Pacem in Terris* 56, *Gaudium et Spes* 88.
- [14] *Pacem in Terris*, 11.
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- [16] *Caritas in Veritate*, 15.
- [17] *Ibid*, 51.
- [18] *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.
- [19] *Ibid*, 27.
- [20] *Ibid*, 26.
- [21] From the introduction to “Justice in the World”, in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 304.
- [22] “Justice in the World” in O’Brien and Shannon, 309.
- [23] *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*, 284-289.
- [24] *Ibid*, 283.
- [25] *Ibid*, 289.
- [26] A more consistent connection, building on *The Challenge of Peace* six months after its publication, can be found in a lecture given by Bernardin at Fordham University, published in *Consistent Ethic of Life: Joseph Cardinal Bernardin*, ed. Thomas Feuchtman et al. (Lanham, Maryland: Sheed and Ward, 1998), in which he stated, “The principle which structures both cases, war and abortion, needs to be upheld in both places. It cannot be successfully sustained on one count and simultaneously eroded in a similar situation,” 5.
- [27] *Centesimus Annus*, 47.
- [28] *Populorum Progressio*, 53.
- [29] *Centesimus Annus*, 47.
- [30] *Ibid*.
- [31] *Ibid*, 37-40.
- [32] *Populorum Progressio*, 53.
- [33] *Ibid*, 51-55.
- [34] For an overview of the approach taken to armed conflict (both state-sponsored and revolutionary) in the Catholic social documents, see *Pacem in Terris* 109-119, 161-162; *Gaudium et Spes* 75-85; *Populorum Progressio* 48-65; *Octogesima Adveniens* 3; *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 37; *Centesimus Annus* 14, 18, 23-25.
- [35] *Centesimus Annus*, 23.
- [36] As previously noted, this juxtaposition comes out most strongly in the U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, 280-289.
- [37] *Centesimus Annus*, 39, 47.
- [38] The connections among life issues in *Caritas in Veritate* are most explicit in 15, 28 and 51.
- [39] *Gaudium et Spes*, 87; *Caritas in Veritate*, 44.
- [40] Bernardin’s approach to the consistent life ethic in fact began with the connection between abortion and war, but “quickly expanded...to include many issues from all of life.” (Kenneth R. Overburg, S.J., “A Consistent Ethic of Life,” <http://www.american-catholic.org/Newsletters/CU/ac0798.asp>.)



# QUAKERS NEED A PRO-LIFE PEACE TESTIMONY

*by Rachel MacNair, PhD*



**T**he Religious Society of Friends, more commonly known as the Quakers, was founded in the mid-1600s in England during the religious tumult that brought about a flowering of dissenting views. When a famous early convert, William Penn, received an American colony and named it Pennsylvania, Quakers flocked there for a “Holy Experiment” that lasted several decades before collapsing under the weight of non-Quaker immigration. Still, Quakers were the fifth largest denomination in colonial America, and much of the U.S. Bill of Rights was strongly influenced by the Pennsylvania experiment.

Much less numerous today, Quakers are nevertheless strongly represented in the peace movement and similar social movements. In the 19th century, we were especially well-known for being active in the movements to abolish slavery and for women’s

equality. From the start, we have opposed war as pacifists and helped establish conscientious objector status in the laws of some countries. Because we believe that there is “that of God” in everyone, it follows that all human beings are equal and that all violence is wrong.

Rejecting creeds as too rigid a view of truth, Quakers organize their assertions instead as a matter of Testimonies. The Testimonies provide general principles, and Friends are encouraged to think through what these mean for their own lives and communities. The main testimonies are Peace, Simplicity (not overdoing it on materialism), Integrity, and Equality.

These are all connected, of course. By virtue of avoiding greed and excessive materialism, simplicity helps with establishing peace. When lying is



necessary to war, then honesty will help prevent war or any other kind of violence that relies on euphemisms and bad reasoning. Further, integrity is not only truth-telling, but seeing things as they really are, which is one of the quickest ways of sabotaging any form of violence. True peace is impossible alongside the kind of human inequalities that lead to structural violence – racism, poverty, pollution, and so forth – violence that comes from the way things are set up. In the same way, the idea that different kinds of violence are connected to each other is well established among Friends. In the 19th century, slaveholders may have argued that peace required that their slaves remain docile, but Quakers developed instead the understanding that slavery was a form of violence and couldn't be maintained without violence. Poverty is a form of violence, and if poor people use violence to fight against their oppression, then the solution is to find nonviolent means to the same end. This is crucial to taking a pacifist stand, because if a stand against direct violence (where people intend to hurt a target) simply means that structural violence continues, then pacifism becomes a vicious tool for maintaining the status quo. Instead, pacifism is a radical call for change: a call not only to get rid of structural violence, but to change our ideas of how to use active nonviolent methods to do so.

Therefore, one commonly finds among Friends opposition to war, the death penalty, poverty and racism, and many other forms of violence. Such opposition is strong and commonly acted upon: announcements after worship will generally include details of how Friends can be involved in local activism. The idea that different manifestations of violence are all connected would be nothing new to most Quakers.

It is on the issue of abortion that Friends vociferously diverge. Members of one branch, the evangelical, tend to be more likely to be pro-life. The branch that continues to follow the practice of silence with occasional unprogrammed speaking in “meetings for worship” without pastors, rather than programmed services with pastors, tends to be the least likely to be pro-life. Indeed, members can sometimes be quite hostile to the pro-life point of view. This is the branch with the greatest emphasis on peace

activism, so the discrepancy is quite startling. Why would this be? Shouldn't the Peace Testimony automatically apply to deliberate feticide? Abortion is violence against unborn children, against their mothers, and against their fathers, grandparents, and siblings. It goes against the insight that using violence usually causes more problems than it solves, as shown, for example, by increases in child abuse and the feminization of poverty. It makes abortion staff members work in conditions of intense spiritual and psychological harm.

Doesn't abortion justification contradict a Testimony on Equality by singling out the killing of unborn children as an exception to the rejection of violence? In many cases it also treats pregnant women as unequal and deprives them of support and accommodation to which they are entitled.

How well does abortion language fit a Testimony on Integrity? It requires dehumanizing or ignoring the unborn child, applying euphemisms to the act of violence, and misrepresenting or obscuring sexist pressures on pregnant women.

In large part, these points are not considered more often because of current stereotypes of polarized left-wing and right-wing politics. Anti-abortion assertions in the media often come from politicians whose ability to think clearly on issues of war and other forms of violence leaves something to be desired. These politicians often express even anti-abortion views in the context of a philosophy that is about sexuality rather than violence. The position for abortion “choice,” on the other hand, is often explained among those in the peace movement as being on their agenda because it is a matter of women's rights.

I have found the most effective way to discuss the topic among Friends who consider abortion a “right” is to bring up the inconsistencies of those who oppose abortion and yet don't use the same pro-life principles to oppose war and the death penalty. It is usually very easy to get some vigorous agreement on that point. Then I'll turn it around and ask if it is not also true that those of us in the peace



movement have a harder time talking to those with a tender concern for unborn children about what is wrong with war or the death penalty if we also are not applying the same principles across the board? Doesn't the sabotage of inconsistency go both ways? Aren't we hurting peace movement goals in the exact same way?

There's another matter of consistency that's indirectly related to abortion practice, which is that we need to *listen* to one another on any topic. Instances have occurred of pro-life Quakers being squelched. No matter what the topic, this squelching is un-Quakerly. However, most of the most startling instances of this were in the 1980s; more recent cases have been milder and were merely expressions of a desire to squelch rather than actual instances of squelching. Psychology shows that the human mind (unless it is of a Machiavellian disposition) has a drive for consistency both between beliefs and between those beliefs and actions, so such squelching is not likely to be maintained in the face of persistent consistent-life Friends. Attempts to squelch will often elicit sympathy from Friends who haven't thought much about the abortion issue itself.

At present, there is a small group with an active webpage and occasional outreach activities called the Friends Witness for a Pro-life Peace Testimony. There's no Quaker hierarchy that would make decisions about positions to take, so major organizations have different positions on abortion. The American Friends Services Committee used to have a "pro-choice" position and signed on to various legal briefs; its current position is questionable inasmuch as it has staff members that have said that there is none, yet documents show otherwise. The Friends Committee on National Legislation, a national American lobbying group, takes no position because they know there's no consensus among the Religious Society of Friends in the United States, and they only work on issues on which there is a consensus. They call abortion and euthanasia "boundary of life" issues. Different Yearly Meetings, groups of smaller meetings that get together annually, have different positions, but most have none at all. There is no

highly visible Quaker group that makes a major effort to advocate the "pro-choice" philosophy.

Change on this issue will be slow, because Quakers work by consensus and because discussion of abortion tends to be avoided. Nevertheless, while it took us several decades to come to a consensus against slavery in the United States, we achieved that before 1800, many decades before the abolitionist movement began in earnest. Coming to consensus means no one is voted down, and, in theory, it means that people are listened to and considered. Growing a consensus is like growing a garden; it takes patience and care and is not speedy.

Yet it's also clear that the approaches of pro-life feminism and the consistent life ethic are the ones that will make sense to most Friends who currently don't understand the value of the pro-life point of view or how crucial it is to oppose feticide. So much of the groundwork has already been laid; consistency in opposing all violence across the board is a natural next step.

*(For a much more extensive discussion of various angles on Quakers and the consistent life ethic, see [www.prolifequakers.org](http://www.prolifequakers.org), the web page of Friends Witness for a Pro-life Peace Testimony.)*

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# MEDIA REVIEWS

## AND CONSISTENT LIFE

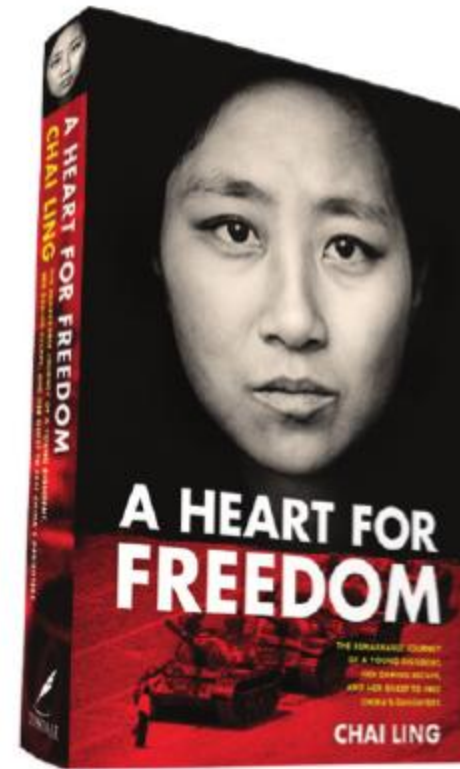
### ON “A HEART FOR FREEDOM”

*by Carol Crossed*

Chai Ling’s book *A Heart for Freedom* (Tyndale House Publishers, 2011) is a clearly written treatise on Ling’s journey from Traditional Chinese family, to Beijing student activist, to American Harvard educated capitalist, to faith-filled penitent. The lengthy middle part of her book assumes the reader knows more about Chinese Communism than this reader did. Ling struggled at the near cost of her life to make Communism democratic, or at least respectable, to give the people minimum rights under a regime that put the state above the individual. As one of the only student women leaders of the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising, Ling commandeered the hunger strike and attempted to maintain a sense of equal voice and non-violence in the midst of the government’s absolute denial of both.

Ling portrays honestly her ‘survivor guilt’. Her harrowing escape out of China and into Boston forces her to face in a realistic way her past and how her youth and idealism masks her culpability in former relationships.

These unveil themselves in a painfully candid revelation about abortion, not only those that are forced upon women in China, but her own abortions. Her unraveling of China’s one-child policy and its conflation with gendercide, or the killing of baby girls



in utero, brings her to a place where she can accept and understand the meaning for her own existence. It is to save Chinese mothers and their daughters from the inherent cultural and political abuse that has been their destiny.

The word gendercide is underlined with a red squiggly line by my computer. It doesn’t even recognize the word. This cultural phenomenon, introduced by the ultrasound machine, enhances an existing historical bias against females. At a recent talk given by Ling’s Foundation *All Girls Allowed*, Ling was compared to our own foremother Susan B Anthony. It is not an overstatement. Ling is indeed the innovative, courageous, justice-oriented womens’ rights advocate of our day.

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*Carol Crossed is President of the Susan B Anthony Birthplace Museum in Adams, Massachusetts.*



# THE UNEXPECTED TRUTH IN "THE IDES OF MARCH"

by Aimee Bedoy

*I have to warn you, if you intend to read on, I will spoil an important part of the story's plot. So if you intend to see the movie and want it to be a surprise, please take note and don't read this piece!*

George Clooney's film "The Ides of March" was produced as a piece of commentary on politics. And while Hollywood's politics again were placed very blatantly on display, something very shocking happened in the movie that perhaps Hollywood did not quite intend to be so damning of the typical pro-choice rhetoric.

The film itself is a critique of politics in this country, and it posits that perhaps even the most charismatic and seemingly moral people can play dirty and get in over their heads. This concept was one worth noting, though I am not here to talk the philosophy or morals of politics.

The plot is driven by the both seductive and wholly seduced Molly Stearns, a 20-year-old intern of the gregarious Democratic presidential candidate Governor Mike Morris. In a discussion with Stephen Meyer, a 30-year-old head staffer on Morris's campaign, Molly reveals that she and Morris had a one-time affair and that she is pregnant with his child. Meyer makes it abundantly clear at this point that there is no other choice for Molly -- she must get an abortion to save face for Morris and his campaign. Molly, a naive and wide-eyed student, believes so strongly in what Morris stands for that she reluctantly agrees, stating that she cannot go to her father, because "we are Catholic."

This is where my scrutiny of the film grew: at no time was Molly asked what she thought, or was she

even remotely allowed to make her opinion or beliefs known. It was assumed that she would kill her unborn child for the good of Morris's political campaign, that the life of the child would mean nothing but trouble for an irresponsible Morris and the too-young Molly Stearns. The only point in which the morality of abortion was discussed was during a debate, in which Morris summarily spouted pro-choice rhetoric, something to the effect that "a woman should have the right to make that choice." And yet, when he and his campaign were faced with the life of a pre-born child that would jeopardize his future prospects in the election campaign, the woman was faced with a situation in which she was given no choice.

Molly Stearns, after being left abandoned at the abortion clinic, takes a taxi back to her hotel in a miserable state. What exactly her thought process was I cannot be sure, but depression sinks in and later she is found dead in her apartment by the coercive and cold Stephen Meyer. Meyer listens to a voicemail left by Molly hours before in which she apologizes and basically states that they won't have to worry about her anymore. Because she killed herself, there will be little in the way of evidence of Morris's affair. Whether the pain of her abortion or the misguided





affection and adoration for a dirty politician or some combination of both drove her to suicide, it is evidence of yet another case of the disregard for human dignity. When Molly was feeling most alone and abandoned, she had no one to turn to -- perhaps I can posit that it was then that she realized what she had done to her child, and realized that the men whom she cared for cared nothing for her child's life -- and perhaps even then, they might not truly care about her opinion or her life, either. At her funeral, Molly's father makes the pithy statement, "It is one of the hardest things a parent could do, to have to bury your child." I think that goes for both Molly and her own family.

The movie represented two things to me as a conscientious viewer: first, the dichotomy between the right to life and the perceived right to a convenient lifestyle, and secondly, the prevalence of "the unchoice." It was entirely convenient for Morris and his staff that Molly procure an abortion and hide his actions, and it was all too convenient that Molly then kill herself and bury the evidence of his affair with her. The compassion shown by the characters in the film borders on cold apathy towards such an optimistic girl. Morris and Meyer seem too focused on the campaign trail to bother with the blatant loss of life which can only be attributed to their preoccupation with political success. Furthermore, the concept of "the unchoice" rears its ugly head in this movie, in which Molly was nearly forced to kill her pre-born child. Such coercion and fear are often used in real-life situations in which women are given no real choice concerning abortion, but rather, often the men in their life are so adamant that they must kill their child to save face, to retain a way of life, or to prevent negative repercussions in their own lives.

As a whole, I found "The Ides of March" to be an interesting film worth watching once, even if only because it caused me to step back and think. It provoked discussion between myself and my friends, and it was a good way to start a discourse about respect for human life and dignity. As a whole, it was an interesting commentary on politics in this country, but an even better commentary sat beneath the true

plot that I don't think the producer or the screenwriter ever intended.



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FICTION

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NEVER A  
DISAPPOINTMENT:  
A SHORT STORY  
*by Angel Armstead*

“**Y**ou’re pregnant again?”

I quickly glanced around us. “Quiet. I don’t want everyone in Wal-Mart knowing my business.”

“Okay,” she said, quietly this time. “How could you do this, Donna? Your last pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, and now you want to keep this one? You have no money and no job. How could you be so irresponsible?”

I had heard this argument a dozen times from a dozen other people. I’d heard it so much that I had a mentally prepared response.

“Well, sister,” I began, “I haven’t been in my twenties in years. In three years I will be forty. It’s not like I’m guaranteed to have a second chance.”

My sister shook her head and walked over to the coat department. The next few minutes were spent in silence while I nodded at the coats she showed me. After picking one out, she turned to me and said, “It’s not too late, you know. At least consider it. You could be ruining your life if you don’t.”

“I know, I know,” I halfheartedly agreed. “I will consider it just for you, Debbie.”



“How about I set up an appointment at my clinic with someone next week? We’ll see where it goes from there. We can’t wait too long or abortion won’t be a viable option anymore. You don’t want to wait that long, do you?”

I could tell by the look on her face she wanted me to agree. I nodded so that we could move on.

Afterward, we went out for lunch and spent the rest of our day gossiping over a plate of fries and some chili dogs. We didn’t see each other very often. I still considered us very close, but we didn’t get many days like this where we could just talk the way we used to when we were younger. We each had our separate lives to live. She had two children, a good job and a semi-stable boyfriend. I had no job, a child on the way and I lived at home with my mother.

“Don’t forget our appointment next week,” she whispered as she walked to the bathroom. I looked down at the table; I really didn’t want to be reminded. When she returned, we paid the tab and left in our separate cars. I thought about her proposition the whole way home. I understood she wanted the best for me. I was nearing forty. As the oldest sister, I should have been the one advising her.

“She is so irresponsible,” I heard as I opened the front door. “So irresponsible,” the voice repeated. I took a quick peek in and saw my other sister Helen and our mother sitting at the dining room table. I backed away. I didn’t approve of eavesdropping, but I would have felt even more awkward walking in at that moment.

“Helen, I know your older sister is a bit irresponsible, but she’s allowed to make her own mistakes,” my mother said calmly.

*She’s always the voice of reason,* I thought to myself. I saw Helen throw whatever was in her hand on the floor and shout, “This isn’t the first time! It’s not just a little reckless, it’s grossly irresponsible! She’s supposed to be the oldest. At her age she should have her life together. Does she? No. Because you keep baby-

ing your first child. Almost forty, and not a thing to show for it!” she got up and began to pace the room.

“Helen, you think I don’t understand, but I do. You’re the youngest child and the baby in this family. You want me to throw her out because of this. I didn’t throw you out when you had your first child at eighteen. Why would I do that to her?”

“Look what I did with myself,” she came back harshly. “I have my own place. My own apartment. I pay the rent. I take care of my kids. No one else does. If Donna has this child, you will be the one raising it.” With that, she sat back down. *This may be the best time to walk in,* I thought.

“Welcome home!” my mother shouted as I walked into the room. Helen glared a little, then looked away.

“How is my older sister and her baby?” she asked nonchalantly.

“I’m fine. The baby is fine, too. I saw Debbie today,” I responded, hoping I could sound as composed as she did. I didn’t want her to know I had heard everything.

“Oh good,” my mother said. “How was she? She hasn’t called in a while.”

I walked over to the kitchen to get a drink of water. “Well, she knows you don’t approve of the work she does. She doesn’t feel comfortable in the house.”

“And she shouldn’t,” Helen added.

“I’m tired. I’m going to bed a little early. Good night, Momma!” I walked off quickly before Helen could pretend to be happy around me. I knew she wasn’t. The look on her face and the tone of her voice said it all. To her I would always be the older sister who didn’t live up to the role of helping her younger siblings.

Lying in bed didn’t help. As much as I hated what my



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sister had said about me, I couldn't help but admit she was right. It's not normal to still be at home at thirty-seven. The men who seemed decent ran for the hills when I mentioned it, and that was before I had a baby on the way.

The next day I woke up feeling terrible. My mother decided to take the day off to take care of me. As much as I tried to resist, I didn't have the energy to do it. I just lay there while she fixed tea and soup. She claimed I was stressing the baby out. I was tempted to say that Helen and Debbie were stressing me out, and that I was taking the stress out on the baby. But I just lay there, too tired to pursue the obvious argument waiting to happen.

Throughout the day I drifted in and out of sleep. I heard Helen try to calm my mother, saying it was probably nothing and that I'd be fine in 24 hours. She was partially right. I fully believed my illness was one due to stress; I wasn't feeling so bad before I got home and overheard Helen.

Next week I checked the calendar and remembered my appointment, the one I had been dreading. I walked to the car, fully intending to seek my sister's advice on an abortion, but drove in the opposite

direction. I could not bring myself to do it. Debbie had two kids; why had she recommended this?

I stopped at a small shop and got a bite to eat. Lost in thought, I realized that I had missed the appointment and repressed a smile. Debbie wouldn't dare call my mother and ask why I had missed *this* appointment. I got back in my car and drove home.

I found my mother sitting in the kitchen just staring at the wall. I rushed over to touch her, and I could tell that she had been crying. I asked her what was wrong, and she didn't respond right away. "Laid off," she mumbled as she looked at the floor.

I took my hand from her shoulder as I realized how our problems had gone from bad to worse. I told her that I would help out as much as possible. I'd do what I should have been doing as the oldest. She said no, and muttered about stressing the baby. I told her to go to bed. I took her credit card, saying that I would bring us back something for dinner.

My first stop, however, was the clinic I had avoided earlier that day. A few people greeted me as I walked in, and I felt welcomed.

My sister noticed me and said hello. "Don't you worry about the missed appointment," she told me cheerily. "We have someone available right now."

As I stood to walk towards the room, she stopped me and said, "You know you're making the right decision, the responsible decision. You cannot afford to burden Momma with more than she can handle." She smiled and walked away.

In the exam room, I blurted out "I want an abortion," before the woman meeting me could speak. I took a seat in front of her and glanced at her nameplate. Nancy Richards. Not so bad. Considering the way some religious people talk about abortion, I had expected a more sinister name.

"How soon would you want this procedure?" she asked, picking up a small calendar.



"What days are available?" I asked nervously.

"Well," she began, "because you are Deborah Manner's sister we can get you in almost any day you want. What are the reasons for this abortion?"

My mind wandered back to all the things that Helen had said. "I have no job and no money. My mother was just laid off. We live in a two-bedroom house that we're no longer able to afford. I need to find a job. I feel like my life is crashing down in front of me. My younger sister Helen hates me because I'm a failure of an older sister and she's right. I'm thirty-seven. I have never done anything responsible in my life. Let this be the first responsible decision I make. Please."

From the look on her face I could tell she was moved by my speech as she scribbled a few words in her little book. "Typically my appointments are a little longer because people aren't sure what they want. I'll overlook that in your case. Tomorrow, 3PM. Good enough for you?"

She stood up and we shook hands. In less than twenty-four hours I could start planning out how to help Momma.

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I stopped by the nearest Chinese restaurant to pick up Momma's favorite things and headed home. My mind kept wandering to my appointment the next day, but I shrugged off my growing feeling of discontent.

When I got home my mother looked calmer. "Thanks for the dinner," she said, "I just don't want you to stress out too much. It might affect the baby."

I didn't say anything in response. As she pulled out napkins and plastic forks, she said, "Sweetheart, I need to tell you something."

"Go ahead."

She poured a drink. "When I got pregnant with you, I thought my life was over. But I realized something: a baby doesn't have to mean the end of your life. It can be the beginning of something else instead. I thought about abortion so many times during that pregnancy, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't do that to you."

"Mom-" I tried to interrupt.

"Let me finish," she said, and looked at the counter in silence for a minute. "I know why you've been talking to Debbie. It's because she thinks it would be better to abort. Do you think that will make you feel better? I know you think you're a failure. I know the feeling firsthand. I felt like a disappointment, and it took me a long time to realize I wasn't. It wasn't easy raising you or your sisters, but it's been more than worth it. You had potential when you were inside me and you have potential now. Please take some time to think about this. What were you going to say?"

"Nothing." I ate the rest of the shrimp fried rice and excused myself. I lay alone and tried to stay calm. *Do I go and get it over with, or do I stay and struggle like my mother did and become another burden? Why can't I ask simple questions before I go to sleep?* That question in itself was enough to make me miss being a child as I drifted off.

When I woke up, Helen was standing at the door.



“What do you want?” I asked harshly. I hadn’t slept well, and I didn’t feel like putting on a superficial tone to match hers.

“I guess I deserve that,” she said, and walked to the edge of the bed. “I’m sorry I don’t talk to you as much as I should. I just want to be able to look up to someone, and you’re my older sister.”

“Well, I’m sorry I don’t fit into your neat little world,” I grumbled, still half asleep.

“I know. That’s not why I’m here. I’m here because I don’t want you to make the mistake I did.”

“What!” I shouted.

She moved a chair close to the bed and sat down. “Erin was not the first time I have been pregnant. I had been pregnant before and I told no one. It was legal to get an abortion without a parent’s permission. I did. Erin is missing a sibling she will never know.”

“All this time, you pretended to be perfect! If this is the truth, do you realize how hypocritical that makes you?”

“Donna, you’re almost forty years old. My problem with you has always been simple. You have no initiative. If you actually had the drive to be responsible and take care of your kid, well...I would help.”

“What did you say? Do you want to take me on as some kind of charity project?” I asked accusingly.

“It’s help I should have offered a long time ago.”

I lay back and looked at Helen, unable to speak.

“Think about it,” she said, and walked out the door.

I lay still for a minute before taking a quick shower. I kept going over and over her last words. Those were three words I would never have expected to hear from Helen. I did think about it. More deeply than I ever had before. I thought of the pros and cons of my

appointment, and I looked over old photos of us as children. I thought about how our life was; the good and bad times came to me as if they had happened yesterday.

I thought of the response I wished I’d given to her. If someone like her could look past her obvious disappointment in me, and try to change to help my child, then maybe things weren’t as bad as they seemed. I stood up. No use dwelling on the past. I had a child to raise and a life to live.

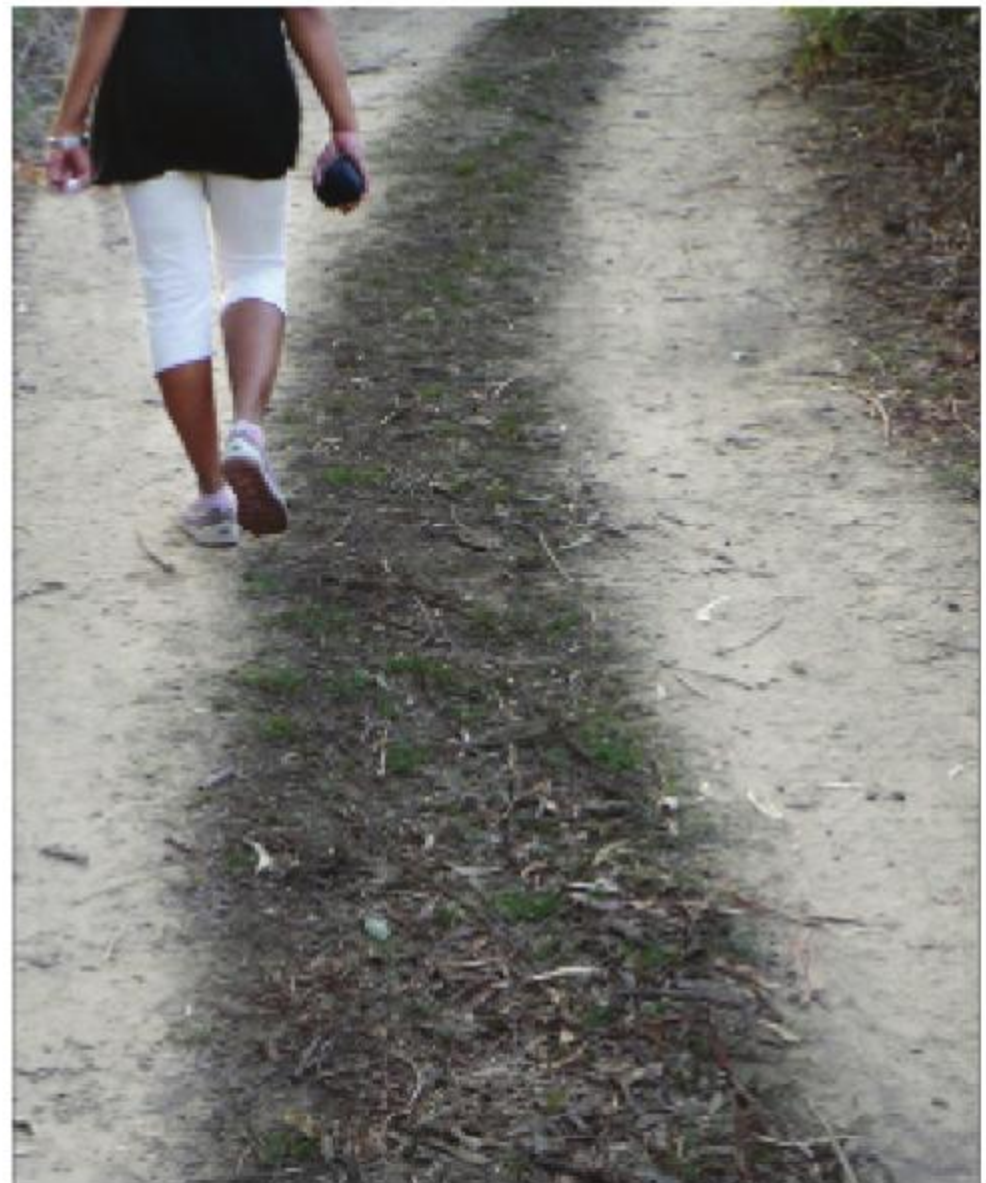


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# NO MAD.

by Lisa Groves

No Mad.

When I was six years old I deliberately dropped my brand new baby doll into a long-abandoned well in my parents' backyard. It was the same year I made a lavender Christmas tree ornament with the sentiment, "I like alone."

When I was twenty-six, an old, old friend, smoking furiously and with unqualified command calmly informed me that it was impossible to love another person unconditionally. If it were possible, she reasoned, if we indeed could love without condition, we would love every person we encountered, and to the same degree.

I blew a kiss through her quarantine, and set out to find the cure for condition.

She fell in my lap. Repeatedly.

Her name was Madeline, a sticky newborn who futilely tried to balance herself with fistfuls of my hair. She was imposing and soulful and beyond my control and I instantly knew she was "Mad".

Two words of wisdom from a girl who could not yet speak one: divine connection.

Not the sort of connection borne of scrutiny. Not that sort at all. There was no academic analysis, no lab to dissect condition. Rather a connection so elemental, so unmodified, divine origin could be safely presumed.

Like a litmus test for soul mates.

Now, to yield to this connection tethers us deeply. Child, lover, friend, no matter – acknowledging any relationship as divine connection creates obligation, it colors escape.

I am an itinerant wife and mother. I am the most well when I am, well, alone.

And in my heart of hearts, I am a nomad. But a nomad who has reached understanding. Yes, it is not connection that drives us mad; we are driven mad by our resistance to it.

Madeline's mama, shouting no Mad, no Mad! - a battle cry of sorts - all to remain a nomad.

And yet, despite my flag, I lay quietly in bed and slowly take inventory. Now that I'm approaching thirty-six, I know more, therefore I no more.

Unconditional, divine connection defies reason, rhyme and requirement.

It is unconcerned with the harvest.

And yes, sometimes it even defies the self.

Recently, my buddy Nate offered this humbling explanation for the assent: "Love, the kind given to one person over the course of a lifetime, is borne of the desire to believe in something greater than oneself."

What a mad, Mad notion.

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*Lisa Groves is a recovering attorney, an author, yoga teacher, president of I've Been Meaning to Write, LLC, a Scottsdale based marketing firm, and Madeline Mary's Mom. The above essay is excerpted from Lisa's book "Off the Beaten Path," © 2011, her most recent work of nonfiction and journey through abuse recovery. For orders, to view additional excerpts, or for a righteous vegan lemon bar recipe, contact Lisa at [lisa@meantowrite.com](mailto:lisa@meantowrite.com) or visit [www.meantowrite.com](http://www.meantowrite.com).*



# WRAPPINGS

*by Aimee Bedoy*

if you believe in the dignity of human life –

how can you sit idly by,  
while thousands and millions of humans die  
by the hand of others?

the homicide is ringing in my ears –

-- deafening.

their silence is louder than your rhetoric,  
their screams no longer present.  
can you hear them?

the cause bears no difference  
if it be at another's behest  
homicide  
never looked so pretty  
wrapped up in nice words  
like "choice"  
and "pre-emptive defense,"  
like "preventative measures"  
and "criminal justice"

...and in hopes that the ends would justify the means.



# WHAT DROVE THEM AWAY

by Aimee Bedoy



I have a suggestion for the various organizations of the pro-life and pro-peace world. They are based purely on observation, and in that regard they are empirical and of course they are not scientific or statistical studies. But I want to tell you an amalgamation of stories, and then lessons I have learned from working with young people in the world today.

The March for Life is seen as the pinnacle of the pro-life year. It is probably the largest event of its kind in the world, and in that respect the mobilization effort is astounding. Hundreds of thousands of people converge on the United States capitol for a protest of massive proportions. This, in and of itself, is amazing and commendable.

But as I learned last year at the Students for Life of America conference, the March for Life was begun by Catholic Democrats who were angered, dissatisfied and put out by the Roe v. Wade decision and the legalization of abortion in the United States. In a way it shocked me, because both the conference and the March seem now to be dominated by Republican and conservative rhetoric and politics; yet in another way I was totally unsurprised. It did not shock me

that Catholics were the ones to make the first headway into the movement – in fact, the Catholic Church has been steadfast in the stance against abortion and it has never swayed on this matter. The thing that perhaps began to irk me was that there has since been little change in the demographics of the movement as a whole, and anyone who is not a conservative with a Catholic or Christian affiliation is made to feel like the outsider. In some respects, it is to be expected: conservatives have, as part of their party platform included opposition to abortion; and likewise, Catholics, as part of Church teaching, are opposed to abortion. These two groups may be the only ones that consistently demonstrate a pro-life stance. And yet, to ignore those outside these groups and to argue on the basis of religion or political party is exactly what is alienating those members of “fringe” groups.

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I have friends who are staunchly pro-life, consistent life, and have taken part in discussions, clubs at their various schools, or in other manners of activism. And in the last year, I have seen many of these young people fall away from some of the most



effective events of the pro-life year. Not only are these young people refusing to return to the Students for Life of America conference, they do not desire to return to the March for Life. They have stated to me again and again, “I was uncomfortable...”, “I didn’t feel like I was wanted there because I’m not Catholic...”, “I don’t understand: do they not want Democrats or LGBTQ people?” It hurts my heart because I do have such an immense compassion for all people, and while religion and our politics beliefs are very important and indispensable parts of each of our lives, we must understand that the arguments which relate to other issues belong in debates and activism for those other issues.

There is not one particular religious belief for this country, and there is good reason for there to be a solid separation of Church and State. Our State should not be run by our Churches, neither our Churches run by our State (though this argument is for another time, and perhaps for a different publication). I believe this to be elementary common sense because, in fact, we do not all believe the same thing and we all beautifully hold the gift of free will in the matter. You cannot therefore, base the argument against abortion – or any other violence, for that matter – upon the very comfortable seat of religion. We have a freedom of belief in this country that does not dictate that each and every person be a Christian, and as our youth come into their own and delineate their own views, studies find that our generation is more secular than ever before. We have already alienated far too many youth who don’t feel their support is valuable or wanted simply because they do not fall into the same realm of belief. And furthermore, our laws should not be dictated by one creed or faith, and our justification for moral law should be able to justly stand outside of religion and be thoroughly complete.

The argument for human dignity is one that can stand strong on its own, without religion as a “crutch.” If we spend all of our energy learning how to lean on religious arguments, we run the risk of being crippled when faced with a secular individual. The things I often hear, such as “God loves your baby,” and “God created them with a purpose” are

nice sentiments – and while perhaps true, are appeals to emotion – pathos in the strongest sense. To argue further in a religious vein with a person who does not believe in God may have a number of desired effects, but the outcome that I see most often is that individuals who do not belong to the same faith will shut you out and no longer pay attention: they do not believe those points are valid or worth listening to. Religious arguments, I would posit, belong in a religious setting. But our government is not one based on religion, our capitol is not the place to bring religion and expect it to be the reasoning for change. So we need to find a middle ground, and I’m having a difficult time figuring out exactly what that is. But I’m asking you to help me make changes in the movement, for twofold reasoning: so we do not exclude those who do not fall into the small category of Catholic and Republican, and so we can establish law in our country that is lasting, based on sound ethical theory, and which will, without a doubt apply to people of all beliefs.

So perhaps I am making an appeal to those in power in this cause: Open the doors of the pro-life movement, of the pro-peace movement, without barriers or road screens. We are not asking that you abandon your religion or cease to believe in your faith or your politics. But we cannot afford to alienate youth who would be a great boon to the cause of life and peace. We stand much stronger together than we do apart, and we must act as though the lives of our children and grandchildren depend upon it – because, indeed, they do. And our law cannot stand alone on religious rhetoric – in the end, life is a human rights issue, not a religious one. People from every belief, whether Catholic, Buddhist, Mormon, Protestant, Hindu, Muslim, Atheist, Agnostic; whether Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian; whether straight or LGBT; whether a student or a professional or a stay-at-home parent: we should all be able to stand together, to make a stand for life and to work together on this, the most important issue of our time. We must be allies in the culture war – to stand up for human life and dignity, regardless of creed, politics, lifestyle, or career. We have this responsibility to our fellow man, to stand up for his right to life – let us not fail.



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