



# Life Matters Journal

V. 5, ISSUE 3—NOVEMBER 2016

## The Pro-life Appeal to Agnosticism

Persuading others to affirm the personhood of the unborn is not the only way to preserve intrinsically valuable human life, one of the pro-life movement's central aims.

## Therapies that Respect Life

There are many reasons to get excited looking forward in the field of stem cell research, but, we cannot allow ourselves to get distracted by the possibilities without first evaluating the ethical implications.

## Waging Indirect War

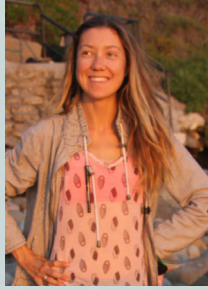
### How the United States Contributes to Yemen's Agony

A coalition of Arab states has been conducting aerial bombing in Yemen for roughly 18 months. The Coalition's air war, which is an intervention into Yemen's civil war, has killed large numbers of civilians and severely damaged Yemen's economy and infrastructure.

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

This issue debuts during a time of national upset as an election year comes to a close in which neither major party has offered us a candidate who even remotely champions protection of human persons from aggressive violence.



I hope that — rather than being discouraged — we will be spurred on to action, and convicted in our resolve to build a culture and political system which truly espouses the dignity of the human person, from pre-born to aged, and all of the spectrum ranged between; that we will delve deep and make no compromise; that we will neither make nor accept compromises from our leaders on this one core tenet — every human life *matters*.

We are all human persons of incomparable dignity and value. We are also capable of impacting our world in ways perhaps inconceivable until we actually step out and act. Our purposeful engagement and dialogue with our communities can bring our disrespect-for-life-tattered world back to a *life-matters world*.

In this issue, we explore the Yemeni crisis in John Whitehead's analysis, reflect on the individuals lives given (or lost?) on the beach at Normandy, look at the impact Susan B Anthony's tireless advocacy had in pre-19th Amendment America, and delve into a pro-life perspective appealing to agnosticism.

I challenge you to read — not passively, but actively. Wrestle with these stories, these ideas as you see them impact reality, these people from the past — and take those that ring with the truths of life, beauty, and human dignity back into your life. Take education and discourse where it belongs: Onto the streets, into contact with fellow human beings. Ideas are a contact sport. So is human life. We write so as to better know where to act, and how — so that aggressive violence against human beings can be a thing of the past.

Yours for peace and every life,

*CJ Williams*

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, 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.

# CONTENTS

## NEWS | OPINION

- Therapies that Respect Life 1
- Waging Indirect War 3

## TRUE LIFE

- Rocky Mountain High 5

## SHORT STORY

- All I Want 6

## POETRY

- Normandy 8

## ONE LAST THING

- The Pro-life Appeal to Agnosticism 9

# Life Matters Journal

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# Therapies that Respect Life: The Different Types of Stem Cell Research

By Christina Healy

Stem cells are set apart from other types of cells primarily by two characteristics: self-renewal (the ability to divide indefinitely) and potency (the ability to become different types of specialized cells, such as a muscle cell or a skin cell). These qualities make stem cells interesting to researchers today, and it's easy to understand why: studying these cells enables scientists to learn more about cell properties and to create model cell or organ systems in which they may test new treatments. Even more exciting is the potential stem cells have in regenerative medicine—stem cells have the ability to facilitate repair mechanisms in diseased organs, to be used as a tool for drug development, and to have applications within transplantation medicine.

Indeed, there are many reasons to get excited looking forward in the field of stem cell research, but, as is always true with new scientific technologies, we cannot allow ourselves to get distracted by the possibilities without first evaluating the ethical implications.

The issue comes down to one method used to procure a certain type of stem cell. Embryos created through in vitro fertilization (IVF) that the couple using IVF ultimately do not need can later be donated to research with the consent of the parents. Human embryonic stem cells (hESCs) can then be taken from the inner cell mass of blastocysts (embryos which are three to five days old) and be used for research. However, in this process, the embryo is destroyed, ending the life of a human being.

While the numerous possibilities of embryonic stem cell research (ESCR) are enticing, we must remember that every human life is just as valuable as the next. Thus, killing a human being for the purpose of procuring stem cells cannot be justified.

Some may argue that leftover embryos created for the purposes of IVF are simply going to be discarded anyway, and therefore it is worthwhile to at least gain scientific knowledge from their short lives. But I reject this argument for two reasons. First, it is important that we respect each human being as an end, rather than treating them as a means. Certainly, the application of this justification for ESCR to other living humans that will likely die soon fails miserably. Consider terminally ill patients and prisoners on death row. The fact that they may pass away soon or are scheduled to be executed does not justify experimentation on them that would intentionally end their lives. Second, it is simply not true that the only fate that awaits these embryos is that they will be discarded.

Organizations such as Nightlight Christian Adoptions offer parents the opportunity to adopt and implant the remaining embryos

not used in IVF, giving them an opportunity to grow and develop into adulthood.

But even for those who aren't convinced that ESCR is unethical, there is another, more pragmatic reason we should not pursue this route. As anyone who works in a research field knows, funds are limited. This being the case, it's important that we direct the funds we have toward the method of stem cell research which shows the most promise. At the moment, it is very clear that this method is not ESCR.

As of right now, no successful therapies have been created with hESCs, in part due to the multitude of challenges they present. For example, hESCs pose the possibility of immune rejection. Because the recipient of a hESC therapy is not genetically similar to the embryo donor, the donor cells may activate an immune response causing the body to destroy them. Injecting hESCs into humans also carries with it the risk of creating malignant cancers due to hESCs' rapid growth. Finally, while pluripotency, or the ability to create any type of cell in the body, is a valuable trait because of its versatility and would be an advantage of using hESCs, it is really only a useful attribute if we know and understand how to control cell differentiation. For many tissues, however, controlling such differentiation remains only a current area of research. Pluripotency holds no value if we cannot regulate it.

These challenges have prevented ESCR from creating any fruitful results to this date, but in the meantime another type of stem cell research has been very successful. Adult stem cells differ from hESCs in that they are present in tissues such as muscle, bone marrow, and the brain and are responsible for regenerating those tissues after they are damaged due to injury, disease, or old age. However, they don't have pluripotency as hESCs do. Adult stem cells are instead described as "multipotent," or having the ability to create a limited number of different cell types.

To give one example, a hematopoietic cell is an adult stem cell for blood and has the ability to create any of the several different types of cells present in our blood (ranging from red blood cells to the various types of white blood cells). However, it does not have the ability to create a skin cell or a muscle cell as a pluripotent stem cell does. On the other hand, because adult stem cells do not proliferate as well as hESCs, they are less likely to create tumors. Moreover, because they can be retrieved from the same person who is receiving the therapy, immune rejection is not a problem.

In contrast to ESCR, investigators have had enormous success

in using adult stem cells for research in the lab and as treatments. Leukemia, lymphoma, sickle cell anemia, and certain metabolic conditions can be treated with adult stem cells, and there have been major strides in the treatments of other diseases (such as heart disease) in clinical trials using adult stem cells.

These advances in the field of adult stem cell research, however, still have not silenced some proponents of ESCR, who argue that we should be exploring every option we have and are worried that there are limits to what we can do with multipotent stem cells. Such concerns have led investigators to search for a pluripotent option that is less ethically unsound than hESCs. In 2006, researchers at Kyoto University in Japan found success. They were able to create “induced pluripotent stem cells” (iPSCs) by reprogramming adult cells to act like hESCs. They reported that these cells “were similar to hES cells in morphology, proliferation, surface antigens, gene expression, epigenetic status of pluripotent cell-specific genes, and telomerase activity.” In short, they were able to induce hESC-like behavior in cells derived from adults, instead of embryos. This iPSC method does not require the destruction of human life, creates cells that have the powerful pluripotent qualities of hES cells, and do not have the risk of immune rejection.

Scientists are looking forward to the multitude of purposes these iPSCs could serve. Already they are being used to understand and model diseases, develop and screen candidate drugs, and deliver cell-replacement therapy to support regenerative medicine.

The creation of iPS cells is an exciting advancement in the world of stem cell research, and with this pluripotent option in addition to the extant therapies of adult stem cells, there are really no practical reasons that we should ever want or need to explore the possibilities of ESCR. However, while these alternatives are exciting, it is important for us to remember that even if they didn’t exist, medical advances at the cost of human lives are unjustifiable. If ESCR ever happens to produce desirable results in the future, it would still be wrong to pursue this method of obtaining stem cells, for the very important reason that all human lives are valuable, even those in their earliest stages of development.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> “The Power of Stem Cells,” California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, accessed September 15, 2016, <https://www.cirm.ca.gov/patients/power-stem-cells#5>.

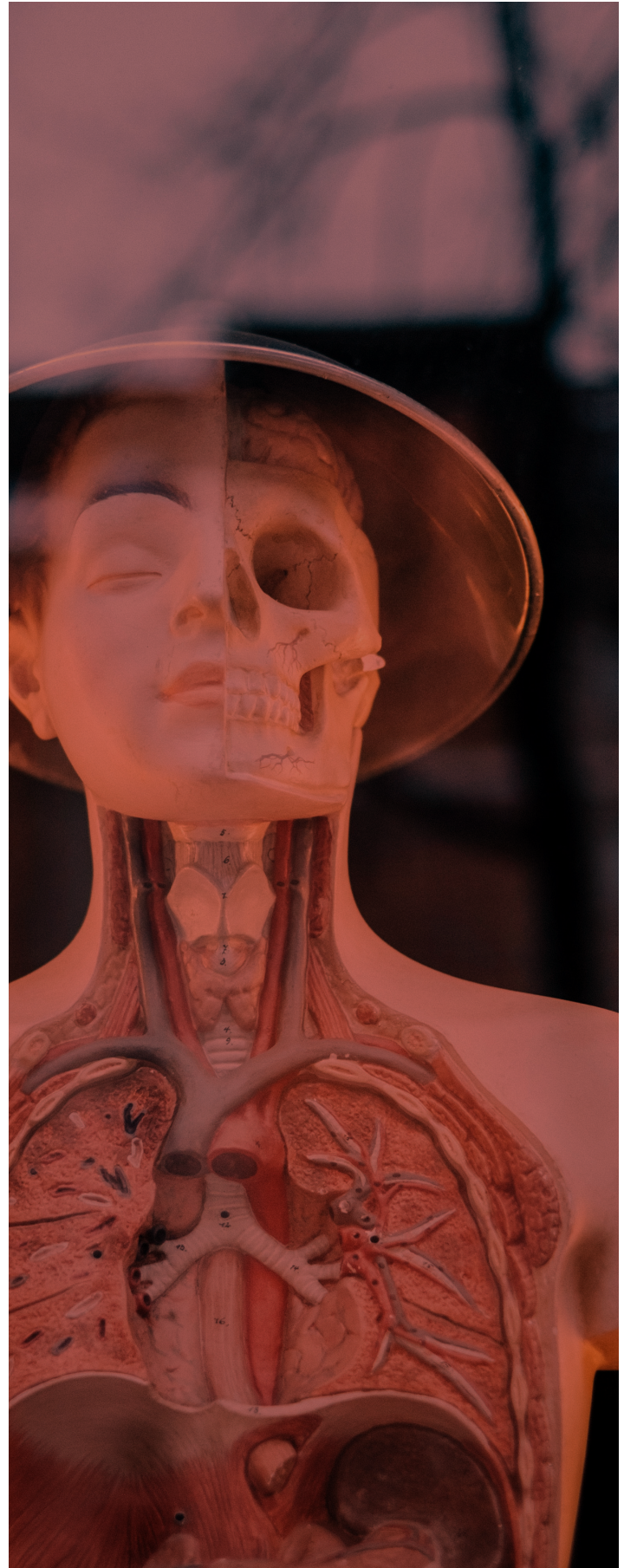
<sup>2</sup> Junying Yu and James Thomson, “Embryonic Stem Cells,” National Institutes of Health, accessed September 15, 2016, [http://stemcells.nih.gov/info/Regenerative\\_Medicine/2006Chapter1.htm](http://stemcells.nih.gov/info/Regenerative_Medicine/2006Chapter1.htm).

<sup>3</sup> “Stem Cell Basics,” National Institutes of Health, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://stemcells.nih.gov/info/basics/4.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> “Stem Cell Research: Stem Cell Therapy,” Johns Hopkins Medicine, accessed September 15, 2016, [http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/stem\\_cell\\_research/cell\\_therapy/](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/stem_cell_research/cell_therapy/).

<sup>4</sup> “Stem Cell FAQ,” International Society for Stem Cell Research, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.isscr.org/visitor-types/public/stem-cell-faq>.

<sup>4</sup> Kazutoshi Takahashi, Koji Tanabe, Mari Ohnuki, Megumi Narita, Tomoko Ichisaka, Kiichiro Tomoda, and Shinya Yamanaka, “Induction of Pluripotent Stem Cells from Adult Human Fibroblasts by Defined Factors,” *Cell* 131, no. 5 (2007): 861-872.





# Waging Indirect War: How the United States Contributes to Yemen's Agony

By John Whitehead

**Led by Saudi Arabia,** a coalition of Arab states has been conducting aerial bombing in Yemen for roughly 18 months. The Coalition's air war, which is an intervention into Yemen's civil war, has killed large numbers of civilians and severely damaged Yemen's economy and infrastructure. Yet over the past year and a half this deadly air war has received support from the United States, which has given various forms of assistance to the Saudis and their Coalition partners.

The Coalition bombing, begun on March 25, 2015, was intended to support the government of Yemeni president Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi in the face of a violent insurgency against his rule. The anti-government insurgency includes the Houthis, a religious minority who, in largely Sunni Muslim Yemen, adhere to a variant of Shia Islam and have some ties with Iran. Also part of the insurgency are forces loyal to Yemen's former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. Prior to the Saudi-led intervention, the Houthis had captured large areas of Yemen, including the capital, Sana'a; President Hadi is currently based in the port city of Aden.<sup>1</sup>

The intervention by the Saudis and their partners—Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates—might have been prompted by a desire to check Iranian influence in Yemen or simply to prevent the civil war from spilling over into other nations (Saudi Arabia shares a border with Yemen). To date, however, the Coalition's bombing campaign has not brought about a decisive victory for Hadi's government and has taken a terrible toll on the Yemeni people.

The Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights reported that an estimated 3,799 Yemeni civilians have been killed since March 2015.<sup>2</sup> An earlier estimate by the United Nations, provided at a time when civilian deaths stood at roughly 3,000, identified the airstrikes as responsible for the majority of civilians killed.<sup>3</sup> Significant incidents of Coalition bombing killing civilians include the following:

- 07-24-15: Housing for power plant workers and their families in the city of Mokha was bombed, killing over 60 people.<sup>4</sup>
- 08-29-15: A water-bottling plant in northwest Yemen was

bombed, killing 13 people. The Saudis justified the bombing by saying the plant was a center for making weapons and training mercenaries.<sup>5</sup>

- 08-13-16: A religious school in northern Yemen was bombed, killing 10 students. The Saudis justified the bombing by saying the school was a Houthi training camp.<sup>6</sup>

- 08-22-16: A Doctors Without Borders hospital in northern Yemen was bombed, killing 19 people.<sup>7</sup>

These bombings of civilian targets might have been the results of faulty intelligence or a tendency among Saudi pilots to fly high so as to avoid fire from the ground, a practice that diminishes bombing accuracy.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, the choice of bombs used has endangered civilians, as Coalition forces have dropped cluster bombs. Cluster bombs scatter small explosives over a wide area, making them a relatively indiscriminate weapon that is thus more likely to kill civilians.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to directly killing civilians, the bombing campaign has contributed to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen created by the war. Roughly 3 million people have been driven from their homes by the conflict and at least 7.6 million people, including millions of women and children, are suffering from malnutrition.<sup>10</sup> In a February 2016 report to the United Nations Security Council, Stephen O'Brien, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, stated

Some two million acutely malnourished children and pregnant or lactating women need urgent treatment. Chronic drug shortages, unpaid salaries, and conflict related destruction means that around 14 million Yemenis do not have sufficient access to healthcare services. Since March last year, nearly 600 health facilities closed due to damage, shortages of critical supplies or lack of health workers. Nearly 220 of these facilities used to provide treatment for acute malnutrition... Water infrastructure serving at least 900,000 people has been either damaged or destroyed by airstrikes, artillery and rockets.<sup>11</sup>

To be sure, many parties to the conflict apart from the Saudi-led

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Coalition bear responsibility for civilian deaths and Yemen's larger dire humanitarian situation. Both O'Brien's report and other UN accounts identify the Houthis and their allies as blocking the flow of humanitarian aid and as committing atrocities against civilians.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the damage inflicted on Yemen by the Coalition's air war should be of particular concern to American citizens given that the Coalition receives support from the United States.

The same day the Coalition airstrikes on Yemen began, the US National Security Council made a significant announcement. Referring to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a group of countries that includes Saudi Arabia and other Coalition members, the National Security Council spokesperson stated

In support of GCC actions to defend against Houthi violence, President Obama has authorized the provision of logistical and intelligence support to GCC-led military operations. While U.S. forces are not taking direct military action in Yemen in support of this effort, we are establishing a Joint Planning Cell with Saudi Arabia to coordinate U.S. military and intelligence support.<sup>13</sup>

In the year and a half since the Obama administration adopted this policy, US military tankers have provided refueling to over 5,600 Coalition aircraft, US military advisors have aided the Coalition in targeting their airstrikes, and the United States has continued to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia and other Coalition nations.<sup>14</sup> A few weeks after the Coalition air war began, US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that "we have expedited weapons deliveries" to the Coalition.<sup>15</sup>

This spring, the Obama administration introduced at least some restrictions on arms sales to the Coalition, halting further shipments of cluster bombs to the Saudis.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, arms sales will continue: a \$1.15 billion weapons sale to Saudi Arabia proposed by the administration is currently pending. This planned sale has prompted protests from members of Congress, including a group of 60 led by Representative Ted Lieu (D-CA), who have called for delaying the sale.<sup>17</sup>

Such congressional protests are promising, but more needs to be done. All military sales and support to Saudi Arabia and other Coalition members should be halted, for at least as long as the current air war in Yemen continues. The United States may not be able to bring peace to the current violent, chaotic situation in Yemen, but it can avoid active participation in the deaths of Yemeni civilians.

#### Post-Script:

Since I originally wrote this essay, the situation in Yemen has worsened. The Coalition airstrikes have continued, most recently killing an estimated 140 people at a funeral in Sana'a. Despite congressional opposition, the \$1.15 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia went forward. Moreover, the United States has now been drawn into direct military involvement in Yemen, bombarding the country in retaliation for an alleged attack on a US warship by Yemeni rebels.<sup>18</sup> The need to stop further American involvement in Yemen's war is imperative.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> In writing this article I owe a special debt to Daniel Larison, a senior editor at *The American Conservative* magazine, who has been tireless in drawing attention to the Yemen war and the United States' role in it. His writings, which were very helpful in my research on this topic, can be found at <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/author/daniel-larison/>.

For a useful overview of the Yemen situation, see Zachary Laub, "Yemen in Crisis," Council on Foreign Relations, April 19, 2016, <http://on.cfr.org/1re7u4C>.

<sup>2</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Thirteen Civilian Casualties a Day in Yemen Conflict," August 25, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2cuNKrn>.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Gardner, "No End in Sight to War in Yemen," BBC, March 25, 2016, <http://bbc.in/2chOkEo>.

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Yemen: Coalition Strikes on Residence Apparent War Crime," July 27, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1D7y11e>.

<sup>5</sup> Gabriel Gatehouse, "Inside Yemen's Forgotten War," BBC, September 11, 2015, <http://bbc.in/2cdHAY2>.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Mazzetti and Shuaib Almosawa, "Support for Saudi Arabia Gives U.S. Direct Role in Yemen Conflict," *New York Times*, August 24, 2016, <http://nyti.ms/2bGEsqM>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> W. J. Hennigan, Laura King and Zaid Al-Alayaa, "U.S. Boosts Support Role in Saudi-Led Airstrikes on Yemen," *LA Times*, August 17, 2015, <http://lat.ms/1DXYZzM>; Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "Quiet Support for Saudis Entangles U.S. in Yemen," *New York Times*, March 13, 2016, <http://nyti.ms/1U8ZfCW>.

<sup>9</sup> "What Is a Cluster Bomb?," Cluster Munition Coalition, accessed September 1, 2016, <http://bit.ly/1u1ijUb>; Kareem Fahimay, "Saudi-Led Group Said to Use Cluster Bombs in Yemen," *New York Times*, May 3, 2015, <http://nyti.ms/2bGJGUX>.

<sup>10</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Thirteen Civilian Casualties a Day in Yemen Conflict."

<sup>11</sup> Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, "Statement to the Security Council on Yemen," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, February 16, 2016, <http://bit.ly/1PU14Sb>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Office of the United Nations High Commissioner Human Rights, "Thirteen Civilian Casualties a Day in Yemen Conflict."

<sup>13</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Statement by NSC Spokesperson Bernadette Meehan on the Situation in Yemen," March 25, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1GqhVG2>.

<sup>14</sup> Hennigan, King and Al-Alayaa, "U.S. Boosts Support Role in Saudi-Led Airstrikes on Yemen"; Mazzetti and Almosawa, "Support for Saudi Arabia Gives U.S. Direct Role in Yemen Conflict."

<sup>15</sup> Africa-Reuters, "UPDATE 2-US Speeds Up Arms to Saudi-Led Coalition against Yemen's Houthis," April 7, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2bGJ2Xd>.

<sup>16</sup> John Hudson, "Exclusive: White House Blocks Transfer of Cluster Bombs to Saudi Arabia," *Foreign Policy*, May 27, 2016, <http://atfp.co/2bIqXoS>.

<sup>17</sup> John Hudson, "60 U.S. Lawmakers Seek Delay of Billion-Dollar Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia," *Foreign Policy*, August 29, 2016, <http://atfp.co/2bXr7tz>.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew Rosenberg and Mark Mazzetti, "U.S. Ship Off Yemen Fires Missiles at Houthi Rebel Sites," *New York Times*, October 12, 2016, <http://nyti.ms/2dYcHIM>.



# Rocky Mountain High

By Carol Crossed

Our family spent a week at a Colorado working guest ranch. 8,000 feet high and 8.8 miles on a dirt road, away from the nearest town, population 24, doubled by our family of 29.

Being president of the birthplace of America's greatest heroine is a good conversation starter when your wrangler asks how you spend your time when you're not riding a horse. Anita didn't miss a beat.

"Susan B. Anthony? She has something to do with women's education and jobs, doesn't she?"

"And the right to vote," I added.

"We sure could use her around today," she said thoughtfully.

"How so?" I ask. I am excited about engaging in a conversation, any conversation, to get my mind off of how much pain I am in from straddling my mare.

"Women in the 21st century, they could hardly settle the West today."

"You know, the states with pioneer women passed suffrage first, years before the states in the East ratified the 19th Amendment." I grappled with dates, chastising myself for not knowing the year Colorado enfranchised women. "So basically, it was a no-brainer that women who drove stagecoaches while nursing babies were equal to men."

Anita chuckled. "No, I didn't know that, but it makes perfect sense. I mean, women today can't even have children and hold down a job at the same time, or at least that's what they think. Well, that's what everyone tells them anyway and so they think it."

"It's harder in big urban areas. Out here, you're self-reliant." I can't

imagine this young woman with nearly leathered skin and cowgirl boots sleeping anywhere other than under the stars.

Anita appeared genuinely puzzled. "Why is that? Food and medicine and education, everything is accessible in cities. Women even have birth control or abortion around every corner."

"Well, it's not around every corner, exactly. But I get your drift." I paused for a minute, then thought I'd take a chance. "What do you do when you have a reproductive need? I hear there aren't many options in remote counties like these across the country."

Anita is a woman of few words. "Kicking him out of the tent is all the option I need." We laugh out loud together.

"But you're not married, are you?" I tread carefully here. "What would you do if you found yourself pregnant?"

Out here? One doesn't 'find' themselves pregnant. We hang around the animals enough to know about female cycles."

I decided to press her a little more: "But seriously, wouldn't it be a long drive to Denver?"

"You mean for an abortion? On my horse?" We both smiled and I took a deep breath, glad she didn't take offense at the personal question.

Then Anita shifted in her saddle a little, maybe giving herself time to answer. "You know, if you can bring down a steer and shovel poop, you can change a baby's diaper."

End of conversation.

Note to self: Find out if Susan visited Colorado on her 72 city tour in 1870. She would love it there. She would love Anita.



# All I Want

By Angel Armstead

**“Do you think it will snow on Christmas this year?”**

asks my younger sister, Katie.

“How would I know?” I answer sternly.

I know Katie is just being a curious child, but her constant questioning is aggravating. As usual she ignores my answer and shouts, “I want McDonalds!” She then goes back to playing with her doll, the only one she has.

Unlike me, she can be happy with so little. Our parents are dead. We’re carrying everything we own on our backs. We’re relying on a friend for food. We’re constantly on edge that someone will find us out. Yet, none of this seems to affect her. I can’t help but envy her ignorant optimism.

I glance at my broken digital watch. It’s 5:00 pm, I think. Tracie should be at work. I motion to Katie so we can head on over to McDonald’s. I hate doing this, but Katie has to eat.

As we walk, Katie tugs my shirt.

I turn around. “What?”

“Do you like Tracie?”

I tense up. I have a bad habit of doing this when I’m asked questions involving Tracie. If I’m tense over this simple question, I wonder how I would react the day I find out Tracie has a boyfriend. I’d probably die of a heart attack. Katie eyes me suspiciously while I try to formulate a response.

“I think she likes you.” Katie’s voice reminds me of the girls back in elementary school that used to tease Tracie and me. Tracie and I sitting in a tree...you know the rest.

“I like her...as a friend.”

“I like her too. She’s nice and takes care of us.”

I smile. Tracie is wonderful and has really helped us out in this rough time, but I fear that she’ll eventually be forced to stop giving us food and a place to sleep.

There is silence between us for the majority of our walk. I only

take my eyes off Katie for a few seconds as I watch a cat run across the sidewalk. I turn back and Katie almost dashes into the street! Luckily I stop her in time.

“What are you doing!” I shout. I yank her back and she falls onto the sidewalk with force. Katie’s eyes fill with tears. She starts to sob. “I’m sorry, but you could have gotten hit by a car. Why would you do that?”

“I dropped our family photo.” She shows it to me. It’s an old family photo. Back when we had a family. “We need to keep it so we don’t forget them.”

I realize I’ve been a jerk. She doesn’t know any better. “I’m sorry,” I say. “I’m just watching out for you.” I pick her up and carry her the rest of the way. We finally make it to McDonald’s and I look in and see Tracie working. Even in her work uniform, she is beautiful. I walk in and carry Katie over to a table. She has stopped crying now. Tracie approaches us with a red bag in her hand.

“Since Christmas is coming up, I got you two something,” Tracie says. She pulls two wrapped boxes from the bag.

“You really didn’t have to,” I start. “You’re doing more than enough.”

“Don’t worry about it. We’ve been friends since kindergarten. It’s the least I can do. I also may not see you guys on Christmas.”

“Where are you going?” I ask.

“California. I guess it’ll be a snowless Christmas this year.”

“You can’t have Christmas without snow,” Katie interrupts.

Tracie chuckles. “No, you can’t, can you?”

“What’s in the boxes?” Katie asks anxiously.

Tracie unwraps one of the boxes and reveals to Katie a few pairs of doll clothes. Katie’s face brightens with every outfit.

“Thank you, Tracie!” says Katie. She hugs Tracie and then goes to playing dress-up with her doll.

Tracie looks to me and hands me the other box. “Go ahead.”



I open up the box and inside is another box. Opening the other box reveals a watch.

"You're always worried about the time so I figured you could use one."

"Thank you." I say.

"No problem."

"Are we staying with you tonight, Tracie?" Katie asks.

"Yes," Tracie responds. "I've already put blankets on the sofa for you two. Speaking of which, you guys should head over there. No fast food tonight, we're eating at home." Tracie hands me the keys to her house. Tracie has to get back to work so we quickly say our goodbyes.

Tracie has a small house. We enter through the back to avoid being seen by any neighbors. When we get inside, Katie jumps onto the sofa, which has her favorite kitten blanket. I glance over at Katie who is playing with her doll again. I tell her to wake me up at 11 pm so I can be awake by the time Tracie gets back. She nods. I lay down on my section of the sofa with the purple blanket and shut my eyes.

I didn't even get much sleep when, suddenly, I'm awakened by loud knocking at the front door.

Katie is sitting up and frightened. I get up and ask who it is. I take a quick glance outside. Officers. Damn. The last time I saw officers was when they informed us of our parents' death.

I open the door and the officers barge in. They say that they are taking us to the station. I hear Katie scream to me as they take her to one of the cars. I try to rush over to her, but they stop me. They put me into a different car and I fear that Katie and I will be separated.

As soon as we arrive at the station, I'm placed in a room with a young female officer. I ask if she thinks I'm a criminal. Her eyes glare at me, but they have a sense of warmth to them. She reassures me that I'm not a criminal and says that she feels sorry that a child of my age is homeless and that Katie and I deserve a good home. I want to see Katie and she tells me that I will see her. She also tells me that there are a lot of things they'll need straighten out so Katie and I will need to stay in a temporary shelter tonight.

After my conversation with the female officer, a stern man comes to talk to me. After another long conversation, another officer escorts me outside to a car where Katie is waiting. As soon as Katie sees me, she runs to me and gives me a hug. Together we are taken to a shelter.

"Good night," I say to Katie before going over to the boys' section of the shelter. She whispers the same to me, worry sculpted upon her frightened face.

I walk over to an available bed, passing aisles of beds with sleeping boys tucked in them. I lie down and immediately think of what could have gotten us into this situation. Could Tracie have turned us in? She would never betray me. Right? Or maybe she had finally been caught and was forced to give us up. I can't even contemplate her doing this to me, to Katie. Either way, we're in this horrible situation and I don't know if I can get us out of it.

The next few days go by in a blur. Decorations are inciting the Christmas spirit in many people and Katie is as excited as ever. The other children are a mixed bunch. Some are very happy about the holidays while the others dread it. My days are spent mostly eating, sleeping, and talking to Katie. Tracie is nowhere to be found.

It's the night before Christmas Eve, and Katie tells me that she is going to ask Santa for a family this year. I'm too old for Santa, but I wish for the same tonight, and for Tracie to be my girlfriend.

Christmas Eve is finally upon us and I don't see Katie until late into the afternoon. She is even more excited than usual.

She runs over to me when she sees me. In short breaths she says, "We...got it..."

"Got what?" I ask. She sits down and catches her breath and starts over.

"We got a family!" she screams. "We can leave soon."

"What!" I shout. Excitement overtakes me. "What are they like?"

"They are really nice. They're signing forms now so we can leave."

Before Katie can explain further, a middle-aged couple approaches us. I am shocked as I see Tracie walking with them. She smiles at me and waves.

"I'm sorry," Tracie says. "I should have told you first. I didn't want to do it this way." Tracie points to the woman. "This is my boss and her husband. She found out that I was stealing, but when I told her why she decided to adopt you two."

"You have no need to be sorry," I say. We hug.

"Are you two ready to go home?" our new mother says.

Home? I haven't heard that word in a very long time.

We have a delicious dinner here in our new home and we've learned so much about our new parents. I find out that Tracie had talked to them beforehand to see if they would be a good fit as our new parents and if we'd be good children for them. As she talks, I come to the realization that Tracie has always noticed me, but I was too ignorant in my self-loathing to see it.

It's the next morning, and I get up early. Fear strikes me like a bullet as I realize our new parents are gone. Katie wakes up and we go and sit in the living room, feeling even more alone than before. An hour goes by and our new family walks through the front door with hands full of bags. To my surprise, Tracie is with them, followed by her parents. Tracie tells me that she and her parents figured there were more important things than running off to California.

Katie is digging into her presents quickly, all the while our new parents are taking pictures. I can see a doll in one of the boxes. It looks like she'll have more dolls to play dress up with. Later, as the adults talk, I pull Tracie to the side.

"I want to thank you again for what you did. This is the best Christmas I've ever had."

Tracie's eyes meet mine. She leans forward. "It's still missing something," Tracie says and gives me a kiss on the cheek.

I blush and realize that my Christmas wishes have been granted. I have my girl. I have my family. I have my perfect Christmas.

I didn't even get much sleep when, suddenly, I'm awakened by loud knocking at the front door.



# Normandy

By Sarah Terzo

On the beaches of hell the sand is red —  
Scream red beneath a sickle sky.  
And that great beast with a thousand faces  
(gunmetal gray and bible black)  
marches on  
Throats parched, eyes burning  
with the sting of powder.  
Men fall  
into a boiling, hungry sea.  
Men fall  
onto gritty stinging sand  
broken as if thrown from angry horses.

Men fall.

And when the guns fall silent  
a sweet breeze blows gently through their hair  
caresses still faces, kisses their lips —  
nature's careless comfort wasted.  
Eventually, their names are forgotten



# The Pro-Life Appeal to Agnosticism

By Sean Killackey

In his 1989 essay *Why Abortion is Immoral*, Don Marquis notes that the arguments made by people on both sides of the abortion debate “possess certain symmetries that explain why partisans of those positions are so convinced of the correctness of their own positions, why they are not successful in convincing their opponents, and why, to others, this issue seems to be unresolvable.”<sup>1</sup> We may concede as much about popular-level arguments, though I think the more sophisticated pro-life arguments are significantly better than their pro-choice counterparts; I particularly recommend the discussion of the “substance view,” as described in Francis J. Beckwith’s *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case against Abortion Choice*, and in Patrick Lee’s *Abortion and Unborn Human Life* (second edition), among others. (Marquis does not address this view in his essay).

Regardless, I can see why someone who is undecided on abortion or the question of the preborn’s personhood can feel that such questions are unresolvable. The Supreme Court of the United States took the position that the debate over the preborn’s status was a stalemate and *attempted* to take a neutral or agnostic position toward the personhood of the preborn. All of this might lead us to think that convincing others is impossible, and our motivation to learn, present, or refine the best arguments available might diminish. Nevertheless, we must present our case that preborn humans are persons.

However, persuading others to affirm the personhood of the preborn is not the only way to preserve intrinsically valuable human life, one of the pro-life movement’s central aims. Widespread acceptance of our view on the reality of the preborn as persons is, of course, a powerful means to that end. However, we can also undermine abortion by appealing to the agnosticism of many pro-choicers, those who view each side’s case as equally plausible, yet affirm a right to abortion nonetheless.

If we’re talking to a pro-choicer who argues that abortion should be legal, because both sides make compelling arguments, we could respond by saying, “Wouldn’t the presence of compelling arguments on both sides actually support pro-life laws banning abortion?” Beckwith argues that “if one is not sure that one is killing a moral subject, then one should not kill it. That is the preborn should be given ‘the benefit of the doubt.’”<sup>2</sup> Why? Keep in mind that if each side makes compelling arguments, then either outcome of the controversy, if enshrined in law—the killing millions upon millions of preborn human beings or the constraining of a woman’s freedom by a prohibition on relieving herself of the substantial burdens of pregnancy and raising her child post-birth—is just as likely as the other to be evil. Faced with these two possible outcomes, we must ask the pro-choicer, which is the worse outcome? I think the former certainly is.

Why assume that human life (and not liberty or choice) should be given the benefit of the doubt here?<sup>3</sup> Because, given such agnos-

ticism on the personhood of the preborn and the permissibility of abortion, performing an abortion would be comparable to being paid to blow up a building where there is, say, a 40 or 50-percent chance that a nine-year old is in the building. Do we detonate, since there might not be a person in there? Or do we abstain from destroying the building, since, for all we do know, there might be a person in there? What if we desperately need the money being offered to blow up the building, to get out of debt, or obtain medical services, or move out of a crime-ridden area of town (for the good of our family)? Even then, I’m sure that no one would destroy the building if there were a 40 or 50-percent chance that the nine-year old was in it. Or, if someone did destroy the building, we would judge that he had acted impermissibly.<sup>4</sup> It is a basic moral principle that it is better to suffer evil than to deal it to others.<sup>5</sup>

In the minds of the undecided, the chance that the preborn are subjects of rights, which abortion unjustly violates, is comparable to the chance of there being a nine-year old in that building. Furthermore, as far as the undecided are concerned, abortion is quite like that act of destroying the building. Thus, they should conclude that abortion is *prima facie* morally wrong. If the preborn’s personhood is in doubt to such a considerable degree, so is the right to elective abortion. To exercise such a supposed right to abortion, or to permit its exercise would be a reckless disregard for intrinsically valuable human life—even if it can be shown later that the preborn were never persons.

By taking this approach we can begin to turn people’s opinions against elective abortion, even if their view of the preborn doesn’t change until later. This approach is only the start to presenting your pro-life case in its entirety, but it is one that will spur a greater interest in considering the issues involved and will save lives.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Don Marquis, “Why Abortion Is Immoral,” *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (April 1989): 183-202; available at <http://faculty.polytechnic.org/gfeldmeth/45.marquis.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> I should note that Beckwith is not presenting the argument that, barring absolute certainty that abortion is permissible and/or the preborn is not a person, we should ban abortion. I’m not inclined to view such arguments from the need for absolute certainty as cogent, let alone persuasive. The difference between that argument and the one I am making here is the degree of uncertainty in the person we’re trying to persuade. This argument is not going to be persuasive if our interlocutor believes there is only a 1 percent chance that he is wrong. But if he is divided between what he considers to be two equally plausible solutions to an intractable problem, this argument can have great effect.

<sup>3</sup> See Francis J. Beckwith, *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case against Abortion Choice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 149 – 152, my main source for this essay. The author Francis Beckwith also addresses, in some depth, the pro-choice appeal to agnosticism.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-151.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107.

# Interested in getting involved?

Want to join the movement against aggressive violence? For information on volunteering or writing for the next issue of *Life Matters Journal*, send an email to [info@lifemattersjournal.org](mailto:info@lifemattersjournal.org).

For information about available internships and upcoming events, check out our website:

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