



Life Matters Journal

V. 7, ISSUE 4 — AUGUST 2019



THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

No Exceptions

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Perhaps the greatest hallmark of the Consistent Life Ethic — indeed, it's right there in the name — is that it protects all human life consistently. It extends the same protection to the tiniest and most vulnerable, even down to embryos, as it does to those often traditionally considered to have forfeited their right to life, such as people who take the lives of others. According to this philosophy, there is nothing a person can do, nor any situation they can be in, that robs them of their basic human dignity. The right to life is absolute. There are no exceptions.



Precisely this point is the uniting theme of this issue, “No Exceptions.” The pieces in this issue are stories of lives often considered “exceptions” by many in our society, and profiles of groups that, like us here at Rehumanize International, embrace this no-exceptions philosophy. In her interview with a former abortion clinic worker, Stephanie Hauer highlights that often-villianized people also deserve to live free from threats and violence. Christy Yao, in a discussion with activist John Reuwer of World Beyond War, raises questions about the practice of making exceptions for so-called humanitarian war. And Sarah St. Onge provides a powerful personal testimony as the mother of a baby with an adverse fetal diagnosis, a situation which many people believe merits exceptions to abortion bans. I hope these and other pieces in this issue can help you think more deeply about, and enable you to better defend, cases the rest of the world often views as unworthy of protection from dehumanization and death.

Yours for life, peace, and justice,

Kelly Matula

This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether that violence is 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, halfway 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 ethic of life toward all victims of violence. We are *Life Matters Journal*, and we are here because politics kills.

Disclaimer

The views presented in this 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.

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Life Matters Journal

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Barr Reinstates the Death Penalty

By Jessica Vozella

On Thursday, July 25, 2019, Attorney General William Barr reinstated the death penalty at the federal level, for the first time since 2003, when he directed the Bureau of Prisons to schedule the executions of five federal inmates.

The death penalty, though legal at the federal level and in 29 U.S. states, has not been used by the federal government in 16 years. This informal moratorium has ended with the backing of President Donald Trump, who has supported the use of the death penalty as both a deterrent for violent crimes and justice for victims and their families. Barr's announcement has followed former Attorney General Jeff Sessions' efforts to restart federal executions by lethal injection. The decision seems in line with the current political atmosphere focused on the pursuit of justice through force based on perceptions of fairness rather than on humanity.

Barr noted in his statement that the directive to schedule the executions of the five inmates is well within the current law and that it is a fair decision, suggesting that the trials and justice system are fair and complete in each case. He referred to the inmates who are sentenced to death row as "the worst criminals," and refers to a popular justification for the death penalty: that this sentence is owed to the victims and their families. These scheduled executions are set to take place in December 2019 or January 2020. The five inmates scheduled for execution are Danny Lee, Lezmond Mitchell, Wesley Ira Purkey, Alfred Bourgeois, and Dustin Lee Honken, who have been convicted of horrendous acts, including murders against vulnerable persons.

The death penalty has been a part of the United States' history since the 1600s and has been shaped by social movements, international events, and advances in technology. The number of people sentenced to death row and the number of executions has decreased in a steady trend, though the issue of the death penalty's constitutionality has not been recently brought up for overarching discussion at the federal level in some time. Instead, many states have abolished capital punishment and others have established moratoriums on the practice, citing questions to the fairness of the death penalty's application, the ethics of both the policy and methods, and staggering instances of innocent persons being put to death.

Furthermore, the United States' reinstatement of the practice at the federal level brings up some of these legal issues that may delay the scheduled executions, mainly over the federal lethal injection

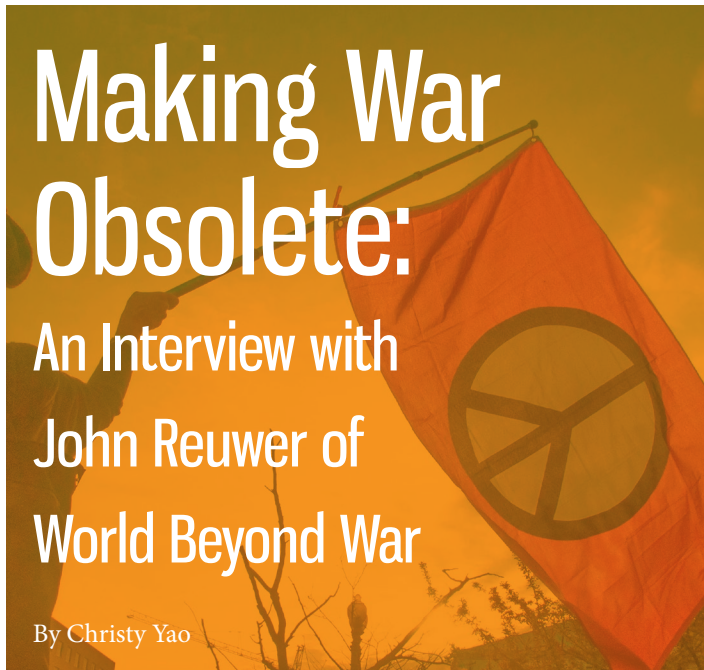
process, raising questions about the drug used in the injection, whether it is unduly cruel and how it is obtained by the government. Attorneys for the five inmates are also sure to bring up suits that may delay the proceedings.

This decision comes at a time when both American and international support for the death penalty is on the decline. U.N. human rights spokesman Rupert Colville criticizes the U.S. Department of Justice's decision as one that is counteracting progress in the U.S. as well as on the international stage. In fact, 170 out of the 194 U.S. member states have ceased federal punishment executions.¹ Colville argues that the death penalty does not serve as an effective deterrent, undermining a main argument for its existence and reinstatement in the United States. He is joined by many critics of the policy, especially on the other side of the U.S. political spectrum, such as Democratic Presidential hopefuls like Senator Elizabeth Warren who voices criticisms of the death penalty, such as the racial and socio-economic disparities of death row inmates and a history of innocent people killed by the practice.² The practice has highlighted many humanitarian issues with the U.S. justice system and is not seen as a reliable and fair tool by most Americans, as seen in a 2016 Gallup poll that shows 49% of Americans believe the death penalty is not applied fairly.³

Currently there are 62 inmates on federal death row, totally about 2,600 on both state and federal level. Since 1988, when the U.S. government reinstated the death penalty after a similar moratorium, only three inmates have been executed. As more research emerges on the death penalty and American justice system coupled with a declining support for the practice both in the United States and across the international stage, the U.S. government's decision to reinstate the death penalty at the federal level is an affront to human rights and one to be watched as the scheduled executions of five inmates draws near.

Notes

1. Nebehay, Stephanie. "U.S. Move to Resume Death Penalty Bucks Trend: U.N." *Reuters*. July 30, 2019. Accessed August 12, 2019.
2. Vogue, Ariane De, and Veronica Stracqualursi. "Barr Directs Federal Government to Reinstate Death Penalty, Schedule the Execution of 5 Death Row Inmates." *CNN*. July 25, 2019. Accessed August 12, 2019.
3. "National Polls and Studies." *Death Penalty Information Center*. Accessed August 12, 2019.



It is hard to remember a time the United States has not been at war.

War is a large part of our history classes, our national holidays, and our identity. War is seen as a “necessary evil,” something that one should take pride in, but not wish for. However, it doesn’t have to be this way.

War has become so commonplace in part because of treaties and other pieces of legislation that make violence easier to achieve. One such treaty is that establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, is a political and military alliance between the United States and other countries, mostly in Europe. It is based on the North Atlantic Treaty, which was signed on April 4, 1949. Anti-war advocates strongly object to Article 5 of this treaty, which states that an attack on one NATO member is an attack on all NATO members. Lord Ismay, NATO’s first general secretary, said the alliance’s mission was “to keep the Russians out, Americans in, and Germans down.”¹ Every member state has to agree on the new members. Other countries can join as “global partners.”

Crisis management, including military intervention, is one of NATO’s main purposes. NATO has been deploying troops to Afghanistan since the time following 9/11. It has participated in sending a training mission to Iraq, providing assistance to counter-piracy operations, and enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya. NATO has a defense spending target for member nations of two percent of their GDP. Only five nations, including the United States, are currently complying.

A total of 90 percent of the world’s defense spending comes from NATO countries. NATO has brought other countries up to the “highest” standards of military technology, procedures, and terminology, with the “highest” usually meaning the stan-

dards set by the United States. New countries are even forced to purchase U.S. equipment.¹

One of the biggest concerns peace advocates have with NATO is the place of nuclear weapons in the treaty as a “deterrent.” NATO has a policy of “nuclear sharing,” which means member states who do not have nuclear weapons can be part of planning and using nuclear weapons. Countries that do not possess nuclear weapons may possess nuclear materials or store nuclear weapons for other countries who own them.¹

Many anti-war organizations have stated that NATO leaders should be charged with war crimes. NATO has been criticized as being neo-colonial and contributing to a new kind of Cold War and arms race. NATO has participated in wars, bombings, and drone operations against Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. NATO has been used as an excuse to enhance US-led forces, accelerate military action, ignore international law, and increase military spending.²

Rehumanize International collaborated with World Beyond War to protest NATO and met with peace activist John Reuwer. Reuwer was kind enough to provide an interview to give an introduction to World Beyond War, his work, and their plan for world peace.

Life Matters Journal: What is the mission of World Beyond War? What gap does it fill that other organizations don’t?

John Reuwer: WBW is a global nonviolent movement to end war and establish a just and sustainable peace. It works by formulating the ideas and stimulating the activism necessary to eliminate war as an instrument of politics for dealing with conflict within and between nations. It is the only organization we know of whose sole mission is to work for the abolition of all war (not just wars we don’t like) through practical alternatives.

LMJ: What drew you to work with World Beyond War?

JR: As a high school student during the Vietnam War, I remember being relieved that my lottery number was high enough not to be drafted, because I probably would have gone to war, something I viscerally did not want, but was raised to do in obedience to Church and State authorities. My conversion to peace began in college when I learned about the problem of world hunger and worked for a number of years for Bread for the World. There I discovered that there was more than enough food for everyone, but resources were being diverted from feeding people to preparing for and fighting [in wars].

As I started my medical residency, Ronald Reagan came into office with plans to win a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. My scientific curiosity led me to study the physical and biological effects of nuclear explosions, [and I found what I learned] so awful that I joined Physicians for Social Responsibility in its effort to educate politicians and the public about the dangers. Most people who took time to listen to us agreed with our conclusion that these weapons should never be used. I learned the value of activism when our efforts helped put a million [protestors] in the streets of New York in 1982, and changed Reagan’s mind to the point that he became supportive of nuclear disarmament, leading to the dismantling of tens of thousands of nuclear warheads.

As satisfying as that was, I soon noticed that conventional war-

fare was becoming ever more deadly with many kinds of weapons of mass destruction, and the ongoing deaths of countless people, now mostly civilians. Even when weapons theoretically serve as a deterrent to war, they steal resources needed to help people live healthy lives. So I began to look for ways to address violent conflict with something other than more violence, leading me to the field of active nonviolence as an alternative way of exerting power for good. I studied, taught, and practiced this with groups like Christian Peacemaker Teams in conflict zones even as I carried on my medical career. Four years ago, when WBW was founded, I found a very bright group of people who had the big picture of what it would take, in practical terms, to replace all war with alternatives more consistent with my spiritual and moral values. I was hooked on their approach.

LMJ: Tell us about your work in South Sudan.

JR: For four months this past winter and spring, I served in South Sudan as an International Protection Officer with the Nonviolent Peaceforce, which is a global organization that addresses violent conflict with nonviolent strategies. They call it Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP), with the mission of protecting civilians in areas of violent conflict by building peace side by side with local communities, while developing local capacity for nonviolent strategies such as building trusting relationships, situational awareness and monitoring, early warning systems, training in nonviolent action, and proactive engagement of parties in the conflict.

In South Sudan, the latest peace agreement is holding better than predicted, so I did not experience open shooting. On the other hand I met people traumatized by witnessing more war than peace for over sixty years. As one might expect in a place of nearly endless war, it is one of the poorest countries in the world, with almost no public infrastructure or services, minimal manufacturing capacity, and limits even on its grazing and subsistence farming. Yet I met many young and old people, reminding me of the indomitable human spirit, who rise up against all odds and declare their dignity. I have never met so many people so hungry for peace. Our teams, consisting of nationals and internationals, were almost universally welcomed with open arms and gratitude for the message of hope we brought — that even the least of us matters, and has a voice. The idea of nonviolence immediately took root because, unlike in the US, [these people's] bitter experience of prolonged war freed them from the belief that violence is what makes them safe. They worked hard to form community protection teams and unarmed community policing groups. They know those things are only a beginning, and are anxious to learn more about how to influence those who start the wars. In addition to supporting an expansion of the Nonviolent Peaceforce in the country, I want to work with the leaders I met to start an African chapter of World Beyond War.

LMJ: Are you a total pacifist, or do you believe there are just wars or situations that call for violence?

JR: I am not a principled pacifist. If I could do more good than harm by using violence to solve a problem, I might be willing to do that. But after decades of thinking about countless situations where that choice would need to be made, it is very hard for me to imagine the circumstances where a nonviolent approach would not be as likely to succeed as a violent approach. In an unexpected encounter with imminent physical harm from another person, I think most of us will react as we are trained. If I practice with and carry a gun, I will likely try to use it; maybe it will help and maybe it will make things worse. If I practice connecting with people out of touch with their humanity enough to want to hurt me, maybe it will help and maybe it won't. In any case, protecting myself or a loved one from one or several attackers has almost nothing to do with the dispassionate decision to pay, equip, and train large numbers of young people to participate in the mass slaughter of thousands or millions of human beings. World Beyond War is concerned with the latter.

LMJ: When and how do you think world peace could be achieved?

JR: If by world peace you mean no more physical violence between humans, that could take a long time because of our intrinsic "fight or flight" biological programming designed to respond to the inevitable threats and accumulated traumas of life. We'd have to do a lot of research to learn how to deal with that more effectively than we do now. If you mean the end of premeditated mass slaughter of humans and widespread destruction by professional and

less professional warriors in the service of political and business interests, I think it could be achieved in any given year because it is a simple decision whether to continue paying for, preparing, and training for that, or do something more life-affirming with our time and resources.

I like WBW's approach on how we do that (this is just a snippet of our Global Security document):

A) Demilitarize security: Realize that human security depends more on recognizing our interdependence and looking out for one another than on how much we can threaten each other. The first step is to disarm all offensive weapons and adopt a truly defensive military posture. There are countless alternatives to military intervention if we devoted the money and genius to them that we devote to war. We cannot find the alternatives easily when so much of our brilliance is spent on preparing to harm one another. Idealistic young people looking for ways to make a difference should have paid options to fight fires and floods, control epidemics, and assist victims of earthquakes and other natural disasters. If they want to address human threats, then let's beef up the diplomatic corps, the Peace Corps, and create a national peaceforce for the riskier missions.

B) Create a culture of peace, which includes researching and teaching universal peace literacy, the power of nonviolence, human rights, and promoting these things in the fields of education, business, journalism, and diplomacy.

C) Managing conflict without violence, which has to begin in ele-

...it is very hard for me to imagine the circumstances where a nonviolent approach would not be as likely to succeed as a violent approach.

mentary school, but extended to international relations. The [United Nations], which was founded to prevent war, could obviously be much improved, or perhaps we need another system of global governance. Well-governed nations ensure domestic peace by having laws that people recognize as fair. International laws need to be developed along similar lines, with mostly nonviolent enforcement. Human security needs to be proactive, and not wait for the next dictator or empire to torture people or start a war. International courts can be strengthened, and current treaties limiting chemical, biological, cluster bombs, and land mines can be expanded and become models for more universal disarmament, monitoring of dangerous behavior, and international cooperation in the service of human rights.

Over time, these things could realize enough human creativity and goodness to make war obsolete.

—

An excuse often used for war, and many other forms of violence, is that it is inevitable. Much evidence points to the contrary. War is not violence in the heat of passion, but rather violence that takes a lot of preparation, such as weapons production and military training. Some societies and even modern nations have gone for centuries without war. War is a relatively new invention. In fact, throughout human history, there have been many more times of peace than times of war.³

The victims of war stretch far beyond the battlefield. In the 1990s, 2 million children died as a result of armed conflict, with an additional 6 million injured and 12 million left homeless. 17 million civilians have been killed by wars from 1945 to 2000. New methods of war do not make the situation look any better. Civilian fatalities have risen from five percent of all fatalities in 1900 to 90 percent today. CIA drones have killed 1,500 people as of 2017. Ten percent of those killed were the targets, and 90 percent

were “collateral damage.”⁴

War also kills through violence that is not direct. Economic sanctions against enemies include denying people essentials such as food and medicine. Refugees are another consequence of war. As of 2014, there were 50 million refugees worldwide, 50 percent of whom were children. Leftover landmines are another side effect of violent conflict. 70 people are killed or injured every day by landmines. Since 1960, 110 million landmines have been detonated in 70 countries. The United States is one of the only countries that has refused to sign a treaty banning landmines. Perhaps most telling of the horrors of war: the highest cause of death among U.S. troops is suicide.⁴

War will be hard to abolish because it is so ingrained in the American psyche. But as new movements, such as No to NATO, innovative organizations, such as World Beyond War, and passionate individuals, such as John Reuwer, enter into the global debate the future looks bright. A future without war seems to be on the horizon.

Notes

1. “Q&A About NATO,” No To NATO, June 1 2018, <https://bit.ly/2OCktxB>.
2. Ibid.
3. “Myth: War is Inevitable,” World Beyond War, accessed August 2, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2T5mofT>.
4. “War Is Immoral,” World Beyond War, accessed August 2, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2YlkrhP>.





By Julia Smucker

Prologue

How did I get here?

I stare numbly into space as I hear my lawyer, a scruffy-haired public defender with permanent bags under his eyes, tell me through a pane of glass that my final stay of execution appeal has been denied. In one week, I am going to die.

This is not the first time I have stared down death. Only the first time it's come with a definitive date attached.

The first time I know I will not win.

Part One: Soldier On

I joined the service because I wanted to serve my country. At least, that's the first thing I tell people. If I feel like being a little more honest, I add: *and for college money*. But the even more honest answer — the one I haven't told anyone — is that I joined to prove I could hold my own. Growing up, the only girl in a houseful of boys, and the "baby" at that, it kind of goes with the territory. After years of fighting to outdo my three older brothers in athletic prowess, I can't help but enjoy the male recruits' surprised looks when I fly through the obstacle courses, the murmurs of "damn" when I take out every target in marksmanship training.

After I conquer the 50-foot Warrior Tower, I decide I've earned a little bit of a breather before going into my final phase of Basic. It's not much, but I treat myself to a couple of drinks at the club on base and lounge around almost until closing: a small indulgence for how hard I've been working. I start to stroll back toward my barracks, past a trio of guys yelling loudly and crudely, roaring drunk. I don't pay them any mind until they're suddenly standing abreast in front of me, blocking my path. I roll my eyes and start to push past them — and find myself being shoved up roughly against a wall.

In a flash they grab me from either side and pin down my arms. Instinctively my hand-to-hand training kicks in, but it's three of them against one of me. I try to gasp out the word "stop" but can barely even hear myself. I feel something pushed up inside me. *God, it hurts*. For a merciful minute my body and mind go numb. And then it's over.

Two months later I'm sitting in a hotel room a couple of cities away — just far enough to be anonymous — using my meager R&R, though I can hardly rest and sure don't feel like recreating. I thought about going to see the base doctor, but that would mean telling people about the incident. Telling them I was weak. That I could not, after all, defend myself as well as any man. I had already imagined reporting it to my C.O., trying and failing to imagine some way of saying it that wouldn't lead to the inevitable conclusion that I was not cut out to be a soldier. So I did what a soldier does: I soldiered on, with grim-faced determination, through the bouts of nausea and bile, until I couldn't avoid my sinking suspicion any longer. Yesterday that suspicion was confirmed. Tomorrow it will be over. Like the responses to enemy contact I learned in battle drills, it's a simple matter of self-defense. If I couldn't defend myself from those guys in my unit, I can at least have some control over the consequences.

After I check into the clinic, they call me back for what they call "counseling," which feels more like a classroom lecture until the haze of information turns into a question. "I'm required by law to remind you that you have other options: adoption, parenting. Are you sure this is what you want?" She says it not like she's expecting me to seriously consider the question, but cursorily, like she's reciting a line from a play. I almost laugh. Because the real answer is hell no, I don't want to be reduced to defending myself against a creature that's even more helpless than I was. But I know what my line is in this script, and that's not it. Swallowing that response, my mouth draws into a flat line as I give the expected answer.

The doctor in the procedure room is saying something about a speculum and a vacuum and removing pregnancy tissue. As for me, I'm just steeling myself. From my position on the table I see her looking intently at a screen that's turned away from me so I can't see. Suddenly she grimaces, then turns and mutters something to the two assistants in the room. I crane my neck to see, and I feel a hand gently come down on my shoulder, restraining. Automatically, I jerk away. My arm flies out and jostles the screen around. And for a few seconds, I see what they didn't want me to see: this "pregnancy tissue" has a tiny human hand. And it too is jerking away from something. Trying helplessly, as I did, to defend itself.

In a flash they grab me from either side and pin down my arms. Instinctively my hand-to-hand training kicks in, but it's three of them against one of me. I try to gasp out the word "stop" but can barely even hear myself. I feel something pushed up inside me. *God, it hurts*. For a merciful minute, my body and mind go numb. And then it's over.

They're apologetic afterward, saying something about a trigger and keeping me safe. *Safe from what*, I wonder. But I don't reply. I'm shaking like I was after the incident. At least this time I have another day to pull myself together. After that, there's nothing to do but keep soldiering on.

Part Two: Disarmed

Two months into my deployment, I'm pacing around one of the watch points on the outer perimeter of the Operations Base. Night guard duty.

I don't mind the night watch. It's a break from the usual desert heat of the Nineveh Plain, and most of the time it's been reassuringly uneventful. Truth be told, there's a kind of thrill in being

slightly on edge, as though my previous moment of weakness has become an advantage. Alone at night, on high alert with my M4 in my hands, I actually feel powerful.

The worst thing, even at night, is the dust. You never know when a sudden gust of wind or a surge from who-knows-where might obscure all but a few inches in front of your face. One of those surges is quickly building, making the sunrise hazy, but I know it's getting near the end of my watch.

Through the thickened air I hear a sudden heavy footfall, then hard breathing. I snap around to see a crazed-looking man wielding a knife step directly into my path. He freezes, his eyes widening even further. I don't wait. My right hand readies my weapon, and in the same smooth motion I step forward and reach for his right arm with my left, twisting hard, until he drops the knife. His open hand tries to jerk away, his feet pivoting outward, away from me. But I don't know what he might do, and I don't have time to think. I fire a shot into his abdomen, then another into his chest. I don't want to stay and watch him bleed out, but I drop and search him for weapons and intel.

Nothing.

He was *disarmed*.

I submit the situation report at 0600 as usual. Most of it looks the same as usual, except for one line toward the end that reads: "*enemy assailant dispatched.*" I stare at it for a minute as questions start swirling in my head like the dust that clouds the air. *Who was that guy? What was he doing there with no weapon except for that stupid knife in his hand? And in civilian clothes?* Not that that tells you much out here. All I saw was a wild-eyed man with a knife. I saw a threat. And I acted in self-defense. But what did he see? Did he think he needed a weapon only to defend himself against me?

My discharge comes three years and two redeployments later. In my head, I'm still waiting to be relieved from guard duty. I try to look as calm and composed as possible when I go for the firearms training required to get my concealed carry permit, afraid it will raise eyebrows if I seem too jumpy, but it turns out I didn't have much to worry about. My discharge papers are practically a golden ticket. The training is like going back to Basic — back when shooting was a theoretical exercise, a skill development like any other. Naturally, I breeze through it. They sign some forms and thank me for my service.

It still takes a few weeks for all the paperwork to come through, and in the meantime, nothing feels quite right. A few weeks without so much as a sidearm. I feel its absence like a missing limb. I'm more on the alert than ever, my whole body snapping toward every sound, hardly trusting myself to sleep. But as soon as I can get my protection, I keep thinking, everything will feel normal again.

And then I do. And it does, and it doesn't. I thought sleep should come easier now, but it's like my whole rhythm has gotten screwed up. After a few restless hours I give up, throw on a tank top and shorts, strap on my Glock underneath, and go for a jog.

The footpath is unlit and lined with shrubbery, but the night sky is clear. Through a rustle of foliage I hear a sudden heavy footfall, then hard breathing. I snap around to see a crazed-looking man wielding a knife step directly into my path. He freezes, his eyes widening even further. I don't wait. My right hand readies my weapon, and in the same smooth motion I step forward and reach for his right arm with my left, twisting hard, until he drops the

knife. His open hand tries to jerk away, his feet pivoting outward, away from me. But I don't know what he might do, and I don't have time to think. I fire a shot into his abdomen, then another into his chest. Before I even realize what I'm doing, I'm on my knees, patting him down, checking for weapons and intel. Nothing, except a wallet in his back pocket.

He was *disarmed*.

And — it hits me full force as I stare up into the red and blue flash of police lights — a civilian.

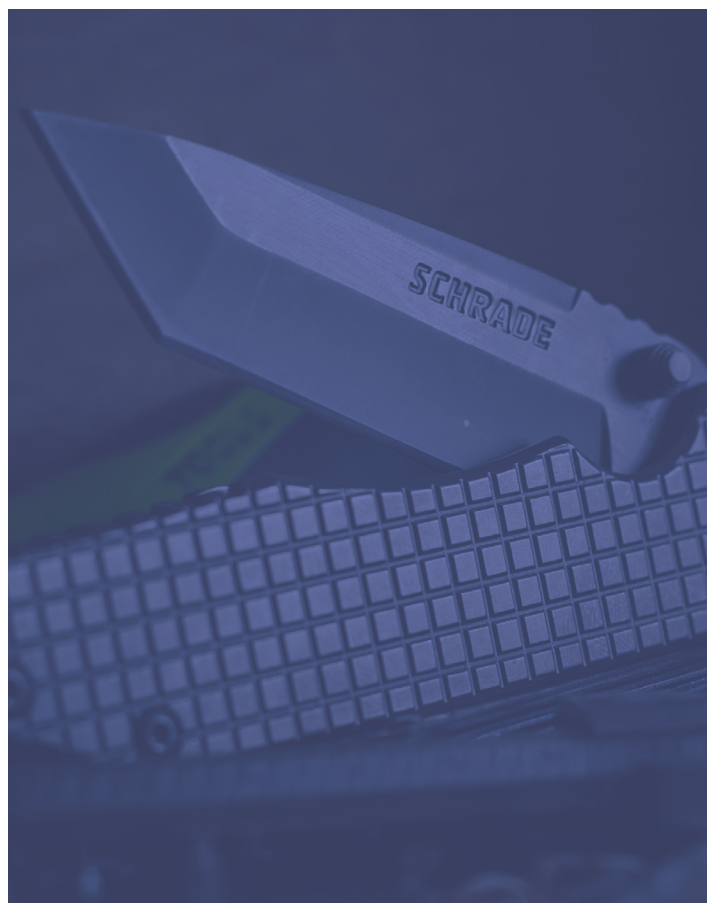
As one officer puts me in handcuffs, another takes out the wallet I found a minute ago. He is turned away as he speaks into his radio, but I hear him say the word "shooting." I hear him say the word "victim." I hear him say a name. I hear him say, "17-year-old male." Not just a civilian. A minor. Then I hear the word "suspect." Then my name.

The rules are different here. This kid's death can't be reduced to a line in a sitrep, it has to be explained by a public defender. Even though all I saw was another wild-eyed man with a knife. And I acted in self-defense. But that's not enough this time. The rules are different here.

Epilogue

I guess this is where it ends.

In one week, I am going to die. Maybe my death will be the last one required. But then — required for what? I don't know. Maybe nobody knows. Maybe it really won't be the last at all. All I know is, in one week, I won't have to think about it anymore.





Which People Are We Uniting?

Reading Charlie Camosy's *Resisting Throwaway Culture*

By Kelly Matula, PhD

I was very excited to read Professor Charles Camosy's latest book, *Resisting Throwaway Culture: How a Consistent Life Ethic Can Unite a Fractured People*, both because it came very highly recommended and because the title seemed to encapsulate what I — and, unless I am mistaken, most if not all of my colleagues here at Rehumanize International — see as the promise of the Consistent Life Ethic: that it can unite often ideologically disparate groups of people with the mission of protecting and caring for all members of our human family. And I was gratified to see that the book does an excellent job of this in many ways. I especially appreciated several features of the book, such as the space devoted to directly addressing opponents' objections at the close of each chapter and the fact that there are entire chapters focused on several issues — specifically poverty,² state-sponsored violence,³ and our treatment of the environment and non-human animals⁴ — that some might have a harder time recognizing as falling under the CLE umbrella because they do not always result in death. However, my overarching concern with the book is that it both outlines the importance of the CLE for the United States as a whole, regardless of people's religious affiliations, and appeals most often to religious authorities (specifically, the Catholic Church), in a way that I fear would drive away secular readers who might otherwise greatly benefit from Camosy's excellent explanation of the CLE.

Since the author is a Catholic scholar and the publisher, New City Press, is explicitly Christian, it would make sense for one to expect the book to be focused on a Catholic audience as well. However, particularly early in the book, Camosy's language and use of sources often suggests that he is also working to address issues relevant to, if not appeal directly to, a wider audience than fellow Catholics or Christians. The introduction is titled "A Political Culture on the Brink," and while there are references to specifically Christian culture,⁵ most of the points made and statistics cited, including about people's views and growing dissatisfaction with the political binary in America,⁶ encapsulate both secular and religious culture rather than being specifically focused on the views of American Christians. I saw this as a very promising start. Though I am a Catholic myself, I have seen enough dedicated CLE activism from those of other faiths and no faith to know that many non-Christians have already embraced the CLE, and I see the divisions in America as troubling enough and the threats to life as dire and widespread enough, that I believe it is essential to reach more people with the message of the CLE even — or perhaps especially — if they are outside the church in which the ethic was originally founded. Indeed, at the end of the introduction, while he makes clear that the book will use a primarily Catholic lens, Camosy states:

because the CLE often addresses its arguments to 'all people of good will,' those who have faith in something other

than Christianity (including those with no explicitly religious faith) will find much to engage as well. Values like the irreducible dignity of the person, nonviolence, hospitality, encounter, mercy, conservation of the ecological world, and giving priority to the most vulnerable are written on the hearts of many kinds of people. And this book will show how those values can provide the basis for unity among a fractured people.⁷

There are many ways in which Camosy's book does well at trying to achieve this goal of uniting all people behind the CLE. His examples of the issues caused by "throwaway culture" draw from many aspects of culture with a wide appeal, everything from current events to popular films, music, and social trends. The range of news and other sources he cites for statistics and other elements of his arguments is impressive for including conservative and liberal, religious and secular data sources. And his replies to objections at the end of each chapter stick fairly faithfully to the broader values to which he appealed in the introduction. Thus, there are many aspects of the book that will appeal to readers of all stripes and all political and religious persuasions.

However, when it comes to actually appealing to authorities to back up his philosophical points about the dignity of all people, Camosy nearly always uses Catholic Church authority, specifically Cardinal Bernardin (one of the original formulators of the Consistent Life Ethic). Church documents, and statements by Popes Benedict XVI and Francis, the latter especially. Though Francis in particular is admired and followed by many in secular society, I suspect he still does not have enough appeal to be seen as an ultimate authority by a majority of secular readers. As a person who works a great deal with secular activists and others on many life issues, and often tries to show the appeal of the CLE to non-Christian or secular friends, I was very mindful of how this balance of authorities might seem to those sorts of readers. I think Camosy is right to say that the values of the CLE are applicable to all people, but that that promise then rings a bit hollow when the ultimate authorities he uses to back up those values are nearly all Christian. I worry that this could be severely off-putting to secular readers, and make them not only put aside Camosy's book, but also put aside the idea of the CLE, since it seems to be grounded so much in religion. I think Camosy's ultimate message, and the ultimate goal of uniting a fractured people, would have been accomplished much better if he had included more non-Christian or secular authorities — be they philosophers, world leaders, or others. The book uses such authorities to provide examples of the problems our world faces, but the solutions are largely presented as coming from Christian minds. In organizing his book this way, I think Camosy has done himself and the CLE a great disservice.

I think Camosy's book is very good, especially for my fellow Christians. It addresses many contemporary issues in light of the CLE, including some unusual ones. However, I think that the extent to which it focuses on Christian authority robs it of much of the force it might have had with non-Christian readers, who I see as valuable allies in the fight for life. I would encourage non-Christians to still read this book, as I think they will learn a lot about the CLE and strategies for spreading it to others. Though they might struggle to look beyond the almost exclusive appeals

to religious authority, I believe the issues our culture faces today make that struggle worth it. But I think a book which did not require that struggle to the same extent, by being at least more inclusive of secular authority, would have done Camosy a great deal of credit and gone even further to truly unite a fractured people, as Camosy aims to do.

Notes for "Which People Are We Uniting?"

1. *Author's Note*: I read an ebook edition of the book, which does not include page numbers; citations are to chapters or, where applicable, subsections.

2. Charles C. Camosy, *Resisting Throwaway Culture: How a Consistent Life Ethic Can Unite a Fractured People* (New York: New City Press, 2018). Kindle edition, chapter 5.
3. *Ibid.*, chapter 8.
4. *Ibid.*, chapter 6.
5. *Ibid.*, Introduction, under "Polarization, Incoherency, and Christian Communities."
6. *Ibid.*, Introduction, under "Reasons for Hope."
7. *Ibid.*, Introduction, under "Thesis and Goals of This Book"



Compassion and Conversion: Abortion Workers and the Right to Live Free From Violence

By Stephanie Hauer

"They're so pro-life, they'll kill you for it."

Critics have lobbed this sarcastic line at pro-lifers many times, but it highlights a sad truth about our movement. Sometimes, in an effort to protect vulnerable lives, pro-lifers demonize the people on the other side. We can become angry, resentful, even aggressive. In other words, we echo the same violent dehumanization that we seek to protest in the first place.

Over the decades, abortion workers have faced countless threatened or real violent actions, some of which even resulted in deaths. Since 2010, three abortion workers were murdered, and nine others were victims of attempted murder. Among abortion workers, 259 reported that they received death threats or threats of harm, and 43 have received bomb threats (and one actual bombing has occurred since 2010). Also, 105,871 abortion workers experienced harassment online. And that's just since the beginning of this decade — since 1977, the total number of reported acts of violence and disruption is greater than 570,000.¹

We, as pro-life people, cannot condemn the violence of drone strikes and war if we are setting off bombs ourselves. We cannot denounce the violence of euthanasia if we are shooting at people because of the building they're inside. We cannot cry out for the dignity of all persons if we are undermining that dignity by harassing people from the sidewalk outside of an abortion clinic. Unless we are comfortable being hypocrites, we cannot defend the dignity of every person in every situation while villainizing the people who staff abortion clinics.

No matter what a person has done, they are still a person. They

still have inherent dignity that can never be taken away from them. People who work in the abortion industry are unique human beings, and they too deserve to live a life free of violence.

I spoke with a woman who worked at a Planned Parenthood in St. Louis to hear more about the impact of violence on abortion workers. To preserve her anonymity, we will refer to her as DB.

Life Matters Journal: Did you ever experience threats or acts of violence because of your work in the abortion industry?

DB: After a few weeks of being [at the clinic]... I decided to brave a walk to check out the surrounding neighborhood. I left the building and noticed a protestor, "John," was taunting the females going into and out of the clinic, saying things like "baby killer," "you're going to hell," and "murderer." "John" noticed me one afternoon and started launching personal verbal attacks at me, saying things such as "you're guilty of killing babies" and "you're going to hell for working at [the clinic]." He followed me around the corner to the café where I would get coffee/lunch; the whole time he was acting very aggressive, menacing, scary, and belligerent towards me. He was shouting "baby killer" at me as I tried to walk faster to get away from him. I cried all the way back to work because he was so scary, I honestly thought he was capable of physically hurting me.

I witnessed aggressive, confrontational, scary, loud protesters there every day. They would hang bloody baby clothes over the fence, [and] wielded signs that showed dismembered fetuses. They would harass the patients and workers relentlessly every chance they got: making threats, calling horrible names, and doing

whatever they could to make us uncomfortable. My job was to answer the phones and I fielded strange calls almost every day with threats to expose the [clinic] workers, to make sure the community we lived in knew we were baby killers, to make sure our families knew what we were doing, and to just remind us we were damned and going to hell because we were taking part in killing babies.

LMJ: How did those experiences affect you?

DB: The acts of violence, taunts, and threats deeply affected me because one of our doctors was followed home by protestors. I became obsessively paranoid about these people following me home, blowing up my home, telling my neighbors where I worked, putting signs in my yard... My imagination is so vivid, I thought they were capable of anything. I couldn't sleep; I was up and down [waking up] all night long. I developed debilitating headaches, stomach issues, panic attacks, and paranoia. I was constantly in a state of hyper-awareness, nervousness, and anxiety, and I became isolated because I was so afraid of these protestors finding out my address and exposing me to my community. I spent the better part of a

I became obsessively paranoid about these people following me home ...

year being scared and constantly having to look over my shoulder because I always felt like one of them could be stalking me and waiting to do something horrible to me.

LMJ: Please describe some of your most memorable interactions with pro-lifers.

DB: There were a group of young men and women who would cheerfully greet us every day going into and leaving from the clinic, [despite] rain or intense heat. This particular group of young people were peaceful, kind, not accusatory, non-threatening, [and] humble, and made me realize [that] not all the protestors were threatening and fanatical. I was especially impacted by a young woman. She would tell me I looked nice, have a nice day, please reach out to them if/when I decided to leave; [she] offered help and demonstrated the very definition of the word compassion.

Because of the patience, kindness, and humility of these young [people], I actually started to think about leaving Planned Parenthood for the first time. I was impressed by their devotion to the pro-life movement and impressed by their kindness. Because of them, I realized this job wasn't the "right" place for me to be, it wasn't a "career" for me; it wasn't a place I could go to work and hold my head up high with pride and confidence. I felt genuinely moved and swayed by their kindness and the more I saw them, the better I felt about my commitment to find a way out of there as soon as I could.

LMJ: Why is it important for protestors to be a peaceful presence outside of an abortion clinic, rather than an aggressive or intimidating force?

DB: Not enough can be said to fully demonstrate or emphasize the importance of having calm, peaceful, prayerful protestors out on the sidewalk. Planned Parenthood is *not* a happy place to work, visit, or be a patient, [without] adding into that situation threats, shame, fear, violent pictures, and aggressive protestors screaming at them. From personal experience, having worked there and being a post-abortive woman, I can tell you that the walk into an abortion clinic is heartbreaking, overwhelming, so scary, and just humiliating. For me, the hate-filled protestors I witnessed [as both a patient and a] former clinic worker only added to my [already feeling] low, unloved, unworthy, and [isolated].

My biggest feelings are that if the "crazy" aggressive protestors really and truly value the sanctity of *all* life, then it's a bad idea to dehumanize, bully, threaten, and judge the women who are walking into an abortion clinic. If women who are contemplating abortion are going to ever be positively impacted and convinced into choosing life for their preborn child, then the hate, threats, and aggression *must stop*, because the lives of the innocent preborn depend on it.

LMJ: What are some actionable ways that pro-lifers can respect the humanity of abortion workers while still advocating for the preborn lives at stake?

DB: Always remember that everybody is a person, no matter if we currently work at or have worked at Planned Parenthood. We have lives, families, feelings, emotions, and dreams and it's not [easy] to work in such a negative, dark place.

Actionable ways of impacting workers who have become hardened from working in the industry would be to engage in polite conversation (while not expecting a response in return), being outwardly kind, demonstrating quiet compassion through giving out pregnancy resource literature, [and] making a positive impression on the workers and women going into and leaving the clinic by not wavering in kindness. What made the biggest impression on me was that even while I was indoctrinated into the Planned Parenthood way of thinking, the peaceful protestors treated me like a human being, they were kind to me, spoke to me like I was a normal person, and they did their best to befriend me in that horrible situation.

Publicly denounce crazy, unsafe, violent, scary behaviors exhibited by the aggressive protestors. Sometimes simply telling them to "stop it" on the sidewalk will be enough to stop the nasty, hateful behavior.

—

DB's experiences are her own, but she is not alone. Countless other abortion workers experience similar situations all over the country. It is vital that we not let our exuberant advocacy for the preborn blind us to the needs of the people in front of us. Instead, we must empower abortion workers to leave the abortion industry, empower parents in crisis to seek life-affirming options, and celebrate the dignity of every human being, regardless of circumstance.

Notes for "Compassion and Conversion"

1. "2018 Violence and Disruption Statistics," National Abortion Federation, accessed August 2, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Kko6CP>.



What Personal Storytelling Leaves Out: A Suggestion on Alternate Approaches to Activism

By John Whitehead

A common practice among activists

or commentators on political controversies is to invoke personal stories. Someone will tell how her or his life, or the life of a friend or acquaintance, was directly affected by a larger injustice or problem. The activist or commentator will use that personal experience as an element in an argument about how best to understand and respond to the larger injustice. This use of personal stories in political arguments is often powerful, but it also has serious limitations. Further, because not all political causes lend themselves equally well to sharing personal stories, this approach slants attention and discussion toward certain causes and away from others no less worthy.

Before explaining personal stories' limits, however, I should give due credit to their value. Having someone talk about suffering personally from an injustice makes what could otherwise be a general and distant issue specific and immediate. When someone talks about a personal experience, we do not encounter statistics or charts that can be intellectually grasped but leave our emotions untouched. We hear another human being tell her or his story and may end up deeply touched. The specificity, immediacy, and emotional impact of personal stories can inspire a commitment to work against whatever injustice has affected the storyteller's life.

Because of its power to inspire, telling personal stories is often part of activism, including social justice, peace, and pro-life activism. Groups such as Veterans for Peace and Silent No More, to take just a couple examples, make known the stories of people affected by war or abortion who now wish to speak out against these forms of violence.¹ Such use of personal storytelling by activists is entirely understandable and often valuable.

Personal storytelling is not a cure-all, however. It has several short-

comings. First, not all audiences are inspired by the same approach. Many people are moved to action by someone's personal experiences, but others may be more cautious or cerebral by nature and require a more abstract analysis of an injustice before they act against it. Second, while sharing personal experiences of injustice can touch people emotionally, such sharing cannot by itself provide a practical strategy for how to counter that injustice. A more analytical approach that looks at the injustice in a more abstract way is necessary.

A third problem with personal stories, and the main one that concerns me, is that not all activist causes lend themselves equally well to such storytelling. A cause might be a good one that addresses a real injustice without being easy to translate into a tale of personal experience.

Sometimes the people most directly affected by an injustice are far removed from the people who most need to hear their stories. When wars or military actions waged by the United States cause death and injury in other countries, the bereaved and injured survivors cannot easily gain a hearing from the American public: their physical and political distance from the United States prevents that. American troops who have known the trauma of war or American families who have lost loved ones in war can make their voices heard more easily and that

A cause might be a good one that addresses a real injustice without being easy to translate into a tale of personal experience.



Should the Consistent Life Ethic Include Non-Human Animals?

Rehumanize International (and by extension, *Life Matters Journal*) is dedicated to ending aggressive violence against human beings. There are myriad acts of aggressive violence that are addressed in this magazine because of that central principle. However, there are also issues which fall in the periphery of the causes for peace and life; on these topics, Rehumanize International does not take an official stance, but we still find them important and worthy of discussion. This section of *Life Matters Journal*, "Opposing Views," aims to highlight varying perspectives on such issues.

Affirmative

By Kristin Monahan

Adherents to the Consistent Life Ethic argue that it is what we share that counts, not our differences. We look at people of different races, abilities, classes — born or unborn, soldier or civilian, guilty or innocent, immigrant or native — and we say that absolutely none of that matters in terms of whether or not you should have equal rights. It is what we share, our shared humanity, that matters.

However, this doesn't extend quite far enough because we are animals just the same. We are just as much a part of the animal kingdom as every other member of the animal kingdom. Our fellow animals are equal to us in the exact same way that people of color are equal to those who are white, womxn are equal to men, poor people are equal to rich people, and those with disabilities are equal to those who are able-bodied. This is why, in order to be consistent, we must include our fellow animals in the Consistent Life Ethic.

Every argument from non-vegans as to why our fellow animals are not equal to us, or why they should not have the most basic rights — to not be killed, exploited, enslaved, or consumed — are the same arguments made against the Consistent Life Ethic. They say that what matters is intelligence level, sentience level, looks, environment, size, ability to have rational thought, or the ability to contribute to society. These are the same judgements cast upon the preborn, those with disabilities, those of other races, women, and LGBTQIA+ people. We must do better than casting those judgments upon our fellow animals.

Some will say, "Well, the Consistent Life Ethic is about humans, so we are still consistent." To me, this is no different than saying, "Well, it's about white people, so we're still consistent if we believe that only white people should have equal rights." You can't be consistent if you leave a group out, so I challenge every Consistent Life Ethic adherent to include our fellow animals.

Negative

By Herb Geraghty

The Consistent Life Ethic is a philosophy that delicately bridges intersecting movements for human rights and dignity. Adherents believe that all human beings are both intrinsically valuable and equal based on our shared humanity. Since its inception, it has existed to end abortion, war, the death penalty, euthanasia, and all other forms of violence against human beings. In a culture where dehumanization is as common as the violence it leads to, it is essential to have a strong movement backing this philosophy.

When you attend any gathering of CLE adherents, you can clearly see that we are an incredibly ideologically diverse group of people. The Consistent Life Ethic movement consists of Catholic priests working side-by-side with transgender atheists and everyone in between. There is room for conservatives and socialists, pacifists and gun owners — and yes, meat eaters and vegans.

As an outspoken vegan — and someone who has led and participated in countless animal rights and welfare campaigns, demonstrations, and events — I care deeply about violence against non-human animals. However, it is evident to me that shoehorning animal issues into a movement for human rights will bring nothing but division and hurt both communities.

The majority of Consistent Life Ethic supporters are not vegetarian or vegan, and alienating them by declaring that they are not truly consistent will do nothing to help the millions of children around the world who are at risk of being bombed, aborted, euthanized, or deported. For their sake, we must be working to bring more into our ranks, not carelessly dividing them. Human rights and animal rights are not mutually exclusive, and I would be in full support of a philosophy or movement to bridge those issues, but the Consistent Life Ethic is just not that. Similar to how it is not unjustly exclusionary for feminists to focus on women's liberation, it is not wrong for a longstanding human rights movement to focus on human rights.



Suicide Prevention for All

By Stephanie Hauer

The loss of human life in any circumstance is tragic. While many acts of violence are imposed outwardly, suicide is a uniquely poignant and painful form of violence that faces inward. As a society, we are quick to mourn those lost to suicide and to call for its prevention when it affects someone we know from the media or our own lives. Social media platforms have added ways to detect and report signs of suicidal thoughts demonstrated by its users so that intervention can be prompt and successful. The phone numbers for suicide hotlines are frequently circulated. More and more resources are being made available to those who are contemplating suicide so that they can receive the help they so desperately need.

So why does that fervor for prevention disappear when someone is not able-bodied?

The movement to legalize assisted suicide flies in the face of the suicide prevention measures that are gaining traction in other settings. All people are deserving of suicide prevention care, regardless of their health, age, ability, level of independence, or any other factors. Human life is always worth protecting, but assisted suicide undermines that truth.

Assisted suicide is particularly scrutinized by disability activists. Much of the justification behind assisted suicide has ableist elements and therefore harms the entire disabled community. Not Dead Yet is a grassroots disability rights that opposes assisted suicide and euthanasia. They succinctly explain the dangers of including assisted suicide as a medical treatment option for people who are seriously ill or disabled.

First and foremost, assisted suicide perpetuates misconceptions about having disabilities. Most people who advocate for the legalization of assisted suicide emphasize unbearable pain as the main reason for its use. However, according to Oregon's Death with Dignity Act Annual Reports, lethal prescriptions were issued for very different reasons: 91% for loss of autonomy, 89% for decreased ability to engage in activities, 81% for loss of dignity, 50% for loss of control of bodily functions, and 40% for feelings of being a burden.¹ That list describes some of the challenges that people with disabilities face on a regular basis. If they are valid reasons to offer lethal prescriptions to patients, then the implication is that all people with disabilities do not have lives worth living because they face those same challenges.

We live in a society that celebrates and regularly expects physical ability. The structures around us are designed for a specific skill set, and people with disabilities frequently find those structures difficult to navigate. Our designs, from the entrances of buildings to the layout of bathrooms to the construction of most clothing, are not inclusive to everyone. As such, it is unsurprising that when someone who was previously able-bodied finds themselves in a situation where they are not free to navigate the world in their independent and comfortable way, they view this as a loss of dignity. When patients are offered assisted suicide because of challenges such as the loss of control of bodily functions, it indicates that anyone with incontinence, spasms, or other losses of bodily function is considered to similarly lack dignity.

Not all patients are offered legally assisted suicide. As Not Dead Yet states, "some people get suicide prevention while others get suicide assistance, and the difference between the two groups is the health status of the individual, leading to a two-tiered system that results in death to the socially devalued group. This is blatant discrimination."²

The second danger inherent to assisted suicide is the role of doctors as gatekeepers. While anyone could request assisted suicide, not everyone will receive it. That decision is made by physicians, requiring them to predict if a patient will die within six months, and whether the request for death is made with a rational and clear mind or from a position of impaired judgement. Such evaluations are difficult to make and often inaccurate. As such, those who do not fit the criteria for assisted suicide are still sometimes permitted to proceed with their request for death, because the evaluation system makes mistakes.

Doctors consistently underestimate the quality of life of people with disabilities compared to their patients' self-assessments. This is yet another manifestation of the misconceptions about disability and the false idea that dignity is only found in independence and physical ability. Instances of abuse of patients or elders are common and often unnoticed; the patient may be coerced or threatened into requesting assisted suicide even if they themselves do not want it. A physician who has no knowledge of such abuse cannot factor it into their decisions, may give a lethal prescription to someone who actually wants to live.

The third problem with assisted suicide is that it presents an "easy

way out” with an unacceptable cost. Much of this “ease” is within a financial context. Killing a patient is a one-time expense, whereas continued care is an ongoing cost. Many of the conditions that activate consideration of assisted suicide can be mitigated through better palliative care. It is also common for patients to develop depression that can be treated. Both of these avenues come at an additional financial cost.

Assisted suicide allows physicians, health care providers, and the legal system to put their own interests before the interests of the patient. Health care providers, who are under constant pressure to reduce their costs, can cut funding to programs that provide even basic care such as help getting out of bed, using the toilet, and bathing, because an “alternative” is offered. Under futility policies and statutes, physicians and health care providers have the right to override a patient’s requests for life-sustaining treatment. When the patient inevitably dies from this absence of care, the cause of death is listed as their medical conditions, so no investigation is necessary and no meaningful data can be collected to provide statistics on these kinds of deaths. Finally, the legal standards can be written to grant immunity to physicians in all circumstances because they only have to act in “good faith,” which is the lowest culpability standard possible (even below “negligence.”) This allows the legal system to practically ignore physician assisted suicide cases.

In 2016, Canada passed a bill known as the Medical Assistance in Dying Act. This bill allows for assisted suicide under the care of a nurse practitioner or doctor.³ It requires that the patient seeking euthanasia fit the following criteria in order to be given the lethal prescription: eligible for federally funded medical care, eighteen years old or older, mentally competent, diagnosed with a “grievous and irremediable medical condition,” making a voluntary request for death, and having informed consent to all treatment options available, including euthanasia.⁴ While the technicalities of these criteria are intended to help reserve the process for only those who “need” it, they fall short of addressing the concerns identified by Not Dead Yet and other groups who advocate against assisted suicide.

Suicide is not a solution. Allowing assisted suicide into our society is unjust and discriminatory. It enables those in power to put their own self-interest above the good of their patients. It perpetuates the misconceptions that people with disabilities lack dignity and do not lead valuable lives. And most of all, it comes at the intolerable cost of human lives. While assisted suicide and euthanasia are often portrayed as compassionate acts, the truth is clear. Killing a person, especially someone who is in need, is always wrong.

Notes

1. “Disability Rights Toolkit for Advocacy Against Legalization of Assisted Suicide.” Not Dead Yet. Not Dead Yet, May 1, 2015. <https://notdeadyet.org/disability-rights-toolkit-for-advocacy-against-legalization-of-assisted-suicide>.
2. Ibid.
3. “Medical Assistance in Dying.” [Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/medical-assistance-dying.html). Government of Canada, April 25, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/medical-assistance-dying.html>.
4. Ibid.

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A Personal Testimony: Having a Child with an Adverse Fetal Diagnosis

By Sarah St. Onge

When the editors of *Life Matters Journal* reached out to me and offered to let me tell my story here, I immediately accepted the challenge because I believe so deeply in what Rehumanize has to say about how we all treat one another. I'm probably the last person my friends and family would expect to be writing for a progressive journal. My politics are most definitely right-of-center and I actively work to have conservative representation in my local government.

Yet here I am.

Because in 2010 I delivered a baby who only lived for one hour and forty-seven minutes. She survived just long enough to make an indelible impact on the world, however, an hour and forty-seven minutes isn't considered a life worth living by many on both ends of the political spectrum.

Some background: before she was born, we knew our daughter was most likely going to die. We also knew there were problems much earlier than most parents who receive a poor prenatal diagnosis. At only nine weeks gestation, she'd already suffered a cataclysmic accident: her olive-sized body essentially split in half. We saw it happen in real time on an ultrasound screen; her tiny form completely engulfed in a bubble of fluid called *hydrops* — a name which sounds more like a children's sweet than a medical ailment. I didn't know babies could have the equivalent of strokes while in the womb, especially when they had barely begun to form. Because the damage looked so widespread I was sent home to miscarry — but my daughter miraculously survived. As she developed, however, it became apparent that her abdominal organs were growing outside of her body, and by sixteen weeks, doctors determined her sacral bone was also positioned in such a way as to leave her paralyzed below the waist. Sixteen weeks was the first time they used the term "incompatible with life" and the fourth time I was offered an abortion, if you count the initial offer of a D&C, when my doctor believed I was in the process of suffering a miscarriage.

I said no. Every time.

It took a further nine weeks for doctors to officially name what ailed my daughter: Limb Body Wall Complex (LBWC). Universally lethal. One of the defect complexes most commonly used in arguments in favor of termination for medical reasons.¹ LBWC is basically a disruption in the embryonic folding process at the point where the umbilical cord forms, and is generally catastrophic. The cause is unknown and there is no cure for it, and very few survivors.

My daughter had the bare minimum of requirements to fit into this category of midline defect, and because I have a life-long history of both living and working with atypical humans, what doctors saw as insurmountable obstacles I saw as potential challenges. While doctors attempted to coerce me into having abortion I researched stories of survivors. When they laughed at me and told me I was tenacious for my course of study, I sought out new doctors.

Through my entire pregnancy I was pressured to end my daughter's life. I resisted. At every doctor's appointment I was offered the option to terminate. I said no. I asked to have a note put into my chart acknowledging I had already been offered an abortion and declined it, but I was told, "We can't do that, because it's part of informed consent." I was never offered support to continue my pregnancy as part of that informed consent.

Through my entire pregnancy
I was pressured to end my
daughter's life. I resisted.

Not only did I resist abortion, but I repeatedly begged for interventions which would potentially save my daughter's life.

A C-section to ensure she experienced the least trauma during delivery was denied: "I'm not cutting open a perfectly healthy uterus for a baby who's just going to die."

When I asked to be put on bed rest, I was told they weren't going to do that: "You most likely will deliver prematurely, and there's really no point in trying to extend the pregnancy any longer than its natural course."

When I noted I was starting to show signs of labor, and asked to have some sort of treatment to stop it, I was told: "You're not heading into labor" (I delivered her less than 48 hours after that appointment).

When in the hospital preparing to birth her, I asked for steroid shots — a standard treatment for preemies and babies who are expected to have lung issues. I was told, "We don't do that for babies

who are going to die.”

In December 2010, my Beatrix was born — and then she did die, just like they’d all predicted.

I tried my very hardest to save my daughter’s life, but all of my trying wasn’t enough. Whether she would have survived if they’d done all that I asked is up for debate. (Four years after she was born, another sweet girl with LBWC that manifested similar to my daughter’s was born and survived. She is happy and thriving despite medical challenges.) What isn’t up for debate is the fact that the medical professionals’ attitude of dismissal *ensured* she wouldn’t.

Before this pregnancy, I myself believed in exceptions to anti-abortion laws. I didn’t necessarily consider myself 100% pro-life until I was faced with my exceptional daughter and others’ resistance to medically treating her.

Even after she died I had no intention of becoming a pro-life advocate. I was just trying to survive the overpowering grief I was experiencing. I still didn’t think it was my place to try and tell anyone else what they should do. I didn’t feel like I was “allowed” to advocate against termination for medical reasons. I believed that our treatment by the medical establishment was an anomaly because her disorder was too rare for them to take me seriously. But something which had been previously a gray area suddenly wasn’t, and as I grew in healing after Beatrix’s death, I began to notice other moms who were also being given substandard medical care. To be clear: what was happening was medically sound, in terms of current, accepted treatments. I am not accusing individual physicians of negligence. It’s the legal and medical system which is failing miserably in its duty to families.

This made me angry. Furious, in fact. So I started writing. And the more I wrote the more frustrated I became, because no one seemed to be paying attention to the fact that even in the most pro-life states, with the most pro-life legislators, women were still having to fight to get treatment for their critically ill children.

For example, in almost every deliriously celebrated anti-abortion law we’ve seen come out in the last year, there is an exception for “lethal” anomalies. The laws which pro-life groups tout as “exceptionless” often contain very specific exceptions for babies who are not expected to live for very long after birth.

When unborn babies are declared less than human in *pro-life* laws, something has gone terribly wrong. Killing people because we’ve lost hope in curing them isn’t merciful. It’s barbaric — and I mean that in the most literal sense of the word. When we decide these children aren’t to be legally protected, it dehumanizes them. There is no such thing as an unsalvageable person.

Children with trisomies 13 and 18 are particularly vulnerable to lethal medical bias, which is especially troubling since

treatments have evolved to improve the quality and length of life for these children and their families. Of note is the fact that medical journals and professionals still routinely refer to these diagnoses as “incompatible with life.”

So this is where I believe we can all work together. This is where Left meets Right.

Because —

It is not a conservative or progressive value to believe all people should be treated with dignity regardless of their race, nation of origin, political or religious beliefs, or station in life.

It is not a conservative or progressive value to believe all people should be protected from violence regardless of their intellectual or physical abilities.

And it is certainly not a conservative or progressive value to desire the end of state-sanctioned killing of vulnerable, voiceless humans.

However, when speaking to other conservatives I’m often accused of being too soft, not pragmatic enough, or an idealist because my suggested solutions many times center around community-based initiatives to solve problems.

On the other hand, when speaking with my progressive friends and family, I’m viewed as cold-hearted because I believe private enterprise and voluntarism will almost always work better than a government solution.

The truth is I’m just a human being who sees beauty in all types of people and wants everyone to have a chance to live their life to the fullest extent they are capable of — both the baby who has all her parts in the right places and one whose parts are all in pieces have a life with value. This is something we can all agree on, work together on, and in the process of working together maybe come to some agreement about how to right the injustices we see.

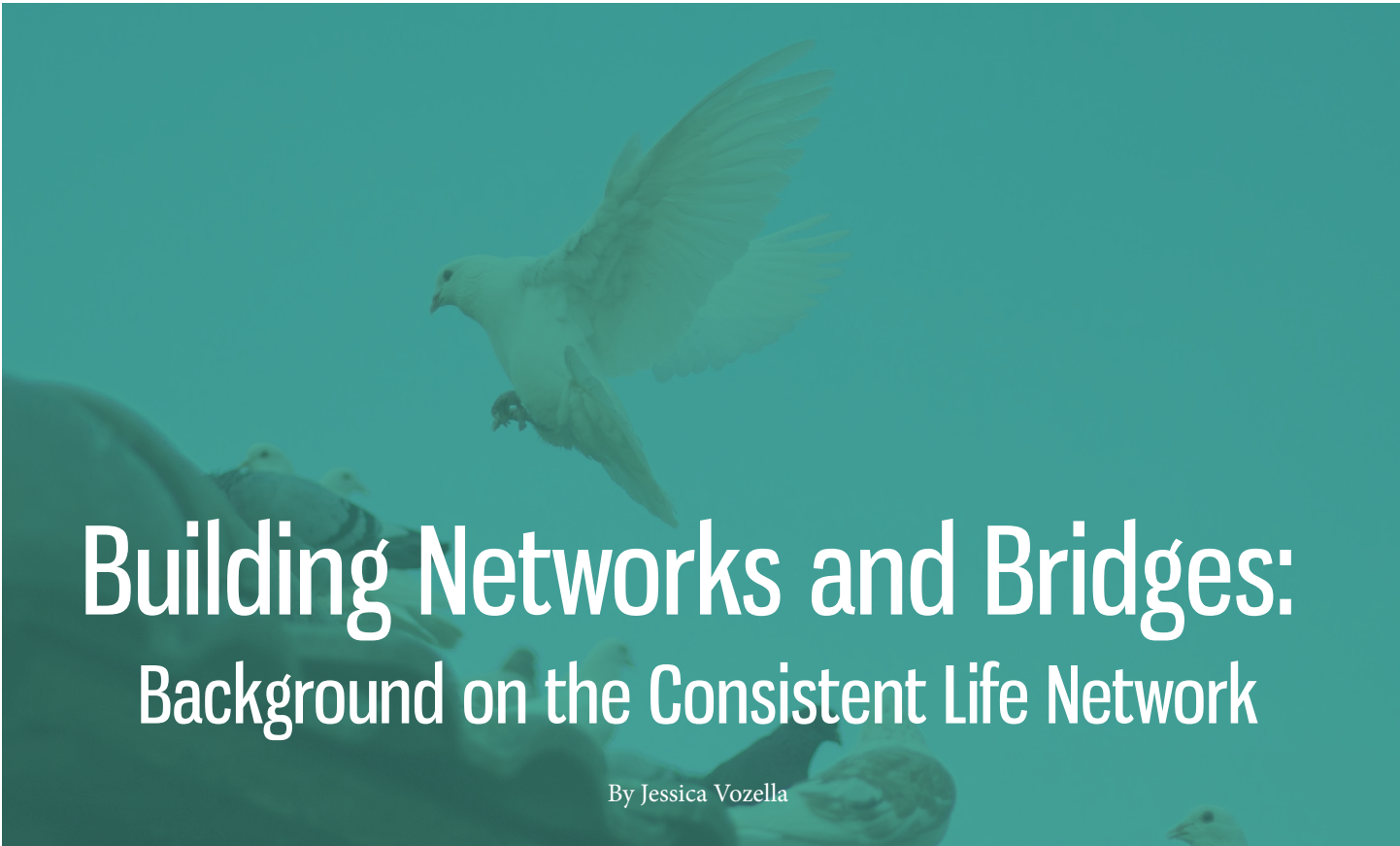
When doctors decided not to try and save my daughter’s life, they interfered in a potential miracle. When we seek to “help” women by allowing them to take the lives of their children in difficult situations, we’re interfering in potential miracles. The paradigm shift will only come when we wake up in the morning and think, *Who am I going to love unconditionally today?* — because unconditional love is the ultimate miracle. For me, it’s the same answer every day: *I’m loving my sweet Beatrix, who the rest of the world saw not as a baby but a medical oddity.* Just like with her, I don’t ask what the cost will be, and I soldier on when everything seems to be dead-set against me.

Sometimes the gaps between political ideals seem insurmountable, but if I’ve learned anything over the last nine years, it’s that miracles can occur if we let them — and conversely, when we stand in their way, precious things can be lost.

Notes

1. Lisa M. Corrigan. “Fetal Anomalies, Undue Burdens, and 20-week Abortion Bans,” *Science Progress* (blog), May 23, 2013. <https://scienceprogress.org/2013/05/fetal-anomalies-undue-burdens-and-20-week-abortion-bans/>

There is no such thing as an unsalvageable person.



Building Networks and Bridges: Background on the Consistent Life Network

By Jessica Vozella

In today's work for peace and justice,

connectivity and shared intelligence are often game-changers for organizations to reach their maximum potential. Many organizations exist that serve similar causes with shared values, but without connection it is easy for groups to isolate themselves, often duplicating services or involuntarily restricting their scope or education due to their own limited resources. With a network, however, these organizations can unite under their common goals and values in order to achieve together, rather than trying to go it alone with the limited resources, personnel, and knowledge they may have. Together, they are inclusive, reach further, and are more powerful than any one voice or group.

For the anti-violence community, such a network originated in 1987 when a group of people convened with the intention of uniting their work on two life issues: war and abortion. This group, which was previously known as Prolifers for Survival, became The Seamless Garment Network at that meeting. They also formed a mission statement that established a clear connection between the violence of nuclear weapons and abortion and sought to unite even more issues of violence under one movement. In 2002, the organization changed its name to the Consistent Life Network in an effort to clarify the mission and focus. Rachel MacNair, a founding member of the organization who was present at the 1987 meeting, explained that the group was founded on two principles that allow it to connect organizations across the anti-violence movement: that violence is interconnected, and “that consistency is the most convincing argument in the peace movement.”

Today, the Consistent Life Network (CLN) is just that: a network of members committed to the consistent life ethic with a specific emphasis on connectivity among those working in the field. Without holding specific positions on issues, abiding by particular political philosophies or religions, or insisting on the “right” ways of doing this work, the Network members “are a larger community with a common set of values working on a common call,” says former president of the CLN, Bill Samuel. This common call allows groups from all over the world and peace movements to operate individually, but to also come together when it makes sense to do so. Over 200 organizations and individuals have membership in the Consistent Life Network, including Rehumanize International, and these members hail from the U.S., Canada, the U.K., the Netherlands, Nigeria, India, and Australia. These are small, independent groups that vary greatly in their work and their type, from religious orders to student groups, secular social justice advocacy organizations to museums and publications. The breadth of opinions,

Over 200 organizations
and individuals have
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beliefs, and backgrounds brings a vital richness and diversity to the movement that allows for innovation, perspective, and competence. Rachel MacNair, a founding member of the Consistent Life Network, thinks the structure of the CLN is ideal: small organizations focused on their own missions, causes, and work that come together to form the consistent life ethic, and thus avoid the typical power struggles of a larger organization.

In fact, the organization's leadership is representative of the Network's focus on diversity and collaboration, as the leadership board is composed of people living all over the U.S., each bringing their own work and experience to continue bridging the gaps in the field. Another impressive note is that the CLN is completely run by volunteers and without an office space. As both Bill and Rachel mused, many of the members of the CLN are living outside of the typical economic system, with varying degrees of material independence. Thus, there is not much money flowing into the Network. However, the board members continue to generously volunteer their time, and some perform specific functions for the organization, like Rachel — in addition to being a founding member, she runs CLN's weekly e-newsletter and heads the organization's research branch, the Institute for Integrated Social Analysis (IISA).

The IISA functions as a research base for objective research on subjects relating to the consistent life ethic and connections between issues. Rachel, who earned a PhD in psychology, has engaged in powerful research that unites perspectives from those in the peace movement with those of the opposing side. One instance of this is when she compiled multiple sources of data and arguments from both sides of the abortion debate into a book, *Peace Psychology Perspectives on Abortion*. She set up a table outside the 2016 American Psychology Association Conference in Denver, and 127 copies of her book were taken. The demand for her book highlights the value of empirical data on issues that are often presented with biased research, even when it is accredited and taught around the country. Thus, the organization's role is not only important

within the pro-life community. "We are not preaching to the choir," Rachel proudly states, "...although sometimes, the choir needs to know how to sing." The work done by the Consistent Life Network helps create a connected, knowledgeable pro-life community while continually engaging those who would not otherwise be open to discussions on controversial issues, and thus has an impact on the movement toward a more peaceful world.

The existence of the Consistent Life Network is invaluable in forming a movement that is informed, supported, and constantly evolving. Creating this united front builds a stronger case for each issue and educates those who wish to combat opposition to the movement. And the opposition is not always where one would expect to find it, as Bill notes: "There are still a lot of [people] who think that the consistent life ethic is threatening to the work on abortion, which we've always disagreed with." For Bill, who was the president of the Consistent Life Network for twelve years, starting in 2005, the most important work of this Network is in uniting issues that threaten the dignity of human life, because we are all connected in a way that will persist for the long-term. The individual issues that the pro-life movement deals with most often do not encompass the full spectrum of violence that threatens the world today, and the very foundational principles of the Network remind us that violence is all connected. Therefore, the CLN is intentionally equipped to deal with new life-threatening issues as they arise. And though these issues are not close to being solved, the Consistent Life Network and its members are hopeful. "We've been very encouraged by the groups that have been springing up; there is a new interest for the consistent life ethic amongst youth and groups (like Rehumanize International), [and they] have a renewed season of interest and a lot of energy," Bill remarks. This is the future of the anti-violence movement with the help of the Consistent Life Network — a movement that is now better connected, energized, and ready to resist the world's threats to life for as long as it takes.



The founding meeting of the Seamless Garment Network (later called the Consistent Life Network) in March 1987

Front Row (L to R):
Cathryn Passmore,
Ann McCarthy,
Carol Crossed,
Rachel MacNair,
Scott Raines

Middle row (L to R):
Possibly Martha Yonke,
Julie Loesch
(now Julianne Wiley),
Possibly Kathy Hayes,
Faye Kuncle,
Mary Rider,
Mary Meehan and (?)

Top row:
Kathy H. or Martha (?),
Ken Maher,
Andy Lipscomb,
Joe Nangle,
Jack Smalligan,
2 unknowns.