



# Life Matters Journal

V. 5, ISSUE 5— APRIL 2017

## Electoral Backlash

Do we lose the necessary urgency of activism if we rely on presidential lip service to our cause? For the activist of any stripe, working under threat is the ultimate motivator.

## Culture of Convenience vs. Culture of Life

For the sake of convenience, we let drivers kill children. For the sake of convenience, we let mothers have their unborn children killed. Where are we all headed in such a hurry that this is all worth it?

## A Coach's Perspective on Performance and Abortion

Collegiate Women's Soccer coach, David B. Lewis, weighs in on the importance of valuing people for their essence rather than their performance.



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Abortion — the distorted and dehumanizing position held at the root of any culture that claims this dehumanizing act as a need and right — is more than a single act. Abortion-distortion trickles into every area of our society. If preborn people are disposable, human people are disposable.



On the flip-side, a culture that espouses life infuses every act, personal or political, with the “glory of the human” spirit.

In our current issue, writers explore a throwaway culture from numerous perspectives. I'm proud and pleased to present Matt Robare's exploration of car-culture in our urban areas, and its anti-personalist worship of convenience; as well as a dance with the mystery and beauty of human individuals in G. Greinetz's poetry.

It is key to examine every area and issue related to human life, not because each threatens human lives with the same urgency or the same magnitude of abortion, *but because often we compartmentalize abortion* to “that pro-life thing in a medical clinic” instead of seeing that that act of violence against women, and preborn people, has radically and inescapably rooted its injustice in every facet of our lives.

Just as war cannot but seep into every life in a nation involved in it, so abortion — the true war on women, & the wholesale killing of thousands of preborn people a day — orients our entire nation to one in which human beings are justifiably used, abused, and thrown out.

Why not put a car before a pedestrian or a woman in poverty?

Why not use kids as weapons, as in Del Castillo's dystopian science fiction? Why not make performance tantamount to person in sports, as a college coach reflects? Finally, Acyutananda has summed up this issue in a wonderful piece, “Why Focus on Abortion?”

Why? Because look: *abortion isn't just the pregnant woman's “problem.”* Abortion is a direct and violent attack on each of us as individuals. It doesn't just creep, it crashes into every crevice of our culture, destroying the very basis for human rights.

So as you read, focus on abortion. But also look wide: abortion isn't “just over there”. It dehumanizes everywhere. I hope you head out, and through these reflections, rehumanize your world. Can you see where the war on the preborn may make us numb to a war in Syria? Can you put “anti-abortion” where it belongs — where abortion impacts us? Everywhere.

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.

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# Life Matters Journal

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# Protest

By Ana Plumlee

A chilly Saturday morning in Cleveland,  
standing outside a clinic next to my pastor  
saying the rosary in the bitter cold  
penetrating my gloves.

Others rattle their rosary beads  
murmuring the various prayers,  
the smell and taste of the exhaust  
from downtown traffic  
cuts through my half-asleep stupor.

People drive by, somewhat apathetically;  
some walk up to me and get into my face,  
saying that I am less of a woman for doing this,  
telling me I'm being stupid and restricting women's rights.  
They are patronizing, saying that one day I'll understand why  
abortion is legal.

They say I'm protesting because I'm young  
and don't understand what their reasoning is.

Sometimes I counter their arguments  
but don't wage war over senseless murder  
because words can kill, too.

The rosary beads continue to rattle,  
prayers continue to be said.  
My protest goes forward. But not silently.





# We Are Stardust / Stars Up Close

By Genevieve Greinetz

way out  
on that distant horizon,  
city lights curve into stars and midnight's sky drips down into city

they say you and I are made from the stuff of stars,  
our lights dimmed beneath blankets of exhaust—  
fears, judgments, preferences, and the like

it's easier to let beauty be a thing that only exists from afar  
but we are beautiful up close  
so close  
I want to know your galaxy and find your suns

these pavements, dust, blood, hate, love streets  
need all the light you can give

let's look each other in the eyes until we swoon into that beautiful orbit only  
stargazing can take us to  
yea, lets stare at each other's eyes  
and remember mysteries  
and stars  
lets cry about beauty  
and the terrible mistakes we've been making all this time  
treating each other like the pollution we've created

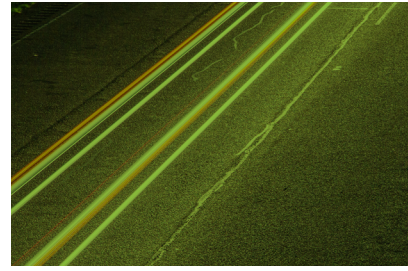
come back to this red light world  
eyes open  
and shine  
you beautiful creature  
don't let pollution dim your radiant fervor  
just love  
find the way to love  
the things i hate and fear  
and shine and tell me  
how to love like that.





# Culture of Convenience vs. Culture of Life

By Matt Robare



left many cities and towns in a precarious state, threatening schools, libraries, youth sports, and police and fire departments' services.

For the sake of convenience, we let drivers kill children. For the sake of convenience, we let mothers have their unborn children killed. For the sake of the freedom of the open road, we oppose basic safety. For the sake of freedom from

It's sometimes amazing the intolerable things people are willing to tolerate for a little convenience, even when the fix is simple, cheap, and barely perceptible.

Beginning as early as the 1920s, but picking up after World War II, a quiet and unheralded revolution took place in the United States. This revolution totally altered social patterns and behaviors, turned life upside down, and utterly changed the American landscape.

It was the automobile revolution and it was a resounding triumph for the "mechanical Jacobin," as the philosopher Russell Kirk called cars.

Today, the car culture of personal autonomy is so firmly embedded in the American imagination that few people can conceive of life without cars. Getting a driver's licence and a car at 16 are simply assumed to be parts of life for many people, like going to high school or getting married.

While cars are often faster and more convenient for many people than other forms of transportation, with important implications for commerce and manufacturing, there are costs to all this convenience, and the environmental impact is perhaps the least of them. Every year, over 30,000 Americans are killed in car crashes and millions more are injured—and many of the victims are children.<sup>1</sup> It's an amount comparable to the number of deaths from gun violence, which is frequently characterized as an epidemic.

But the costs are even greater than that. The infrastructure built for cars harms families by driving up the costs of food and housing and promotes sedentary lifestyles that result in greater obesity and other health problems. The stress caused by a long commute is associated with a higher divorce rate. Automobile suburbs are notorious for increased social isolation and a lack of civil society. Moreover, as Baby Boomers age, they are becoming less able to drive and hence less able to interact with other people or even get necessities such as groceries. Last, our car-oriented life style has

sexual mores, women are treated as disposable objects.

Where are we all headed in such a hurry that this is worth it?

Oddly, perhaps the easiest thing to do is reduce the number of deaths. At its most basic it's a question of physics: force equals mass times acceleration. In other words, speed kills. For many years, traffic engineers recommended that all roads be treated like highways: no trees, wide travel lanes, plenty of turning lanes, and few stops. While this approach works well for limited-access highways, it's a recipe for disaster on city streets.

The information drivers get from the street encourages them to speed up, while a lack of trees and on-street parking leaves pedestrians without a buffer. The lack of crossings encourages pedestrians to dart across roads, and the width of the road not only gives pedestrians little time to get across but puts them at risk.

## Where are we all headed in such a hurry that this is worth it?

I have witnessed a car stop for someone in the street, only for a car behind the car that stopped to swerve around and almost hit the person crossing.

To make matters worse, in many places, people who kill pedestrians with their cars are rarely even charged with manslaughter. In one disturbing case, according to an article in *Aeon*, a woman in



Atlanta, Georgia, whose son was killed by a drunk and doped-up hit-and-run driver was charged with vehicular homicide and faced more jail time than the driver who actually killed the child.

It's a story almost as old as mass automobile ownership itself. According to the writer Hunter Oatman-Stanford, around 200,000 people had been killed by cars in the United States by the end of the 1920s and most of them were children. At the time, common law jurisprudence and common sense put the burden of liability on the driver. The street, the public way, was a way for the public that everyone could use.

Then the motor industry reacted. They used public relations to convince people to equate cars and speed with “progress” and to insult pedestrians as “jaywalkers.” They then drafted a model traffic ordinance that brought legal force to making cars the kings of the road and exiling people to sidewalks and crosswalks. With groups like the American Automobile Association providing free “educational” materials to schools, according to Oatman-Sandford, the dominance of the car became unquestionable.

Practically overnight an ordinary human activity was criminalized and the victims were blamed.

The sad thing is, it would be incredibly easy to change things.

Wide lanes can be narrowed with paint, wide streets can have trees planted along them, and bike lanes can be added between the parking lane and the sidewalk. Some cities are using raised crosswalks to get cars to slow down and some cities build “bumpouts” — extensions of the sidewalk and curb past the parking lane and into the street — in order to reduce the distance people have to cross the street.

These changes, along with others such as reducing parking minimums — city-required space developed solely for parking during development — or creating lanes exclusively for buses in order to improve public transport, are vehemently opposed by people because they can take away a few parking spaces or slow traffic. Ironically, considering the lengths to which the motor industry went to demonize ordinary walking and promote driving, these efforts are sometimes criticized as “social engineering.”

The Vision Zero movement, which started in Sweden in 1997, advocates for safer streets. While many American cities have signed on to its principles of eliminating all road fatalities, they have done little to implement them and the slaughter goes on, which is why the work goes on.

A consistent life ethic ought to examine the built environment, as well as human action. Where environment is planned for the service of persons, the dignity of the human being is respected implicitly. A society in which human lives are valued is one in which its practical, physical structures orient towards individual lives.

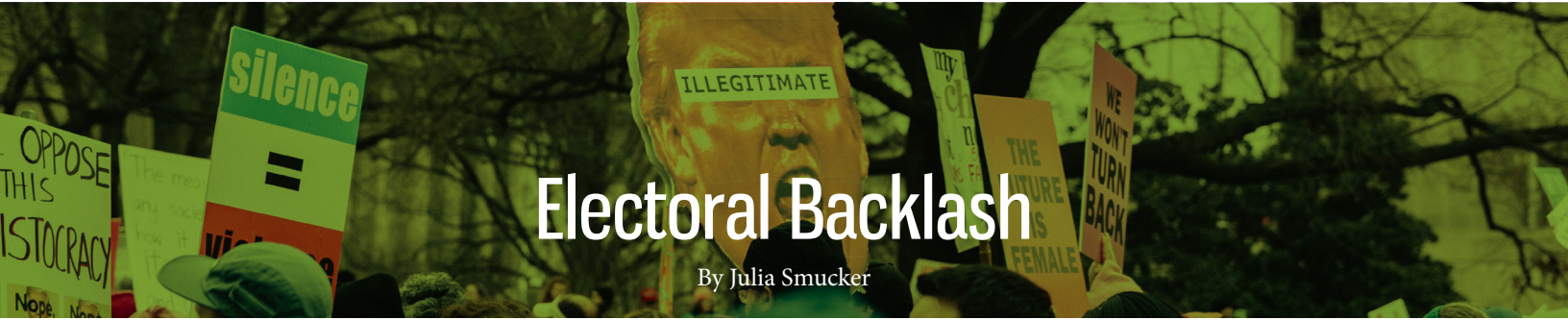
Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Vital Signs: Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention— United States and 19 Comparison Countries,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, July 8, 2016, [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/vol-umes/65/wr/mm6526e1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6526e1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/vol-umes/65/wr/mm6526e1.htm?s_cid=mm6526e1_w); “Child Passenger Safety: Get the Facts,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed March 6, 2017, [https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/child\\_passenger\\_safety/cps-factsheet.html](https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/child_passenger_safety/cps-factsheet.html).



A society in which human lives are valued is one in which its practical, physical structures orient towards individual lives.





# Electoral Backlash

By Julia Smucker

In late November 2012, the Consistent Life Network's newsletter, *Peace & Life Connections*, pointed out a counterintuitive set of facts. First, the administrations of publicly pro-choice Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama saw declines in abortion rates and providers, under very different economic circumstances. Second, the Obama administration continued and even expanded many features of the hawkish foreign policy that was much more widely protested under George W. Bush. The apparent disconnects may be as much because of public perceptions as they were in spite of them, as motivation for grassroots activism can appear more urgent "when not relying on presidential lip service."<sup>1</sup> For the activist of any stripe, working under threat is the ultimate motivator.

By the same token, the perception of having the powers that be on one's side, whether true or not, can lead to an easy and often false complacency. For this reason, the election one cycle later of a candidate who has indeed paid unsubstantiated lip service to the pro-life movement (and and this only recently, having previously referred to himself as "very pro-choice") risks becoming one of its greatest setbacks. While those who have put their hopes in Donald Trump to end legalized abortion—a long shot at best—may be tempted to complacency by his victory, those who fear such a result are anything but.

The nervous reaction in some circles in defense of what is euphemistically termed "reproductive rights," including an upsurge in support for abortion providers, is not unlike the surges in gun sales and rallying support for "gun rights" groups that predictably follow the public shooting incidents that have become all too commonplace. And like the preemptive reactions in fear of gun control legislation that often doesn't happen, proponents of abortion are already stepping up their activism and will likely continue to do so throughout Trump's term of office—regardless of whether anything is done to protect the preborn.

Meanwhile, however, the same type of electoral backlash is also becoming a major catalyst for the protection of other vulnerable populations. Church authorities and organizations that provide services to immigrants—not only non-profits that specialize in assisting immigrants, but also the leadership of Catholic colleges, as well as Mexican-American Archbishop José Gomez and Los Angeles city officials—are steeling themselves against the possibility of unjust deportations.<sup>2</sup> Others are already taking the incoming administration to task on the need to address the social and moral sickness of racism.<sup>3</sup> And the list goes on: public discourse bespeaks heightened concerns for the protection of religious minorities,

particularly Muslims; the dignity of women, particularly survivors of sexual assault; and people with tenuous access to adequate health care.

And in a further twist of irony, we may also see a rise in peace activism as we did in the Bush years, even though Hillary Clinton is at least as hawkish as Trump (or almost any Republican for that matter), and certainly more of an interventionist. Yet if any checks against excessive militarism might have been unduly lax under a Clinton presidency, as they were under Obama, those who are quite justly worried about such excesses are much more likely to be on the alert for them within a military-brass-laden Trump administration and the Republican Congress.

There are, of course, many others who took a gamble on Trump, whether in hopes that he will protect the lives of the preborn or the livelihoods of those who have been shafted by a post-industrial economy. These concerns are justified and indeed critical, yet those who put their hope in Trump to address them effectively are likely to be disappointed. This should not be any cause for celebration among those of us who have opposed him but all the more reason to provide better answers to those misplaced hopes.

It should be obvious from Trump's speech and behavior that he is no friend of the vulnerable. Hence there is the need to advocate as strongly as ever for the dignity of the unborn and the working class of all races and social demographics, not to mention for welcoming the stranger, freedom from religious hatred and sexual violence, health care and living wages for all, and peace within and beyond our borders. In short, there is the need to continue advocating for the lives and dignity of all who are vulnerable to legally and culturally sanctioned violence, no matter who controls Congress or occupies the White House.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> "2009: U.S. Abortion Rate Drops 5%," *Peace & Life Connections* 138, November 30, 2012, <http://consistent-life.org/weekly121130.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the following: Archbishop José Gomez, "LA Prelate 'Deeply Concerned' about Trump on Immigration," *Crux*, December 9, 2016, <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2016/12/09/la-prelate-deeply-concerned-trump-immigration>; "What Will Become of the DREAMers' Dream?," Kino Border Initiative, December 6, 2016, <https://www.kinoborderinitiative.org/will-become-dreamers-dream>; Jim McDermott, "Los Angeles Circles the Wagons," *America*, November 18, 2016, <http://www.americamagazine.org/content/dispatches/los-angeles-circles-wagons>; Carol Zimmerman, "Catholic College Leaders Stand with Undocumented Students," *America*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/catholic-college-leaders-stand-undocumented-students>.

<sup>3</sup> For another church-based example, see Archbishop Wilton Gregory, "Racism Is a Disease That Must be Cured," *Crux*, December 2, 2016, <https://cruxnow.com/cns/2016/12/02/archbishop-gregory-racism-disease-must-cured>.





# A Coach's Perspective on Performance and Abortion

By David B. Lewis, D. Min.

**As a Collegiate Women's Soccer Coach,** I enjoy recognizing principles within sport that can be applied to everyday life. I refer to these principles as transferable concepts. One such transferable concept is the correlation between performance and abortion.

Maximum performance is a key component for any collegiate soccer team. Each training session is filled with the fundamentals of the game: mastering the first-touch, trapping, passing, dribbling, shielding, shooting... techniques practiced over and over... and over. Players strive to improve these fundamentals while the coaching staff provide assessments and evaluations of player development. What needs to be worked on and which needs should be prioritized? What players work best together? Who adds speed to the line-up? What is the best system of play? These evaluatory questions are ongoing as the coaching staff attempts to field the best-prepared team — and these assessments invariably are based upon player performance.

Performance and Function are essential components of the game. Yet, here we must proceed with caution. Certainly, player performance is vitally important, but it is never to become the measuring stick to define an individual person's significance or value. A player's identity and worth are not to be defined by their performance, i.e.: "You score a goal; therefore, you are more important." "You pass with precision; therefore, you are of greater value." "You defend flawlessly; therefore, you are worth more." Or the contrast: "You failed to score; therefore, you are valued less." "You allowed a goal to be

scored; therefore, you are less." No! A player's value or significance is NOT based upon their performance or function. Rather, player value is based upon their essence — who they are as a person.

Years ago, our soccer program ran both Junior Varsity and Varsity teams. In total, we had 55 players between the two teams. Several players rotated, and played at times, with the Varsity as well as with the Junior Varsity. Due to the number of players, whenever the Varsity would travel for an away game we had a travel team limitation of 22 players. Consequently, decisions had to be made about who would be traveling. The selection of the majority of the travel team was determined by performance criteria. In order to field the most competitive team, this type of assessment was necessary. However, there was one specific player who was consistently selected to travel not because of her soccer ability, but rather because of the

**Essence has no strings attached: "You are; therefore, you are significant and valued."**

presence she brought to the team. Soccer-wise, she was not among the top 22 players. Her skill set was average at best. However, she added an essential presence along the sideline. Her enthusiasm, passion, nurturing spirit, and words of encouragement were infectious and vital for the team's healthy dynamics. Her addition to the travel squad was not based upon her on-field performance, but rather upon the character qualities of her presence.

Regardless of who travelled or who did not, the personal value and significance of each player as an individual rested not upon her soccer skill level or field performance, but rather upon her essence as whole person.

Essence has no strings attached: "You ARE; therefore, you are



significant and valued.” Whereas, performance carries all kinds of conditions: “If you perform up to a prescribed standard then you will be recognized and esteemed.” A performance-based value system is a transactional relationship (Cause and Effect). Perform well and then you will be rewarded with acceptance. Perform poorly and experience rejection. I realize that players will mistakenly equate personal value and worth with such things as starting roles and minutes played. Yes — coaches will need to base game-day decisions on performance criteria. However, we must not perpetuate a performance-based value system when it comes to player identity and significance. Rather, we embrace a value-system based upon essence. I want to continually reassure my players that they are valued because of who they ARE and not because of their performance on the soccer field. “Win or lose, you are loved.” “Succeed or fail, you are still held in the highest regard.” “Starter or Substitute, you are each vital to the team.” When the stress and weight of performance is lifted from their shoulders, players can enjoy the game as intended. Interestingly, when this freedom is experienced, player performance typically rises.

So, what does this discussion about player performance and essence have to do with abortion? I suggest that there is a corresponding parallel or analogy — a transferable concept.

Frequently, discussion about abortion and the life of a fetus is framed within the lens of performance. Prescribed performance-based conditions are imposed on the child in the womb: “This life can be terminated before there is a heartbeat... before brain waves can be detected... before he/she can be viable outside the womb...” Whatever the conditions may be, they are all measures of performance or function. Perhaps it is determined that the preborn child will be disabled physically or mentally and incapable of a “meaningful life”. Should this life be terminated because he/she will not reach the performance measure imposed by others? Let’s echo the coach’s words to his/her players: “You are valued because of who you ARE, not because of your function on the soccer field”.

Little one, you are valued for who you ARE, not because of your perceived potential level of productivity in the world. Win or lose, you are loved. Whole or disabled, you are loved. “Succeed or fail, you are still held in the highest regard”. Fully capable or not capable at all, you bear the image of God and are thus esteemed. “Starter or Substitute, you are vital to the team”. Strong or weak, you belong to our family. You are HUMAN. You are BEING. You are ESSENCE. Little one, your essence may differ from most others and that is okay. Because you are human.

Similar to the athletic scenario, our ethic regarding human life is succumbing to a performance-based value system. The little life in the womb may not have adult thoughts or even self-awareness, but by virtue of his or her essence, he/she loudly proclaims, “I am!” By nature of human conception, the human fetus is a human being. Her presence is essence and not tied to the strings of function or performance.

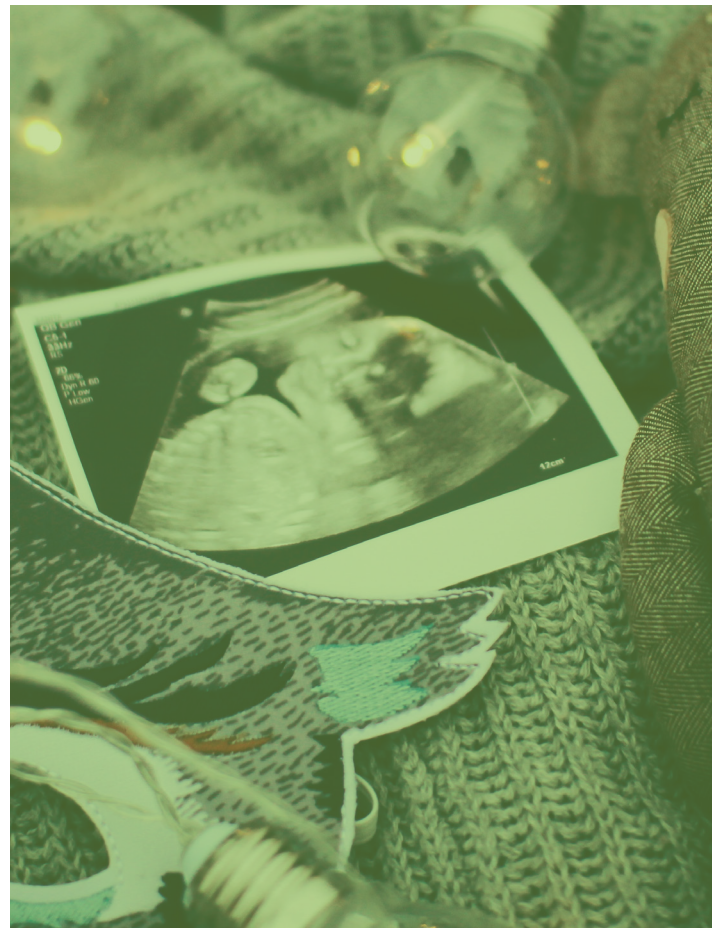
An important question emerges: At what point in our human existence do we begin “be human”? In my personal religious terms, to bear the image of God? Do we bear His image at a certain age after birth? Do we bear His image once we can achieve a certain human function or capability? Do we bear His image while yet in our mother’s womb? Does abortion kill a human being who bears the image of God? Existence... Essence... Being... I am... To be

consistent, we must identify with God as our Creator and bear His image at the very moment that our life begins — the marvel of conception. “You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:13-14).

Again, consider Jesus. Why didn’t Jesus simply appear as a fully grown man when He came to earth as Savior? I suppose He could have. Instead, He chose to fully identify with every aspect of our human existence through His conception in the womb of Mary. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and spoke about Jesus: “What is conceived in her (Mary) is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son and you are to give Him the name Jesus...” (Matthew 1:20-21). These words fulfilled the words spoken by the prophet, Isaiah: “The virgin will be with child AND will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel — which means ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14).

Jesus experienced each gestational stage of life, birth, infancy, toddler, teen, etc. Was there any point in time from the moment of His conception in which Jesus was not yet Jesus? At the moment of His conception, Jesus is “I Am”. Jesus fully identifies with our humanity and likewise we identify with His image at the moment of conception.

A transferable concept — in this case, drawing meaning from an athletic analogy and applying it to life: A player’s value does not rest in their performance on the soccer field, but rather in their essence. They belong because they ARE. Likewise, the child in the womb is valued because of her essence — human. And I surmise, a gift from God, to be nurtured and cherished.







# The Killing Game, Part Two

By Mariana Fernandez del Castillo

*Continued from part one, which can be found in Life Matters Journal Volume 5, Issue 4.*

A few days after her meeting with The Seven, she was called to C.O. Twintu's office. "495, we need to go over the marching orders for next week; the trainees need to be ready to go. Let's walk to my office." As they walked, she continued.

"The Leaders are pleased by your support. The first order of business is getting everyone to the Mountain Crater Base. The baby soldiers are to be left out without their feeders. We need bait. Once they go into the dorms, make sure the barracks are unlocked, and hide in the portable bunker down in the crater. Don't utter a sound, just wait until we securely ping you for further instructions. We need you to run tactical from the base and fly some of the crafts into the air. After the attack, our men will fly in and capture the aliens. 495, we've also moved the date of departure up three days, so be prepared."

"Officer Twintu, we'll be ready 72 hours from now." She wasn't sure what she was feeling. After the marching orders sunk in she felt hopeless for the first time. She walked into the instruction room and looked at all the expressionless faces. "Listen up; we move out midnight 72 hours from now. Every one of you little snots needs an overnight pack ready."

"Yes, Lieutenant," each cadet responded in unison.

The next two days were a blur. 495 felt a strange feeling in the pit of her stomach. Her attendant came in with her pill. 495 pretended to swallow the pill, which she placed into a pocket she had created inside her shirt. The pile of pills felt weighty under her shirt, and she wondered if anyone noticed the bulge.

The day of the mission came, and 495 had trouble looking at the young faces waiting for her to speak. Her C.O. spoke, "495, get the trainees ready for transport. I almost forgot, but I received a longer lasting pill made by Dr. Speck. I'm not sure when we can next get to you, and we need you in tip-top form."

495 was quiet as the trainees walked and attendants pushed the babies into the ten-speed tubes allocated for the mission. Once at the base, she followed the plan to the letter, finally running to her bunker. Pip cried softly; she asked, "Can I let these children die? They have been nothing but loyal to the cause."

A voice in her head spoke up saying, "Yes, you can. Remember the pledge! 'Hail Leaders, who keep the world at peace. Without you, peace wouldn't exist. I pledge allegiance to you, and my sole mission is to protect you with my life.' I'm not one of them." The voice went on: "You will be rewarded, promoted, and maybe one

day elected to be a Leader. This mission is what you've trained for all your life."

The pills felt heavy in her pocket, and she touched them with her hands. "Take the damn pills," said the voice. She couldn't.

Pip took a deep breath and opened the door to her mini-bunker a crack. She couldn't be a part of this any longer. She would run away into the dark wilderness and live out her life without any moral uneasiness. She wondered if others had similar qualms about what the government was doing. First, though, she would have to lock the bunkers so no one could get inside until the aliens were captured.

She heard noises and peered carefully through the crack. Pip saw a craft flying overhead. It was one of Headquarters'. "They have changed their mind and have come to rescue the children," she thought to herself. She let out a long sigh of relief. Soon the craft landed and several members of the secret police walked out with guns and knives. They ran over to the bunkers and started to shoot and stab with wild abandon. She heard screams of pain as the children died. Suddenly the secret police jumped back into their craft and were gone.

A deafening silence passed through the base for several minutes as Pip took in the horrific scene. She wept for all the martyred infants and children, for they had no reason to die; their blood flowed out in a river towards her bunker, pooling at its base. She cried violently, not just for the dead but for her years of ignorance.

"The aliens and chimeras are a lie," she screamed between sobs. "I'm sorry, so sorry, I didn't want this. I want no part in this war! What have I done?" She stopped crying for a moment, and the voice of 495 spoke: "Take the pills... You need pills. Regardless of morality, you could not have stopped them. Take the pills and you won't feel a thing."

She shook violently as she surveyed the scene; she grabbed quickly for all the pills from her pocket. The pills dropped into the pooling blood and began to disintegrate with a hiss. 495 reached into the blood for the pills, staining her hands. Suddenly the realization was too much for Pip. "Oh God, what have I done? Oh God, what have I done?" She ran blindly towards the bunkers between wrenching sobs, splattering her whole body with red.

Pip picked up a gun. As she held it to her head, she heard a familiar voice say, "I don't want them to take you, Pip." She fired.





# Why Focus on Abortion?

By Acyutananda

I'm not alone among pro-life advocates in that people sometimes ask me, "Why only abortion? Why do you advocate on this issue only?" When pro-choicers ask me that question, it often takes the form of "Why don't you talk about the problems of women?"

My first reply might be that I do not in fact ignore other issues. I have done a lot of pondering about the miserable treatment of women throughout most of history, in most of the world, and I have even ventured to write about a pro-life feminist approach toward rectifying all of that. I volunteer for an organization that works to lift people out of poverty.

Most of the pro-lifers I know actually do approach abortion with a holistic view of the world. But it is true that some of us, including me, do also spend a disproportionate amount of our advocacy time focused on the abortion issue specifically.

For me, this is because I feel that the pro-life cause, much more than any other cause, can be a vehicle for a higher human consciousness that will uplift us morally in how we respond to all issues, not only the abortion issue.

As Javier Cuadros wrote:

Science is a process of knowledge in which we penetrate ever deeper. . . . As the observations multiply . . . it is typical that the original appearances . . . are shown to be incorrect. The reality is different. . . . This is why I have always been puzzled about the reluctance of scientists to apply the same program of investigation to the nature of the human embryo. Are human embryos men and women and thus entitled to the inalienable right to life and respect for their dignity and physical integrity, or are they not? Here, many scientists . . . are for applying the simple criterion of appearances. No, [embryos] are not men and women, they say, because they do not look like a person. Agreed, they do not look like a developed human being. But the Earth looks like it is stationary. . . . [S]hape does not make a human being. It has been shown that the most fundamental element of the presence and identity of a human being is the existence of a specific DNA molecule.<sup>1</sup>

Most people in the world, if we may indulge in broad strokes, have one of these two perceptions of the early preborn: 1) either

they feel that the early preborn is not possessed of the moral value of other human beings because it doesn't look like most of the human beings we know (or doesn't seem quite as bright as most of the human beings we know, or some such criterion); or 2) they feel that the early preborn does have the same moral value as the other human beings we know because the genetic information it possesses has set it on an inexorable path—a path such that it will soon enough be a human being similar to others we know (if only somebody doesn't kill it first).

I think that among those who hold the second category of perception, there are also some who got there without an understanding of DNA and chromosomes. They got there simply by common sense, and perhaps pondering deeply over some such thought as this: "A human life is one seamless process that has to start somewhere, and how can it be expected that it won't start extremely small?"

Now, can we call either of the two perceptions better than the other? Well, the first perception is like a still picture. It is a perception of the organism as if it were frozen in time. The second perception is of a process. If you kill a small clump of cells lacking, perhaps, even a beating heart, it is correct to say that you are killing an organism whose life presently has little value; and that therefore the organism itself would—if no future lay ahead of it—have little value. But it is also correct to say that you are depriving that organism of the complete human life which has started in it as a process. We cannot deem that either perception is more scientific than the other. But, obviously, the perception of the process is a more complete perception.

The perception of the process is not necessarily more scientific, but it is more complete. It is richer. I think that perception helps explain the joy that we see on the faces of "the pro-life generation" at the March for Life and on almost every campus in the country. So for me, it reflects the higher consciousness that I spoke of above, a more evolved consciousness. It reflects a forward evolution in a person's inner world. It reflects an expansion.

When Barack Obama announced his support for gay marriage in 2012, after sixteen years in politics, he famously described that pivot of his as "an evolution." Well, Mr. Obama, that's great! Evolution is a liberating experience. Any one person's moral evolution surely



has wonderful consequences for us all. Now, Mr. Obama—and Hillary Clinton, and Cecile Richards, and Gloria Steinem—you have a chance to go on evolving, to evolve still more. Wouldn't it be great to do so? The path is before you. We'll all be cheering you on.

Though not wishing to minimize how big an evolutionary step it was for straight people to come to perceive gay people as fully human, I think that coming to perceive embryos as fully human will be an even bigger step. It will also be a bigger step than coming to perceive other races as fully human, or other genders as fully human, or the differently abled as fully human. Why? Because—to get back to Cuadros above—gay people, and people of other races and genders, and the differently abled, look like persons. We can “apply the simple criterion of appearances.” Moreover, let us remember Martin Luther King, Jr.'s observation that “freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.” Unlike other groups that have won society's respect, the preborn do not themselves strike the least fear in the hearts of those who would mistreat them. If rights are to be secured for them, it will be the first time in history that rights have been secured for a human group who could not fight back somewhat, or at least clamor shrilly. So coming to truly perceive the preborn as fully human, though completely in accord with science, will be a grander mental achievement than in the case of other groups. This last frontier of civil rights will be the most difficult. But by the same token it will represent a more significant expansion of consciousness.

A pro-life position taken on this basis will mean a greater connectedness with our origins and hence a greater connectedness with the universe. This connectedness will certainly spill over into all our activities and all our decisions. It will be a big evolutionary step, a step to what I called above “a higher human consciousness that will uplift us morally in how we respond to all issues, not only the abortion issue.”

I also said, however, that “the pro-life cause, much more than any other cause, can be a vehicle for a higher human consciousness.” Let me explain why this is so. It is natural for the mind to try to confine one's human family to a small circle. We fear having to care for people, or kinds of people, outside that circle. Our mental walls constructed around that circle, however, get smashed when confronted by facts that are incompatible with such encirclement or when confronted by incompatible, yet persuasive, viewpoints coming from people who command our respect. The smashing of our mental walls is an uncomfortable experience, a disturbing experience, but once one manages to grasp the idea that a human life is one seamless process, and hence equally valuable at all points in time, it is an idea that becomes very persuasive. It is a more complete view than to perceive the organism as if it were frozen in time. Moreover, once we include within the circle of our family people we had formerly excluded, we emerge with fewer fears than we had before. In this way also our minds expand. Thus the pro-life cause can be a vehicle for a higher human consciousness, and thus this,

to me, is the issue to focus on.

People whom we do not respect, however, are unlikely to persuade us. Among other things, pro-life advocates who are to be persuasive must be people who truly have that expanded vision—which cannot be said of all pro-life advocates. I think that many religious people who were originally pro-life by virtue of rote religious doctrine later become prompted by their doctrines, or by other forces, to do some deep thinking of their own and develop that expanded vision. But those who came to a pro-life position out of rote religious doctrine alone (without further reflection), not to mention those who came to it out of political opportunism, will not have that vision. Only those who genuinely have this vision will be able to articulate it in a way that touches non-believers; others may even create a big backlash among skeptics.

A few years back John Koenig coined the word “sonder,” a noun whose definition begins, “the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own.”<sup>2</sup> It is the ultimate sense of human connectedness, and as the founder of *Life Matters Journal* has pointed out, it is a state of mind out of which consistent pro-life behavior in all one's actions must inevitably flow.<sup>3</sup> I think that activism on behalf of the preborn can do more than anything else to further this outlook in the human race.

## The last frontier of civil rights will be the most difficult.

Now I have said a lot about establishing in people's minds the perception that the preborn is a full-fledged member of our human family. But by now some will be asking, in order for the pro-life cause to prevail, will such convincing alone be sufficient? What about the bodily rights position, which concedes for the sake of argument that the preborn is indeed fully human, yet claims a right to kill it nonetheless?

But I think that the understanding that the preborn is a full-fledged member of our human family is sufficient. It seems to me almost always that those who concede for the sake of argument that the preborn is truly a human being, yet claim a right to kill, make that concession only for the sake of argument. Very few of them—perhaps only Naomi Wolf and Camille Paglia—have made that concession in their hearts.<sup>4</sup> I think that almost anyone who really sees the preborn as our little sisters and brothers will quickly dig a little deeper and discover the weaknesses in the bodily-rights argument.<sup>5</sup>

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Javier Cuadros, “CRISPR, but No Clearer about the Human Embryo,” *MercatorNet*, February 9, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2ke3joG>.

<sup>2</sup> John Koenig, “Sonder,” *Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, accessed on February 4, 2017, <http://bit.ly/1bSrI4khttp://www.dictionaryofobscuresorrows.com/post/23536922667/sonder>.

<sup>3</sup> Aimee Murphy, “Sonder: The Key to Peace?” *Life Matters Journal* 3, no. 2 (2014): 32-33.

<sup>4</sup> Camille Paglia, “Feminists Have Abortion Wrong, Trump and Hillary Mis-cues Highlight a Frozen National Debate,” *Salon*, April 7, 2016, <http://bit.ly/1XjLsY6>; Naomi Wolf, “Our Bodies, Our Souls,” *New Statesman*, January 27, 2013, <http://bit.ly/2jN3ubL>.

<sup>5</sup> Acyutananda, “Bodily Rights and a Better Idea,” *No Termination without Representation* (blog), April 10, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2l9OOAw>.