



# Life Matters Journal

V. 4 ISSUE 2 — OCTOBER 2015

## Be a Hero, Save a Whale Feed the Homeless, Go to Jail

In what ways are we as a society dehumanizing those who live in poverty?

## Children of War

The children of American servicemen conceived during wartime are often left abandoned and disadvantaged.

## What's in it for the Born?

The benefits of humanity's increasing inclusiveness have not been a one-way street.



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

First, I'd like to just thank you for reading *Life Matters Journal* and your commitment to the consistent life ethic. Our society faces many challenges today in the struggle for life, peace, and human rights for all human beings. We face the challenge of violent threats



to life, often arising from an abuse of the concept of freedom. We also face weariness from the toil of taking on these challenges. It's not easy to "keep fighting the good fight." It's inherently difficult, just like any other challenge, and it can also be depressing because it can seem like we're not getting anywhere. And at times we even risk our jobs, our relationships, and our freedom. But where is the joy if we don't roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty? And could we ever be victorious without determination and sacrifice?

We do need to rest, but we also need to focus on doing what we can—within reason and remembering our human limitations—to take that stance for justice, peace, and the protection of the vulnerable. I hope you have found the content of our past issues helpful in this shared mission and that the articles in this issue will further motivate your work, passion, and compassion. Starting in the next issue, we will have a column from Equal Rights Institute president Josh Brahm. Please send us your queries on pro-life subjects, such as apologetics, hard questions, and attitudes in discourse.

In addition to working on this publication, *Life Matters Journal* is gearing up for the March for Life in D.C., March for Life Chicago, and the Walk for Life in San Francisco. We will have a #LifeMatters meetup at each event, and we are coming to the March for Life Conference & Expo. Stay tuned by visiting our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/LifeMattersJournal](http://www.facebook.com/LifeMattersJournal).

Let's roll!

**Mary Stroka**

Executive Editor

# Life Matters Journal

OCTOBER 2015

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**LIFEMATTERSJOURNAL.ORG**

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

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

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent 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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Have a letter for the editor here at Life Matters Journal? Please write us at [info@lifemattersjournal.org](mailto:info@lifemattersjournal.org) and let us know what you think. Make the subject line of your email "Letter," and we will publish it in our next issue along with our responses.





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# A Red State Ends the Death Penalty:

## How Conservatives in Nebraska Came to Reject Capital Punishment

By Ben Jones

On May 27, Nebraska became the first red state since North Dakota in the 1970s to repeal the death penalty. As the country has shifted away from the death penalty in the past decade, many interpreted this development as a progressive movement. Before Nebraska, a string of blue states – New York, New Jersey, New Mexico, Illinois, Connecticut, and Maryland – had repealed the death penalty. Nebraska challenged this dominant narrative, with Republicans leading efforts to end the death penalty. Without this conservative support, a repeal bill would have had no chance of passing the Nebraska Legislature.

Developments in Nebraska show the growing support across the political spectrum for ending the death penalty. Of course, a number of states (red and blue alike) still have capital punishment, so the vote by the Nebraska Legislature far from represents the final chapter in efforts to end the death penalty across the nation. The campaign in Nebraska does, though, provide insight into why more conservatives are rejecting the death penalty and how to make further progress toward ending it for good in the United States.

### A History of Close Calls

The campaign to repeal Nebraska's death penalty did not achieve success overnight, but only after decades of persistently highlighting the problems with capital punishment.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's reinstatement of capital punishment in 1976, Omaha State Senator Ernie Chambers (an independent) consistently introduced legislation to repeal the state's death penalty over the course of four decades. On several previous occasions, bills ending or limiting the death penalty introduced by Chambers passed the Nebraska Legislature, yet each time they fell short of becoming law. In 1979, the Nebraska Legislature passed a bill repealing the death penalty but the Governor vetoed it. Twenty years later, the Governor also vetoed a bill establishing a two-year moratorium on executions in Nebraska.<sup>1</sup>

As this debate played out, many of the problems prompting doubts about the death penalty nationally also became apparent in Nebraska. Most notably, mistakes by law enforcement showed that capital punishment was far from foolproof, and at times put innocent life at risk. After a 1985 rape and murder in Beatrice, Nebraska, officials focused their investigation on six individuals – the “Beatrice Six” – despite the lack of physical evidence connecting them to the crime. When threatened with the death penalty, some of these suspects confessed so as to avoid being executed. Collectively, the Beatrice Six spent more than 75 years in prison before DNA testing in 2008 finally proved their innocence.

In addition to such mistakes, Nebraska's death penalty failed to affect crime in any meaningful way. The state had carried out only three executions since reinstating the death penalty in the 1970s and none since 1997. Like other states, Nebraska ran into obstacles obtaining the drugs necessary for



lethal injections.<sup>2</sup> Though rarely used, Nebraska's death penalty still inflicted a fiscal toll on local counties pursuing death sentences due to the prolonged legal process associated with capital cases. One Nebraska county nearly went bankrupt as a result of two capital cases, and in response mortgaged its ambulances.<sup>3</sup>

This broken system – characterized by ineffectiveness, egregious error, and high costs – did little to inspire the confidence of many conservatives. In this environment, a number of Republican lawmakers stepped up to play a leadership role in repealing Nebraska's death penalty during the 2015 legislative debate.

## Conservatives Take Ownership of Repeal

As in years past, Chambers introduced legislation in 2015 to repeal the death penalty. At the time, however, the prospects of this bill succeeding seemed bleak. No red state had repealed the death penalty in over 40 years, plus Nebraska's governor, Pete Ricketts, was on record supporting the death penalty. Passing repeal legislation through a Republican-controlled legislature by itself was a tall order, and the further task of mustering a veto-proof majority struck many as out of reach. In an April 2015 article on Nebraska, the progressive magazine *Mother Jones* bluntly said: "The [repeal] bill is unlikely to become law."<sup>4</sup>

This pessimism, however, did not deter a group of conservative lawmakers from coming together to push for an end to Nebraska's death penalty. On April 15, at a press conference sponsored by Nebraska Conservatives Concerned about the Death Penalty, seven Republican state senators called for repeal. A combination of fiscal and pro-life concerns motivated these senators in taking this view. "I [believe] life begins at conception and should be protected until God calls the individual home," said Senator Tommy Garrett. Senator Colby Coash, who played the lead role in assembling Republican support in the Senate, emphasized that ending the death pen-

alty would root out "government waste."<sup>5</sup>

These Republican senators were not alone, as a number of individuals and organizations in Nebraska also mobilized at the grassroots level to support repeal. The Catholic bishops of Nebraska issued a statement in support of ending the death penalty, noting that "We must all be careful to temper our natural outrage against violent crime with a recognition of the dignity of all people, even the guilty."<sup>6</sup> Other influential faith leaders in Nebraska made similar pleas.<sup>7</sup>

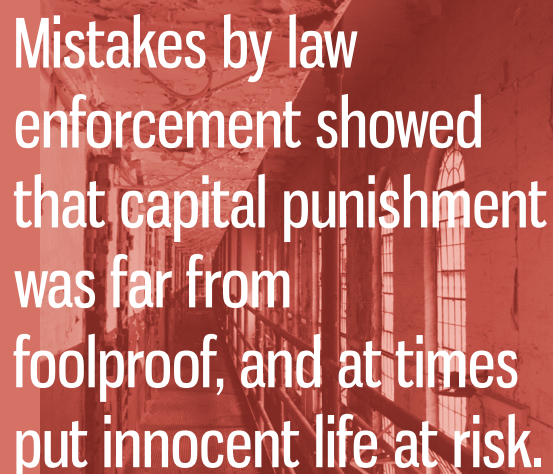
A number of murder victims' families also voiced opposition to the death penalty – a system they saw as failing them by prolonging the legal process and inflicting additional harm. Miriam Kelle, whose brother Michael Ryan was murdered in 1984, experienced this aspect of the death penalty firsthand. After enduring three decades of capital appeals in her brother's case, Kelle urged lawmakers to recognize the pain inflicted by the death penalty: "If we had been given a sentence of life, without the possibility of parole, we would have left the legal system behind 30 years ago ... and had time to focus our energy on our family, our grief and not this never-ending fight for justice."<sup>8</sup>

Concerns for murder victims' families, protecting life, and cutting government waste all represented compelling reasons for conservatives to end Nebraska's death penalty. In other words, it was not in spite of but *because of* their conservative principles that many Nebraska Republicans supported repeal of the death penalty.

## "We Were All Number 30"

The strong momentum for repeal in the Nebraska Legislature caught many proponents of the death penalty off guard. Despite the death penalty's reputation as a controversial issue, the repeal bill passed the Nebraska Judiciary Committee unanimously. From there it headed to the full unicameral legislature (unique to Nebraska) for consideration. Though a unicameral legislature with one less chamber seems to provide an easier path to pass a bill into a law, that is hardly the case. The Nebraska Legislature must approve a bill three times before it goes to the governor. Should the bill face a veto or filibuster, it needs to meet the high threshold of 30 or 33 votes (out of 49), respectively, to pass.<sup>9</sup>

Despite statements and press conferences by Governor Ricketts urging lawmakers to keep the death penalty on the books,<sup>10</sup> the repeal bill passed on the first reading with a veto-proof majority. Shortly before the second vote, the Governor made a surprise announcement: he claimed that Nebraska had succeeded in purchasing the lethal injection drugs needed for an execution.<sup>11</sup> It later came out that Nebraska had tried to illegally import lethal injection drugs from India, and that the FDA would block these drugs' entry into the country.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, at the time, the announcement tried to attract wavering senators by convincing them that Nebras-



Mistakes by law enforcement showed that capital punishment was far from foolproof, and at times put innocent life at risk.

Photo credit: David Scaglione, Flickr Creative Commons



ka could make its death penalty work. This tactic failed to stop the Legislature from sending a repeal bill to the governor – the bill passed 30-16 on the second vote and 32-15 on the third vote.

As expected, Ricketts vetoed the bill after it reached his desk. With 32 senators on record in favor of repeal, Ricketts and his allies needed to persuade three legislators to oppose repeal to keep a veto override from succeeding. A few days before the veto override vote, Senator Jerry Johnson announced that he would switch his vote and not support repeal.<sup>13</sup> During the veto override debate, Senator John Murante also announced that he would no longer support repeal.<sup>14</sup> While the debate continued on the Senate floor, both proponents and opponents of the death penalty focused their attention on Senator Robert Hilkemann, a Republican from Omaha, who would be the decisive vote.

Hilkemann supported the death penalty when he entered the legislature in 2014. A turning point came after meeting Ray Krone, one of the more than 150 individuals in the United States wrongfully sentenced to death and later exonerated.<sup>15</sup> Convicted on faulty bite mark evidence, Krone spent 10 years in prison before DNA proved his innocence (he now serves as the Director of Membership and Training for Witness to Innocence).<sup>16</sup> This personal story detailing the injustice of the death penalty stuck with Hilkemann, and was the impetus for him supporting repeal during the first three votes.<sup>17</sup>

On the day of the veto override debate, Hilkemann received visits and phone calls from the Governor, the mayor of Omaha, law enforcement officials, and others urging him to sustain the Governor's veto. Hilkemann had even prepared a speech in case he changed his mind and voted against repeal. But at the end of the day, he "could not not push green," as he put it. Amidst the intense lobbying, Hilkemann recalled advice from a recent sermon that gave him strength: "Always remember that Jesus has got your back."<sup>18</sup> With this mindset, Hilkemann cast the deciding vote in favor of repeal, as the veto override succeeded 30-19 with no votes to spare.

Afterwards, Hilkemann perhaps made the statement that best summed up the legislative effort: "We were all number 30."<sup>19</sup>

## Building Off the Victory in Nebraska

The victory in Nebraska has reverberated across the country. It prompted conservative commentator George Will to write, "Capital punishment is withering away."<sup>20</sup> Ron Paul praised Nebraska for scrapping capital punishment – or, as he put it, the "Ultimate Corrupt, Big Government Program."<sup>21</sup>

Pat Nolan, who has been one of the leaders on the right advocating criminal justice reform, saw the Nebraska vote as a turning point. "You can't get more red than Nebraska, and the cooperation of flinty conservatives with urban blacks was unstoppable," Nolan explained in an interview with *The New Yorker*.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, the mood on the death penalty in the country appears to be shifting, with Nebraska representing a microcosm of the growing bipartisan support for its repeal. Another red state, Montana, came within a single vote of passing a repeal bill through its house in 2015.<sup>23</sup> In Kansas, the Republican Party stripped its pro-death penalty plank from the state platform<sup>24</sup> and the Kansas College Republicans called for repeal of the death penalty.<sup>25</sup> This past March, the National Latino Evangelical Coalition – a leading organization of Latino evangelicals representing 3,000 congregations – adopted a resolution supporting repeal of the death penalty in a unanimous vote.<sup>26</sup>

This growing opposition to the death penalty, combined with the inability of states to obtain lethal injection drugs needed for executions, has put the future of capital punishment in doubt. Ending the death penalty in the US is within reach, but there is still much work left to do.

In Nebraska, it is important to protect this crucial victory. The Governor has vowed to try to execute the people on Nebraska's death row – despite the repeal bill being retroactive<sup>27</sup> – and has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to a referendum effort to bring back the death penalty.<sup>28</sup> As a result, it is likely that the issue will be on the ballot in Nebraska in 2016.<sup>29</sup> If you live in Nebraska, oppose reinstating the death penalty; if you don't, encourage anyone you know in Nebraska to oppose reinstatement efforts. To volunteer and learn more about the campaign to keep Nebraska death penalty free, visit Nebraskans for Public Safety online at [nebraskansforpublicsafety.org](http://nebraskansforpublicsafety.org). More generally, start a discussion on the death penalty with any pro-life groups that you are involved with and engage them on this issue. The legislative victory in Nebraska made evident the powerful impact of pro-life and conservative voices on the debate over the death penalty. If these voices continue to grow louder, it can only be a matter of time before the death penalty of today in the US becomes a relic of the past.

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# Be a Hero, Save a Whale — Feed the Homeless, Go to Jail

By C.J. Williams

**T**he homeless lump on the bench. It's filthy. You can't see a face -- this thing is covered up against the evening, only its feet sticking out. Geez, not even shoes. You edge up the path, wondering if you pass by without being noticed, wondering if you'll smell it anyway, wondering *why can't this loafer find a place to live? McDonald's is always hiring, for God's sake.*

So you do get a little close because you have to pass by and you were hoping to use that bench. Maybe the next one. After all, this is the best place to see the sunset and eat gelato ... or it was.

You can't help but look a little closer as you pass by. Voyeurism, disgust. The rubbernecker's curiosity. It's then that you notice its bare feet. No, you really notice its bare feet -- because they have holes in them. Nail holes. And you realize it's not a homeless lump. It's a sculpture lump. It's not alive at all -- as if you were thinking of it as alive in the first place. It's a statue -- and it's a statue depicting Jesus Christ. This is Fort Lauderdale, and in this city in Florida, it is effectively illegal to be homeless.

Do you see homelessness differently now?

In the United States today, 71 cities have banned feeding the homeless. Florida and California lead the nation in restrictive legislation, with Chico, CA, imposing a ban on distributing free food in its park and Costa Mesa, CA, demolishing two sites where the homeless have typically found shelter. In Fort Lauderdale, FL, a 60-year-old man was nabbed by the cops while offering a plate of food to a homeless individual, and told to "drop the plate" as if it were a weapon.

Proponents of anti-homeless laws argue that offering help, or tolerating squatting and loitering, encourages and increases homelessness -- as well as crime. But those who support offering aid see the conflict as one not of crime or community safety, but as one of a basic conflict of values.

"What do we really value?" commented Lisa Williams, an attorney who grew up in Costa Mesa, CA. "When we make laws against the homeless, especially in these wealthy areas, we're really saying we don't like the mess. We don't want to participate in a solution, but we don't want to see the suffering."

In other words, banning the homeless is an attitude that puts *human dignity second, my comfort first*. While it's true that the homeless don't look pretty, they're often camping out in neighborhoods because those very neighborhoods have not



voted to offer a municipal-based shelter in the area -- shelters that are often legally required by city and state laws.

Yet why are the shelters not built for the homeless people who have nowhere to go? Perhaps because the homeless aren't pretty, they aren't useful, and sometimes, they need a whole lot. Yet if it's illegal to be homeless, should it be illegal to be poor? If it's illegal to be poor, should it be illegal to have a large family -- grungy, loud, maybe taking up a bit too much space at the park all afternoon? Could our worth and value be just a matter of whether we're useful and pleasing to the community?

## Could our worth and value be just a matter of whether we're useful and pleasing to the community?

Cities banning homelessness often aren't willing to look at offering resources for the homeless. In San Clemente, CA, the state-required shelter has been delayed for over a year, as residents and the city council hem and haw over location -- none of the neighborhoods want the shelter near their homes.

Criminalization of the homeless -- and legislative and community acts behind it -- is an example of the Culture of Death, a culture that puts material wants, power, or appearances before a basic respect of human life. The homeless may cause you discomfort. But if comfort comes before a basic respect for our fellow man's dignity, we are looking at a values system that has gone topsy-turvy. After all, aren't you really the one responsible for your discomfort -- is it perhaps natural to feel uncomfortable when you see a human being disrespected, homeless, and robbed of the dignity of food and shelter?

The statue in the park is real. Tim Schmaltz, a Canadian artist, created it in 2013, and Pope Francis invited it to occupy a bench in St. Peter's -- doing exactly what it does: offer a shocking perspective on our own attitudes towards our fellow man, homelessness, and where our laws and communities draw a line at where we'll give human dignity. And where we put the sticker "less-than."

For a video of the artist, and explanation of the sculpture, go to: [https://youtu.be/2rAys\\_ON8rg](https://youtu.be/2rAys_ON8rg).

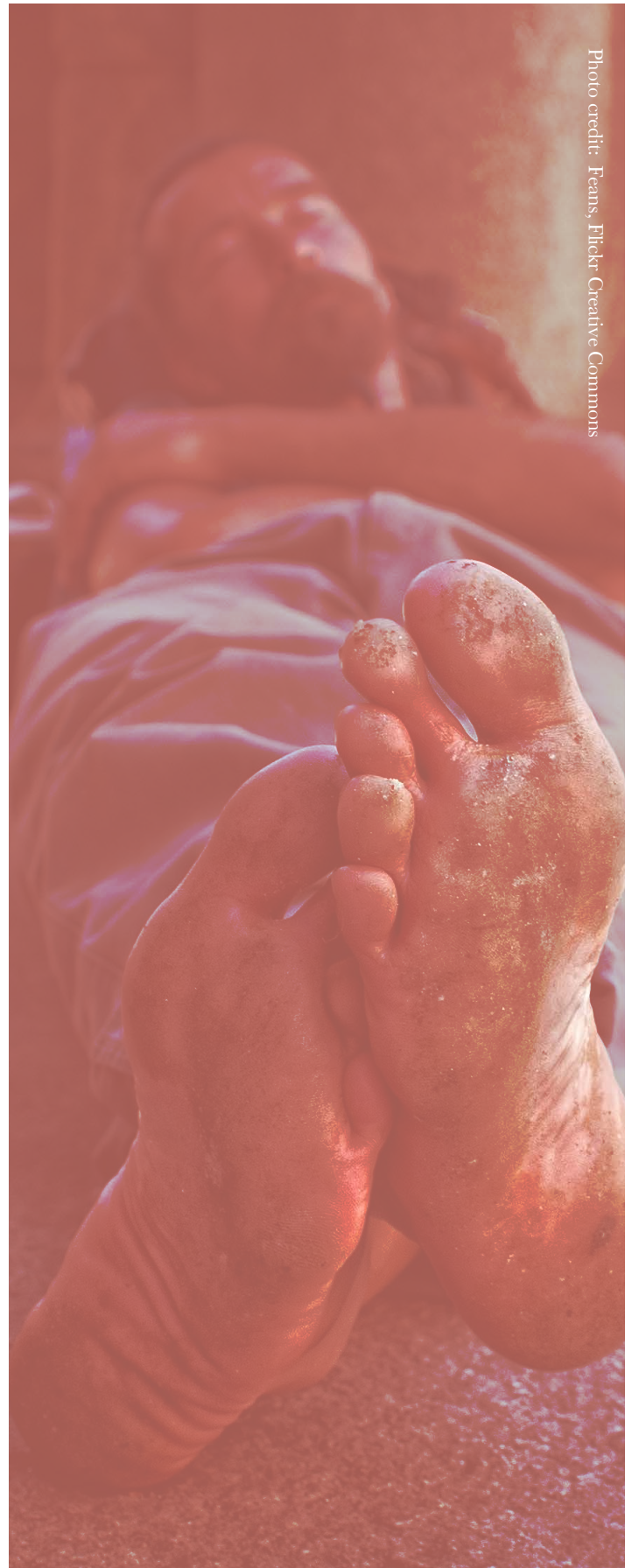


Photo credit: Feans, Flickr Creative Commons



A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over a landscape. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and casting long, soft shadows. The sky is filled with wispy clouds, and the overall color palette is dominated by warm tones of orange, red, and yellow.

# We are Beloved

By Nicholas Mele

As I write, the United States is angry, anxious, saddened, and split over the shootings of unarmed black men by white police officers in a number of locations. News of a negotiated settlement with Iran over its nuclear program evokes apocalyptic rhetoric. We live in the midst of a stew of fear and violence. News outlets headline stories about scary epidemics, war, mass executions. Social media memes—cleverly chosen images and aphorisms propagated over the internet—cater to stereotypes, polarization, and fear. Popular culture promotes the myth that violence can solve almost any problem and protect individuals as well as nations from any threat.

As theologian Walter Wink wrote in *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, “Violence is the ethos of our time. It is the spirituality of the modern world. It has been accorded the status of religion, demanding from its devotees an absolute obedience unto death.” Violence and threat breeds fear: fear of others, fear for our safety, fear that we will not be able to stand against the threats screaming from headlines and television news and talk shows.

To climb out of the morass of violence in which we live requires courage, creativity, effort, persistence, personal integrity, and a sense of humor. We must start by honestly ex-

amining and healing the violence within ourselves. The first step is cultivating awareness of how we have internalized the violence we experience daily and inflicted it on ourselves and others.

The violence we experience is not confined to news headlines or fiery talk show panelists. We also hear threats and violence daily from our families, our friends, our teachers, our supervisors and from our co-workers. The myth that violence solves problems, that a kind of purification or even redemption comes through violent behavior, dominates our attitudes and behavior. Over time, we internalize the messages of threat and violence and speak harshly to ourselves.

To be sure, often the violent words we hear are not intended to threaten or induce fear, they are simply the consequence of the “ethos of our time” described by Wink. For example, an exasperated parent seeking some support for house-cleaning might say to his child, “Pick up your toys!” in a tone of voice that the child hears as an implicit threat to withdraw love or impose punishment. Over time, we impose limits on ourselves in anticipation of others’ disappointment, disapproval, or withdrawal. As we do so, we also strive to earn approval and love and to exceed what we think others expect of us.

Popular culture reinforces feelings that we are not loved, or do not measure up, or both. The same media that conveys messages of violence and threat conveys advertisements and



subliminal messages that tell us we are each inadequate but can soothe our anxiety through self-indulgence or can compensate by purchasing the right products. We often fall into this trap and substitute material goods for love or identify and value ourselves through our possessions: I drive a luxury car or an SUV or a sexy sports car! I wear brand “x” clothing!

Popular culture also urges us to avoid relationships in which we feel insecure, such as those with the poor or socially stigmatized. We see the weakest members of society—the homeless, the mentally ill, the undocumented worker—as

threats to be met with bravado and force rather than as people desperately in need of help. Since we feel inadequate to deal with our fear, we automatically resort to violence instead of carefully considering responses proportional to the degree and probability of the threats we perceive.

How then, can we defeat the violence that envelops us? How can we live a fully nonviolent, fully human life, passionate and compassionate, stalwartly resisting evil and injustice? The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life give us some guidance. All three synoptic Gospels tell the story of Jesus’ baptism; the story opens the Gospel of Mark. In all three, God declares, “You are my beloved son.” Throughout his life, Jesus’ trust in God’s love freed him from shame, fear, and other emotional and social pressures. Thus, he was free to love others, in the process breaking through social constraints to heal and build community with outcast, despised people like tax collectors, differently-abled people, and even Roman soldiers. He saw beyond the letter of the Mosaic Law into its spirit and confronted those who could not or would not grasp the Law as deeply. Jesus calls us repeatedly to this same sort of risk-taking and removal of barriers to community.

The practice of contemplative prayer has opened the door

## How then, can we defeat the violence that envelops us?

to feeling beloved for many. The longer I sit quietly in the cloud of unknowing, the more aware I become of God’s love. Whether we focus on our breath, recite a sacred word, or use any other technique, when we are still we are open to God.

We can also feel God’s love more intensely when we practice gratitude. Simply recounting to ourselves a few people, situations, or things we are thankful for in our lives brings concrete evidence of God’s love, and offering thanks to God fosters more intimacy with God and a deeper knowledge of divine love. We can, moreover, acquire a sense of being loved when we are serving others in some way—when we care for “the least of these” we honor their belovedness and our own.

As members of the body of Christ, we, too, are God’s beloved children. As described above, we find this difficult to know and feel, although we may give our intellectual assent to the idea that God loves us. Father Henri Nouwen was



We see the weakest members of society...as threats to be met with bravado and force rather than as people desperately in need of help.



much concerned with this subject. He moved from a kind of academic but detached allegiance to the Gospel through stages of engagement with others that culminated in his long participation in the life of a L'Arche community in Canada.

These words, from a posthumously published talk by Nouwen, sum up the centrality of feeling God's love: "We are not what we do. We are not what we have. We are not what others think of us. Coming home is claiming the truth. I am the beloved child of a loving Creator."

Iconic leaders in nonviolent action also stress the value of feeling beloved. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. defined belovedness as "an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. It is the love of God working in the lives of men."

We can come to know and embrace God's love through various routes, but several steps are critical to free ourselves of the effects of our culture's ethos of violence. We might start by growing more aware of the violence directed at us by mass media, simply noticing the content of news reports, novels, films, and so on and exploring how we feel as we see and hear such things.

We should at the same time become more mindful of how

the people around us replay what they see and hear and how we and they often respond with a fight-or-flight response.

We should not neglect a careful look at the violence we do to ourselves. All of this can be painful, and it is hard work, so we need to be gentle with ourselves as well as aware, honest, and brave. Acknowledging emotions like fear, anger, and pain takes persistence and patience, since allowing ourselves to experience these emotions helps dissipate them.

A set of questions posed by Father John Dear in his recent book *The Nonviolent Life* offers a framework for examining the violence we and others do to ourselves from our personal experience and perspective. Start by looking at the violence within. What's going on inside you? How do you feel about yourself, your life, your body, your spirit, your soul? Do you ever speak critically or harshly to yourself, for example, "That was stupid!"? Do you have any areas or feelings of violence toward yourself? Because we live in a culture of violence, we all have moments of self-hatred or violence. Ponder your life journey: What violence did you experience from your parents? Siblings? Relatives? Friends? Classmates? Neighbors? How was your childhood and youth influenced by the realities of violence? What violence did you experience? What





violence did you internalize? Finally, how we can let the violence lingering within us go and move beyond it to new feelings of peace, inner freedom, and joy?

Spiritually, many practitioners of nonviolence spend time with Scripture, spiritual reading, and spiritual practice. Gandhi, for example, read portions of both the Hindu *Vedas* and the Sermon on the Mount every day. Jesus himself was rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially the prophetic writings. In addition to Scriptures—our own or those of other traditions—we can closely read writings on nonviolence. It helps to combine our reading with meditation and prayer, whether through the practice of *lectio divina* (meditative reading of sacred texts), centering prayer, or some other contemplative discipline.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke and wrote of the Beloved Community as the goal of nonviolent action; joining with others to form a nonviolent community offers companionship and support for the profoundly different way of being and conducting ourselves that is the way of nonviolence. Many organizations, like the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the denominational peace fellowships, also offer resources for small groups or individuals wishing to move deeper into nonviolence. In community, we can explore nonviolence with others' support and together act to reduce and resist the violence in which our society immerses us. We can become prophets speaking the truth of our loving God and Jesus' way of nonviolence to a country ad-

dicted to violence.

Since choosing nonviolence is profoundly counter-cultural in the United States today, we need to look for signs of hope while we explore the effects of violence. The communities of nonviolence scattered across our country, including Catholic Worker houses and cooperatives seeking collaborative solutions to injustice, are one sign of hope. Renewed interest in nonviolence is another; in September 2013, the Peace Bene Nonviolence Service launched a multi-year endeavor to spread understanding, awareness, and application of nonviolence to address the problems of war, injustice, and environmental degradation. Last September, hundreds of communities around the country and organizations like the Southern Poverty Law Center, [350.org](http://350.org), and Jobs with Justice joined in nonviolent actions that ranged from traditional protest marches and trainings to community book discussions, essay contests, and art exhibits. This effort to move from violence to nonviolence, from injustice to justice, continues with ongoing trainings, retreats, and public events to spread nonviolence. Cesar Chavez noted, "There is no such thing as defeat in nonviolence." Keep moving forward!

**We need to look for signs of hope while we explore the effects of violence.**

*A different version of this article appeared in A Matter of Spirit, a quarterly journal published by the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, Seattle.*





# What's in it for the Born?

By Acyutananda

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “humanize” as 1) “to make more humane” and 2) “to give a human character to.” When we say, “Abortion-rights advocates often dehumanize the unborn,” we use a negative form of sense 2 to mean that they take human character away from the unborn. In this essay I will use “humanize” in both senses, but mainly in sense 1, “make more humane.”

My generation of Americans can be credited with having made itself into something more humane and more human – with having undergone, in a relatively short time, a moral and empathetic change. In the 1960s, it humanized us (those of us who were white) to come to see other races as fully human; it humanized us (those of us who were men) to come to see women as fully human; and it humanized some of us Americans to come to see the Vietnamese as fully human. A decade later, it humanized us (those of us who were heterosexual) to come to see homosexuals as fully human. And around the same time, it humanized those of us who were able-bodied to come to see the differently abled as fully human.

For succeeding generations, such inclusive attitudes came more easily, since much of such attitudes was inherited from the opening up that had already occurred. Empathy even became mandatory, and the term “politically correct” came into existence.

Nothing could be more obvious than that humanity has consistently evolved in the direction of increasing inclusiveness. And it is obvious to me, from my own experience and from what I have seen take place in the people around

me, that the benefits of this inclusiveness have not been a one-way street.

One need not believe in God to appreciate the psychological wisdom of the Golden Rule in Christianity and of teachings of altruism and service-mindedness in other religions and philosophies. Some of our species have long understood the futility of seeking happiness in objects and in tangible rewards, even the most tangible mental rewards such as the admiration of others. As a species, we have gradually been learning that happiness for an individual involves identification with something greater than oneself.

Science may now have caught up with traditional wisdom in this area and may begin to take the lead. As the abstract of a 2008 psychology study said

*. . . we hypothesized that spending money on other people may have a more positive impact on happiness than spending money on oneself. Providing converging evidence for this hypothesis, we found that spending more of one's income on others predicted greater happiness both cross-sectionally (in a nationally representative survey study) and longitudinally (in a field study of windfall spending). Finally, participants who were randomly assigned to spend money on others experienced greater happiness than those assigned to spend money on themselves.<sup>1</sup>*

These findings recommend just the opposite of the “corrosive . . . social atomism” Tanner Matthews identified, in





the January 2015 issue of *Life Matters Journal*, in one noted abortion apologist.<sup>2</sup>

The above are just some hints that I feel help to explain my own empirical observations: the more of the human race that I, and people known to me, have included in our mental family, the happier we ourselves have become as a result.

Obviously we as Americans, not to mention we as a global society, still have a long way to go in terms of real inclusiveness of all the groups I have mentioned above. But it is clear to me that we have made progress and that the momentum is in the right direction.

Painfully, however, almost left out in the march of such progress has been one big human population: the unborn. Historically, they seem always to have been second-class citizens, at best. Even many pro-lifers, even today, seem to save most of their outrage at abortion for those of the unborn who are pain-capable or viable. Even whatever progress toward acceptance there has been for the early-term unborn has been met by a fierce reactionary onslaught in some small but perhaps growing circles, mainly in the United States.

## Human Life as One Seamless Process

I will say something about that reaction, but first I would like to point out that most dismissiveness toward the unborn does not stem from any conspiracy at all. I think it is quite natural. Again I look at myself. I've tried to remember – and really can't remember exactly how I thought of the unborn when I was young, but I do remember having the idea that there were a lot of kindly doctors around who were quite ready to solve someone's problem, so therefore abortion must be completely okay (though illegal, at that time). And after I read *The Population Bomb*, I felt quite urgent about controlling, or better yet, reducing, population, and I'm sure I must have thought of abortion as a very good thing. I'm sure that the unborn seemed insignificant to me. Neither in the 1960s nor maybe even in the 1970s did I begin to think of the

unborn any differently than that.

If a small embryo were to remain just as it is, frozen in time, we would have to say quite fairly that its life would not have much value. And it doesn't really matter exactly when I began to see an embryo as anything other than such a snapshot. But after however many years of thought and meditation, experience, and a smattering of scientific learning, the following idea finally became a reflexive understanding for me, and not just an abstraction: "A human life is one seamless process that has to start somewhere, and how can it be expected that it won't start small?" I came to see the unborn primarily as a process and only secondarily as a snapshot of a particular moment.

Both ways of looking at the unborn are scientifically useful for different purposes. It is not science, but only pre-logical intuition, that can certify as more morally relevant the perception of the embryo as a continual and relentless process, minute by minute, toward a fullness of human experience whose value no one will contest. This is the perception, in other words, "The child is father to the man" – and thus a person. But it would be a scientific statement (about my own subjective experience) to say that I feel larger myself for having embraced that group along with other human groups.

To quote another proverb here, I think that the single biggest source of the whole avoidable-abortion tragedy that is going on, and therefore also of the whole abortion conflict in society, is summed up by "Out of sight, out of mind." To care about the unborn, the unborn must first seem real to us, and how can they seem real when our five senses help us so little? It is difficult to know what the first thoughts about and perceptions of the unborn might be on the part of very small children. How they perceive the unborn must depend a lot on the depictions they hear from their parents, which must in turn vary widely. We sometimes hear of things that small children do or say, when their mothers are pregnant, that seem to show a surprising connectedness with the unborn, a connectedness that we could even interpret as being based on identification – the born child having been so recently in the same position as its sibling. But if that connectedness was a reality for me personally when my younger brother was inside my mother (which I don't remember), I certainly lost it later on. So I'm guessing it's common either to lack that ability to connect, or to lose it later in childhood. Wordsworth described the fading of a kind of magic as a child grows: "Shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing Boy." If, in the absence of a positive vision instilled by the parents, or a special intuition, you just showed a child a life-size model of an embryo a few millimeters long, with a tail, I think the child would not be impressed.

Certainly we do not start out in life with either the scientific knowledge or the cognitive equipment to see the unborn in

terms of the information that is in their genes and the process of change that that information drives. Moreover, I think I was not unique when young in wanting to find some kind of permanence in the world. I have been learning extremely slowly that my body and my friendships and my favorite food products must all change, and still haven't learned all such lessons yet. So regarding the unborn, I think we must certainly start out with a strong bias toward the snapshot model as at least part of our mental mix. Naturally it might take years to come to "see" a being whom we can't literally see, as the first requisite step in the process of a human life.

The *Wall Street Journal* has found that ". . . attitudes about abortion and politics are subject to change with age and experience, and usually in a conservative direction."<sup>3</sup> (Personally I hope that that is true about abortion but not about all politics.)

Other variables being equal, a pregnant woman must innately have a much better sense than most people of the humanity of what is inside her. Even then, however, I think that that sense can be very limited without further thought, experience, and so on. Many of the post-abortive women whose stories of regret I have seen or heard have said that the unborn seemed inconsequential to them at the time. Later they decided that it had been a person after all.

## The Dehumanizing Reaction

All this has just been to make clear the natural difficulties of seeing an early unborn child, in a reflexive and intuitive way, for the human being that our educated intellects actually know it to be. But in addition to those natural difficulties, there has also been the reactionary backlash that I mentioned above. In the cases of all the rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, also, forces of reaction not surprisingly arose to protect certain interests.

Here we have to distinguish between a valid acknowledgment of legitimate interests, and propaganda. There is no denying that the interests of the unborn may come in conflict with the interests of some of the born – particularly, of course, the women who carry them – and no denying that to protect their most vital interests, the born may sometimes have the right to kill the unborn. But even if we are in conflict with some other party, it would not be intellectually honest to allow the conflict to affect our evaluation of the other party's humanity.

The temptation to do so would be understandable, how-

ever. Here let's reflect that even before *Roe v. Wade*, it was clear to some that, with the US Supreme Court holding sway, abortion rights would need to hinge on the lack of personhood of the unborn. So any initiative to establish the humanity of the unborn came to be resisted from the beginning through a concerted effort to dehumanize them (using here the negative form of sense 2 of "humanize"). Author and abortion-rights advocate Naomi Wolf admitted this 20 years ago, and went on to try to pinpoint the origins of that reaction:

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what is inside her.

*Because of the implications of a Constitution that defines rights according to the legal idea of "a person," the abortion debate has tended to focus on the question of "personhood" of the fetus. Many pro-choice advocates developed a language to assert that the fetus isn't a person, and this, over the years has developed into*

*a lexicon of dehumanization. Laura Kaplan's *The Story of Jane*, an important forthcoming account of a pre-Roe underground abortion service, inadvertently sheds light on the origins of some of this rhetoric: service staffers referred to the fetus – well into the fourth month – as "material" (as in "the amount of material that had to be removed..."). . . . In the early 1970s, Second Wave feminism adopted this rhetoric in response to the reigning ideology in which motherhood was invoked as an excuse to deny women legal and social equality. In a climate in which women risked being defined as mere vessels while their fetuses were given "personhood" at their expense, it made sense that women's advocates would fight back by depersonalizing the fetus. . . . Second Wave feminists reacted to the dehumanization [of] women by dehumanizing the creatures within them. In the death-struggle to wrest what Simone de Beauvoir called transcendence out of biological immanence, some feminists developed a rhetoric that defined the unwanted fetus as at best valueless: at worst an adversary, a "mass of dependent protoplasm." <sup>4</sup>*

Unmentioned by Wolf, but perhaps still more effective in dehumanizing or simply erasing the unborn, were cunning bits of socio-linguistic engineering that assured women that only one "body," theirs, was involved in any abortion.

All that was 20 to 50 years ago; now (Wolf's plea for honesty having failed to make a dent in most of her colleagues)





it is practically the stock-in-trade of the most vocal of the pro-choice side (for instance, those we are likely to meet in online discussions about abortion) to speak of the unborn as “parasites,” “tumors,” “intruders,” or even “rapists.” One would get the impression that the unborn babies of the world were on the march, trying to destroy civilization as we know it. If these abortion-rights advocates do not always paint the unborn as that marauding horde, at least they carry dismissiveness to comical extremes (the comical nature not being entirely deliberate). Britain’s Julie Burchill wrote:

*Myself, I’d as soon weep over my taken tonsils or my absent appendix as snivel over those [five] abortions. I had a choice, and I chose life – mine.*<sup>5</sup>

And America’s Amanda Marcotte wrote:

*This is why, if my birth control fails, I am totally having an abortion. Given the choice between living my life how I please and having my body within my control and the fate of a lentil-sized, brainless embryo that has half a chance of dying on its own anyway, I choose me. Here’s another uncomfortable fact for anti-choicers: Just because a woman does want children doesn’t mean she wants them now. Maybe she’s still got some fun-having to do. Or maybe she has a couple already and, already well-educated about the smelly neediness of babies, feels done with having them. Either way, what she wants trumps the non-existent desires of a mindless pre-person that is so small it can be removed in about two minutes during an outpatient procedure. Your cavities fight harder to stay in place.*<sup>6</sup>

Wolf, above, showed how the origins of deliberate dehumanization of the unborn could be traced to the fear of fe-

tal personhood on the part of pro-choicers in the 1960s and 1970s. But the pro-life movement did not cease its efforts after the 1970s. The pro-choice side has continued to get a lot of pushback from the pro-life side—and rightly so; I think that that pushback should only increase. But it was predictable that there would be a process of conflict escalation, and such a process probably explains the level of dehumanizing rhetoric that we are seeing now. I think that the pro-choice side wouldn’t have taken their rhetoric to such extremes if their agenda had not met resistance in the first place. In other words, the pro-choice extremes are to an important extent a by-product of the pro-life pushback. Reasonableness is one of the casualties of war, particularly when one starts to lose.

But whatever the origins of the dehumanization we are witnessing, what will be its effects on its agents? If, as I have argued, the process of including different groups in our human family brings greater happiness for those who include, what will be the psychological effects for those who deliberately exclude and dehumanize? Wolf again provides valuable comments:

*Clinging to a rhetoric about abortion in which there is no life and no death, we entangle our beliefs in a series of self-delusions, fibs and evasions. And we risk becoming precisely what our critics charge us with being: callous, selfish and casually destructive men and women who share a cheapened view of human life. . . . With the pro-choice rhetoric we use now, we incur three destructive consequences – two ethical, one strategic: hardness of heart, lying and political failure. . . . when we defend abortion rights by emptying the act of moral gravity, we find ourselves cultivating a hardness of heart.*

Feeling that the unborn are fully human does not necessarily mean that it is immoral ever to kill them, and even if it is

immoral, that doesn't show that it should be illegal. Virtually all who call themselves pro-life would agree that a pregnant woman should be allowed to have her child killed if the risk to her own life reaches a certain level. But Wolf may be one of the few people who really embody another principle that many pro-choicers will agree with abstractly – the principle that even if the unborn are fully human, that per se doesn't disallow a woman from aborting for the sake of her career, or her education, or even simply because she does not want to be pregnant.

Why do I call Wolf “one of the few” who really embody that principle? Certainly there are many who say, “Even if the unborn are fully human, a woman should be allowed to abort for the sake of her career, or her education, or anything at all.” We are all familiar with the bodily-rights argument, which tries to show that even if the unborn is a person, a woman should have an absolute right to refuse to let it use her body.

But I say Wolf is “one of the few” because she really seems to feel that the unborn is a person. Whereas virtually all, I think, of those many who use the bodily-rights argument, concede *only* for the sake of the argument that the unborn may be a person, but do *not* really feel it. I have debated many advocates of bodily rights, and I'm convinced that what truly underlies the artfulness of their arguments is not the logical strength of the position, but the fact that they do not think it's a person. I think that if they really related emotionally to the unborn as their little sisters and brothers, their minds would quickly be flooded with good counter-logic against that argu-

ment of theirs. In practice as opposed to principle, the mere humanity of the unborn is convincing enough to lead to rejection of abortion rights.

Elsewhere I have thought as best I could about the bodily-rights argument, and in the end I support unborn child-protection laws.<sup>7</sup> I mention this because the question of my views on law naturally comes up if I mention law at all. But the way I really need to approach law here is in relation to one of my main themes, our perceptions of the unborn.

One might say, even if unborn child-protection laws are justified in spite of bodily rights and so on, why enact laws that will be messy and difficult to enforce and widely violated and save only an uncertain number of babies?

One answer is that I think that laws protecting the unborn, by their presence or their absence, are very important in relation to our perceptions of the value of the unborn. Rebecca Haschke does pro-life outreach on college campuses. She explains the effect on our thinking that the legality of abortion can have:

*I've talked to students on campus, though, when we talk about abortion – their reasoning for why abortion is okay is because the law says it's okay. And I ask them, “Should the law be what determines what is right and wrong?,” and they'll be like “Well, yeah, it does.” And then I cringe and I say, “Well, have we ever had laws that have been unjust?” And then they go, “Yeah, we have.” . . . the law does sometimes make people think . . . it*





influences people's thoughts.<sup>8</sup>

Her words were borne out by this example: In 2005 the *Los Angeles Times* interviewed patients at an abortion clinic. "She regrets having to pay \$750 for the abortion, but Amanda says she does not doubt her decision. 'It's not like it's illegal. It's not like I'm doing anything wrong,' she says."<sup>9</sup>

At a pro-life conference in Orange, Calif. in September 2014, the president of the National Right-to-Life Committee remarked, "We often hear, 'If it hadn't been legal, I wouldn't have done it.'" Above I said, "Feeling that the unborn are fully human does not necessarily mean that . . . it should be illegal." Again, the legality of abortion does not technically say, "The unborn have little value," but I think that in practice it does say that. And the *illegality* of abortion would send the message that the unborn are fully human.

## A Giant Leap for Humankind

And if we do feel that the unborn are fully human, what's in it for us? What will we gain if we can cross that last civil-rights frontier?

The lucky and privileged of the species did not lose anything psychologically by including in their human family groups that they had earlier despised or patronized. They only broadened their horizons and outgrew their pettiness and the anxiety of clinging to their positions. It was win-win.

*From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits  
and imaginary lines,*

...

*Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself  
of the holds that would hold me.*<sup>10</sup>

An acceptance of the unborn will involve not only the earlier kind of inclusiveness when any group was accepted but also, this time, a transition from a mechanistic model of reality to a vision of all life as process and interconnectedness. It will be a giant leap for humankind. Coming to see an embryo as we would a little sister or brother, and coming to see all of life as a process of change, will be at once mind-expanding and a clearer realization of a particular scientific fact. For us, not to mention for the unborn, that day cannot come too soon.

Acyutananda has a pro-life blog at  
[www.NoTerminationWithoutRepresentation.org](http://www.NoTerminationWithoutRepresentation.org).

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Science 21 March 2008: Vol. 319 no. 5870 pp. 1687-1688. DOI: 10.1126/science.1150952. <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/319/5870/1687>

<sup>2</sup> Tanner Matthews, "Argument from Bodily Rights" in *Life Matters Journal*, Vol. 3 Issue 4, January 2015.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122695016603334449>

<sup>4</sup> "Our Bodies, Our Souls," *The New Republic*, October 16, 1995. <http://www.priestsforlife.org/prochoice/ourbodiesoursouls.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Julie Burchill, "Abortion: still a dirty word" in *The Guardian*, May 25, 2002. <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2002/may/25/weekend.julieburchill>

<sup>6</sup> Amanda Marcotte, "The Real Debate Isn't About 'Life' But About What We Expect Of Women" in *Raw Story*. March 14, 2014. <http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2014/03/14/the-real-debate-isnt-about-life-but-about-what-we-expect-of-women/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.NoTerminationWithoutRepresentation.org/dismantling-the-bodily-rights-argument-without-using-the-responsibility-argument/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuON-bERruPc> at 23:29.

<sup>9</sup> Stephanie Simon, "Offering Abortion, Rebirth" in *Truthout*, November 29, 2005. <http://www.truth-out.org/archive/item/58965:offering-abortion-rebirth>

<sup>10</sup> Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road."



# Our Identity Remains the Same Throughout Our Entire Life

*I would like to thank Jake Earl, who created the “John” thought experiment. The probing questions of various people, but most definitively of Earl, helped me to better think things through.*

By Clinton Wilcox

I have been heavily involved in the pro-life movement for about five years now. I have done outreach with a number of pro-life groups, and as I have engaged people in conversation I find there are two things many people have in common.

The first is that many people have difficulty in thinking abstractly. This makes it much easier to justify killing the unborn while decrying a tragedy like the Holocaust. In the Holocaust, the victims were out in the open, undeniable. In abortion, the victims are hidden inside the mother’s womb; the killing is done in private abortion clinics, away from the public eye. Many of the people I talk to haven’t done much philosophical reflection about the moral status of the human embryo/fetus nor about the moral permissibility of abortion. Often the more ridiculous arguments are knee-jerk reactions, and the person I am talking to can be willing to abandon that line of reasoning once I ask enough probing questions.

The second thing I have noticed is found among people who consider themselves “personally pro-life” but don’t want to “force their views” on someone else. While they may say that they believe the unborn organism is a human being, they don’t really believe it. If they did, rather than saying “I would

never kill my child, but I can’t tell someone else not to do it,” they would find abortion just as appalling as those of us involved in trying to end it. They would take steps to protect those innocent children who are being legally and mercilessly slaughtered in abortion clinics, just as Oskar Schindler and Corrie ten Boom acted to protect Jews during the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup> They would agree with us that the practice of abortion needs to come to an end, regardless of the fact that we have to tell people they are wrong.

The purpose of this essay is to explain why the unborn should be seen as full human beings from fertilization. On top of that, I plan to explain not just why *they* are human beings, but why *you* were *you* at that early stage in your development. That wasn’t some abstract thing we called a human organism growing and developing inside your mother’s uterus. That was literally *you*, just as much as you are *you* now, the person reading this essay.

It is outside the scope of this essay to cover the scientific arguments that we are *biologically* human from fertilization.<sup>2</sup> Instead, this essay will focus on the philosophical side of the issue: the fact that we are identical to ourselves through all stages of our development.



## Personal Identity with the Embryo

As we know from the science of embryology, the unborn, from fertilization, are biological members of the human species. Pro-choice people assert that there's no clear line to be drawn between non-personhood and personhood, but they're wrong. The clear line is at fertilization, before which you had two non-human entities, the spermatozoon and the ovum, and after which you have a new human individual. This implication is unacceptable to the pro-choice advocate. However, it makes perfect sense to draw the line there and it doesn't make any sense to draw the line anywhere else. From the point of fertilization, the mother's and father's DNA have combined to form the unique DNA of a new human individual, and everything that individual will develop and become is written in their genetic code. I have brown hair and blue eyes now because that zygote had the genes for brown hair and blue eyes. The gene for gender is even present, so although I did not yet have visible sex organs I was already a male at that point. It makes perfect sense to say I was that zygote in my mother's womb. It doesn't make any sense (and it is not true) to say I merely came *from* that zygote.

Pro-choice people tend to view the unborn human organism as a shell in which the human person comes into existence sometime later, inhabiting the human organism. Commonly the pro-choice advocate will point to your brain as what grounds your personal identity. But this has at least two major problems.

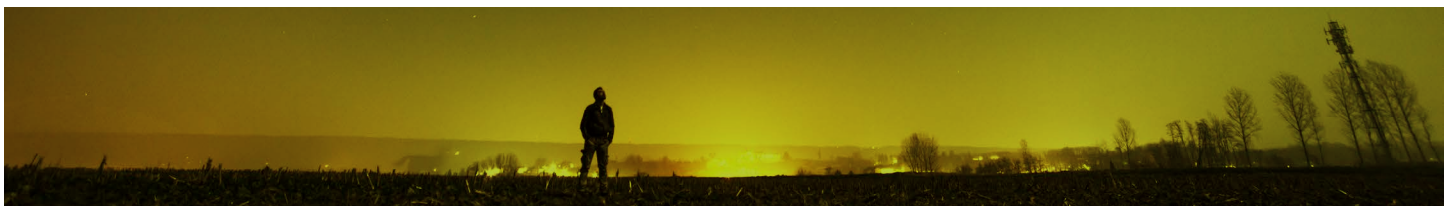
If your identity (or personhood) is seen as simply being a collection of memories, thoughts, emotions, and so on (in other words, the collection of your mental states), then you are literally a new person from one moment to the next. If I am just the collection of my mental states, then I cannot be the same person now as I will be tomorrow when I have collected new memories. Besides, there must be something doing the experiencing; otherwise, what, exactly, is it that is collecting those memories and experiences? This is putting the cart before the horse. Apart from being counterintuitive—after all, I have memories of my childhood, and I can honestly say that it was *my* childhood, not the childhood of a previous occupant of the physical organism I now inhabit—it would make our criminal justice system inherently unjust. It would be unjust to put me in prison for a crime I did not commit, and if I am literally a different person now than before I committed the crime, I could not justly be punished for it.<sup>3</sup>

Another problem with this idea is that it establishes a counterintuitive form of dualism. Edwin C. Hui, in his book *At the Beginning of Life: Dilemmas in Theological Bioethics*, argues that this dualism results in the view that the physical organism can exist independently of the psychological entity, and it's the psychological entity that should be given ontological significance.<sup>4</sup> In other words, this view holds that the psychological entity is the one with intrinsic value—the one whose existence is important—not the physical organism. This view contradicts normal human experience, however. The sensations that our body experiences need the body to be a subject of experiences, to experience these sensations, and the psychological component is necessary to comprehend the sensations so they can be understood as meaningful. Since the body and psychological components are both necessary for our experiences, then both are necessary for the “I,” the person who is the subject of experiences. Since the body is a necessary component to the person, one cannot hold that the body comes to be at one time while the person comes to be at another time.

Alexander Pruss, in his essay “I Was Once a Fetus: An Identity-Based Argument against Abortion,” takes this argument further.<sup>5</sup> I am either identical to the embryo that was in my mother's womb or I am not.<sup>6</sup> If I am not, then what happened to the biological organism I “came from”? There are only two possibilities: either the embryo I “came from” is alive or it is dead.

If the embryo is dead, then what happened to it? When did it cease to exist? If it was literally a part of the woman's body, then it could have ceased to exist when it was removed from the mother's body. But this is highly implausible. The embryo has a different genetic code than any part of the mother's body.

Additionally, the fetus is not controlled by the woman via the umbilical cord. The fetus takes in nutrients from the umbilical cord, but the cord, itself, does not direct the embryo's development. The embryo directs her own development from within herself. The embryo does not work toward the good of the mother's body in the way that the rest of her body does: that is, as a unified whole with each part fulfilling a certain function to keep the woman's body functioning properly. The fetus remains a wholly separate entity from the mother. In no way can the embryo be said to be a part of its mother's body.



Another possibility is that the embryo could have died when the person came to inhabit the body—that is, when the body gained consciousness and self-awareness—but this also seems false. The embryo from the very beginning is a self-directed organism, developing itself from within. This means that the embryo would have ceased to exist when it *gained* the ability to be conscious or self-aware, but this is absurd because entities don't die when they gain an ability the development of which is rooted in the entity's developmental program or plan. So the embryo can't be dead.<sup>7</sup>

If the embryo can't be dead, that means it is still alive. After all, every biological part of the embryo developed into me. Since the embryo developed into me, it has become all of my body. I can't separate out one part and say "that is the embryo." So while the embryo exists, I also exist. This means that I cannot be an organism because there cannot be two organisms that have the same body. So if I am an organism, I am the embryo. But if I am not the embryo, then I am not an organism. This would also mean that I am not a rational animal, and this is an absurd consequence because human beings are rational animals. If we are rational animals, then we are organisms.

There are other problems with the view that the embryo is alive but I am not the embryo. This would mean that persons do not have sexual intercourse, their bodies do. It would also mean that rape is merely a property crime, not a crime against a person. Additionally, it would entail that two numerically different entities occupy the same place at the same time, which violates a plausible law of physics.<sup>8</sup>

So it seems pretty clear that not only is the embryo that was in my mother's womb still alive, but that I am identical to the embryo that was in my mother's womb. If the embryo is still alive but I am not identical to it, this leads to many absurdities.

I do not look much like the zygote that I once was, but then again I don't look much like the toddler that I once was, either. Nevertheless, the zygote does look like every human being does at that stage in their development. Further, if merely looking human is what makes us human, then someone like Joseph Merrick, commonly known as the Elephant Man, wouldn't have been human.

I also function in a substantially different way than the toddler I once was, as well as the zygote I once was. This is because human beings are substances, which are entities that maintain their identities through change. When I was a toddler, I was much smaller. I could not engage in rational thought, nor had I yet gone through puberty. I also do not remember what it was like to be a toddler. But I remained the same "me" throughout all of the changes. All of these changes were changes that were in my nature, in my programming, to undergo.

## Artifacts vs. Substances<sup>9</sup>

The world we live in contains many different things consisting of different levels of order and degrees of unity. A heap is a collection of items with no structure to it. It only has unity insofar as it consists of items that are spatially close together. A pile of metal is an example of a heap. The metal can be made into something else with unified order, such as a car. But the pile of metal, itself, is merely a heap because none of the parts are unified. This is why the argument that the unborn is just a "clump of cells" is completely misguided. A clump of cells (such as a group of skin cells) is merely a heap, a weak unity with no order. But since the unborn entity from fertilization has numerous cells that divide, working in tandem to become more biologically complex, all of the cells are working together in a unified whole toward the good of the organism.

Then there are artifacts and substances. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, in their book *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, list several differences between artifacts and substances.<sup>10</sup>

Artifacts represent the next level of unity. Whereas a heap only has a weak kind of unity, artifacts have a stronger kind

of unity because all of their parts are unified toward a particular function. An artifact finds its identity in its parts, and it is an object that becomes different if you swap out its parts. An artifact doesn't really exist until it is completed (a clock without its hands is not really a clock at all, but a human being who loses his hands in an accident doesn't cease to be a human). Since an artifact is constructed with a purpose ex-

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Photo credit: Lunar Caustic, Flickr Creative Commons

trinsic to itself, its parts bear no intrinsic direction to the good of the whole.<sup>11</sup>

A substance is the highest type of unity there is. Substances are entities that maintain their identities through change. All living things are substances. A substance exists ontologically prior to its parts, which is just a fancy way of saying that a substance exists before its parts develop. A substance is not artificially constructed, like an artifact, but is conceived and develops naturally. Substances, unlike artifacts, have an internal unity where all of their parts are intrinsically directed to the good of the whole.

To illustrate this concept, think of a car. If you have a classic automobile, say a Mustang, and it is exactly the same as you bought it, except that you had replaced the seats, you have a different car than the one you bought and it will lose value. A collector of classic cars won't pay as much for it, if they buy it at all, because it's not the same car that you originally bought.

We can take it a step further.<sup>12</sup> Suppose I have a classic Mustang in my yard that I've really taken care of over the years. My neighbor has a Mustang, too, but his is beat up and generally in poor condition. He wants my Mustang, but instead of just stealing it outright, he dismantles it piece by piece and replaces it with the parts from his car. A few weeks down the road I now have a beat up Mustang in my yard, and he has a nice, "like new" Mustang in his yard. I walk across the street to ask what the meaning of this is and he argues that the car in my yard is, in fact, my car. But this cannot be. The one in my yard can't be the original. My car is the nice one that is in my neighbor's yard.

This is where many people tend to misunderstand human development. Richard Stith is a philosopher who argued that pro-choice people tend to view human development like construction of a car.<sup>13</sup> A car's purpose is to be able to drive and carry passengers around. If a car doesn't drive, then it's really only a car in name only. And certainly no one would say I have a car when you put the first two pieces of metal together.

Human development is very different from constructing a car. Rather, human development is like a Polaroid picture. You take the picture and it begins as a brownish-grey smudge, but it will soon develop into the picture. The picture was there the whole time, you just couldn't see it because it was not given time to develop. Whereas the metal will not de-

velop itself into the car but requires an outside builder to do it, the unborn child from fertilization develops herself *from within* into a more mature version of herself.

This is why the objection that the unborn are only "potential persons" is also misguided. This confuses two different types of potentiality: passive potentiality and active potentiality.

Passive potentiality is the potential something has to become something else, such as a heap of metal having the potential to become a car. Things with this kind of potentiality don't have it within themselves to become another thing, and they lose their identity when they do. The heap of metal becomes the car when it is constructed; it is no longer a heap of metal. It doesn't become a car until an outside builder makes it a car.

Active potentiality is the potential something has within itself, and as this potential comes from within itself, this change is identity-preserving. The unborn, from fertilization, have the active potential for rational thought, for speech, for hearing, and so on. They just need time to develop the right hardware to be able to engage in those activities. The unborn may not currently be self-aware because they haven't developed their brain enough to do so, but consciousness and self-awareness only have to do with our awareness of existing through time, not with our actually existing through time. So while the unborn have the *active* potential to develop, they are *actual* persons, not *potential* persons, because being a person is about the kind of thing you are, not the kind of thing you can presently do.

So as we see, this is why we are identical to the embryo that was in our mother's womb. Not only were we living members of the human species as we are now, but all of the changes we underwent were within our own programming. So we retained our identity through the whole process. This not only has implications in the abortion debate but also in the embryonic stem cell research debate. Experimenting on human beings is wrong, and since the unborn, even in the first few days of life, are full-fledged human beings, ethics demands that we oppose killing embryos for their stem cells, as well as opposing the creation of embryos for no other reason than harvesting their stem cells.

If we want to be people of virtuous character, we have no choice but to stand against unethical procedures such as

abortion and embryonic stem cell research. There is ample reason to believe that not only are the unborn full-fledged human beings, but they are deserving of the same respect that older human beings are deserving of. If we truly believe in treating all humans equally, justice demands no less.

*My thought on human personhood has been greatly influenced by a number of thinkers, such as Aristotle, Boethius, Thomas Aquinas, Frank Beckwith, J.P. Moreland, William Lane Craig, and Patrick Lee. For more on the Substance View, and why it should be viewed as the correct account of human identity, see (for example) Body and Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics by J.P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae and Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case against Abortion Choice by Frank Beckwith, among others.*

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> I realize there were other people groups captured, tortured, and killed during the Holocaust. I'm using the Jews to represent all the groups of people since they were the largest.

<sup>2</sup> This is an uncontroversial fact of science. Embryologists consistently agree that human life begins at fertilization. Pro-choice philosophers even agree with this basic fact, making a distinction between the biological human (human in the genetic sense) and the human person (human in the moral sense). Since pro-choice and pro-life embryologists agree with this basic fact of biology, I don't see why we should dispute this point.

<sup>3</sup> I owe J.P. Moreland for the observations in this paragraph. For more on why we are not the same thing as our brains, see J. P. Moreland, "Naturalism and the Crisis of the Soul," Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, accessed July 18, 2015, [http://www.sebts.edu/faithand-culture/pdf\\_docs/naturalism\\_and\\_the\\_crisis\\_of\\_the\\_soul.pdf](http://www.sebts.edu/faithand-culture/pdf_docs/naturalism_and_the_crisis_of_the_soul.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Edwin C. Hui, *At the Beginning of Life: Dilemmas in Theological Bioethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 71-72.

<sup>5</sup> The article is dated November 25, 2001. Alexander R. Pruss, "I Was Once a Fetus: An Identity-Based Argument against Abortion," Alexander R. Pruss website, accessed July 18, 2015, [https://bearspace.baylor.edu/Alexander\\_Pruss/www/papers/IWasAFetus.html](https://bearspace.baylor.edu/Alexander_Pruss/www/papers/IWasAFetus.html).

<sup>6</sup> I am using the term "embryo" here to denote all stages of unborn human life. I decided to use embryo because 1) it includes the zygote (which

is considered part of the embryonic stage) and 2) if I was identical with the embryo in the womb, then I was certainly identical to the fetus, which is a later stage of development.

<sup>7</sup> The observation in this paragraph comes from Stephen Napier. The rest of this section comes from the aforementioned essay by Alexander Pruss, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>8</sup> The observations in this paragraph also come from Stephen Napier.

<sup>9</sup> The information in this section is drawn from William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2003), 220-221, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> This is a point made in Timothy Hsiao, "A Defense of the Perverted Faculty Argument against Homosexual Sex," *The Heythrop Journal* (early view): n. 5, doi: 10.1111/heyj.12134.

<sup>12</sup> This is an example I heard on the Please Convince Me podcast by J. Warner Wallace. It's essentially a modern update of the Ship of Theseus thought experiment postulated by ancient philosopher Plutarch.

<sup>13</sup> See Richard Stith, "Does Making Babies Make Sense? Why So Many People Find It Difficult to See Humanity in a Developing Foetus," Mercatornet, accessed July 18, 2015, [http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/does\\_making\\_babies\\_make\\_sense](http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/does_making_babies_make_sense).



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# Children of War:

More reasons social conservatives should oppose a hawkish foreign policy

By John Whitehead

**S**ocial conservatives often express concern for children's need for a stable and traditional home life, with both biological parents involved in their upbringing. In particular, the harm done to children by absent fathers is a common worry among such conservatives. This commitment to children is threatened, however, by social conservatives' tendency to ally themselves politically with foreign policy hawks and to support a large defense establishment that engages in wars and other military interventions.

Military service, especially in wartime, can give rise to unstable home lives for a specific class of children: those children conceived through liaisons between servicemen and women in the countries in which those men serve. Often born out of wedlock, these children will likely never see their respective fathers after he returns to the United States, if they ever saw him at all. Raised by single mothers, sometimes amid the aftermath of war, and frequently viewed with hostility

or contempt by their fellows, such children hardly enjoy prospects for a happy home life. The fact that these kinds of broken families can result from military service and operations should lead upholders of family values to view hawkish foreign policies far more critically.

Sexual relationships between soldiers, sailors, and airmen and the women they encounter during deployments—whether those women are professional sex workers or simply ordinary civilians in the vicinity of a military camp or base—are probably as old as war. For whatever psychological and sociological reasons, the chaste behavior that social conservatives favor is often lacking among servicemen, especially in wartime.

During the final year of the Second World War, for example, the typical American serviceman in Europe had an estimated 25 female sexual partners.<sup>1</sup> A member of Army Special Forces stationed in Vietnam during the American conflict there patronized an equivalent number of prostitutes.<sup>2</sup> Prostitution has flourished in various places American



troops have been stationed, whether in Japan, South Korea, or Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> In the French town of Cherbourg, the U.S. Army even indirectly ran several brothels during the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> Servicemen's sexual behavior could also take far darker forms: during the Allied occupation of Japan, the number of rapes and assaults on Japanese women averaged 40 a day in the second half of 1945 and rose to over 300 a day by early 1946.<sup>5</sup>

The results of so many sexual encounters were predictable: the out-of-wedlock birthrate in France rose from 6.3 per 100 live births in 1939, the year the Second World War began, to 9.4 in 1944, when Allied troops liberated the country, to 10.5 in 1945.<sup>6</sup> In the Netherlands, where Canadian troops were stationed at the war's end, the number of out-of-wedlock births in 1946 was over 7,000, triple the number in 1939.<sup>7</sup>

Estimates of children born to British women and American servicemen stationed in the United Kingdom during the war run into the tens of thousands, perhaps as high as 100,000.<sup>8</sup> (The local population responded to this situation with characteristic British irony: in villages near military bases, signs were posted reading "Please drive carefully. That child might be yours."<sup>9</sup>) Almost 67,000 children were born after the war to German women and troops from the United States and other Allied nations, according to official German statistics—the actual number might be much higher.<sup>10</sup>

In Asia, where the U.S. military has had a significant presence since the American occupation of the Philippines at the end of the 19th century, relationships between Americans and women of various nations produced the children

referred to as "Amerasians" by the novelist Pearl S. Buck.<sup>11</sup> Political science and economics professor Henry Parker Willis commented, in his book *Our Philippine Problem: A Study of American Colonial Policy* (1905), "The American volunteer

**Whether in Asia or Europe, the lives of children fathered by American servicemen have not been easy. These children and their mothers have often been looked down on by their neighbors.**

regiments marched into Manila in good order like regular troops, but as soon as the novelty of their strange environment wore off, they gave themselves up to all sorts of excesses, debauchery and vice." By 1920, the Philippines census recorded 18,000 Amerasians in Manila.<sup>12</sup>

This process repeated itself in the other Asian nations subsequently occupied by American troops. In 1980, the Pearl S. Buck Foundation put out a monograph estimating that 2 million Amerasians had been born since American forces arrived in Asia.<sup>13</sup> One NGO worker stationed in Vietnam in the 1990s found Amerasians all over the country, even "living in the mountains ... which is as far away from civilization as one can get."<sup>14</sup>

Whether in Asia or Europe, the lives of children fathered by American servicemen have not been easy. These children and their mothers have often been looked down on by their neighbors. In Germany, the children were derided as "bastards" and the women as "Ami-lovers" ("Ami" being slang for "American"). Franz Anthöfer, the son of a German woman and American serviceman, recalls other children in an orphanage calling him "Ami-bastard" and being hit by caregivers. He observed, "There were the good orphans, who had lost their parents in the war, and then there was me, who would always be bad."<sup>15</sup>

In Britain, the derogatory term for such children in Britain was "Yankee leftovers." Families would make up various stories to avoid stigma, presenting the children of wartime relationships as their mothers' younger siblings or the product of later marriages or simply giving the children up for adoption.<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere, the penalties for children could be more severe than social stigma. After the Vietnam War, Amerasian children and their mothers could be ostracized, with the children being denied employment, education, or even food rations. Some were reduced to begging in the street; many congregated in a park in Ho Chi Minh City, with around 200 sleeping there at night.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Bass, who wrote a book on Viet-



name Amerasians, summed up the bleak findings of various studies of their plight:

*Amerasians have less schooling, fewer skills, and lower opinions of themselves than other Vietnamese refugees. ... Their mothers are castigated as whores. Their fathers are long gone. They are unloved, unwanted, the rotten fruit of bad seed. ... [K]ids yell at them in the street. Black American, red American, put them in the pig sty.*<sup>18</sup>

The children fathered by American servicemen on the Japanese island of Okinawa, where the United States still has a military presence, have often had to endure both paternal abandonment and bullying. One Amerasian woman, Arisa Garrison, recalled nasty notes and taunts from her classmates at a Japanese school, commenting “I hated going there. ... I was bullied almost every day. I missed many days of school because I was so sad.”<sup>19</sup>

Racism has played an important role in the suffering of some servicemen’s children. In a depressing display of how widespread certain prejudices are, the children of black servicemen have faced greater hostility in Asia and Europe than

**In post-war Germany, children of black servicemen were three times more likely than white servicemen’s children to be given up for adoption and were also less likely to find adoptive families.**

the children of men of other races.

In post-war Germany, children of black servicemen were three times more likely than white servicemen’s children to be given up for adoption and were also less likely to find adoptive families. Women who had these biracial children could lose their jobs or be rejected by their families. The children might be derided as “Negro half-breeds,” their mothers as “chocolate women” or, more crudely, “Niggerwomen.”<sup>20</sup>

Even today, black Amerasians in the Philippines might be mocked with the epithet “charcoal.”<sup>21</sup> Among some Vietnamese Amerasians, the shame of having a black father is such that they might pretend he is from another minority group, such as Hawaiians or Native Americans. As Meme English, a psychotherapist who has worked with Amerasians

speculates, “In an extremely race-conscious culture, which Vietnam is, if you want to be accepted as Asian, you have to pretend you’re anything but black.”<sup>22</sup>

Some efforts have succeeded in helping the children fathered by American servicemen in Asia. The Amerasian Act of 1982 allowed such children living in Cambodia, Laos, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam to immigrate to the United States.<sup>23</sup> A later act, passed in 1987, made it easier for Amerasians in Vietnam to immigrate, and around 25,000 Amerasians and 60,000 of their relatives had arrived in the United States by the mid-1990s.<sup>24</sup> Some servicemen’s children have not been aided in this way, however: legislation has yet to be passed to allow Filipino Amerasians to come to the United States (one reason for excluding these children is that they were not born during a war).<sup>25</sup>

Even if they are permitted to come to the United States, the prospects for Amerasians are not necessarily any better than those of other immigrants from poor countries and, given the children’s disadvantages in their countries of origin, might even be worse. For some Vietnamese Amerasians, coming to the United States has meant time in a poorly managed refugee camp or halfway house before falling into lives in this country marked by low-wage jobs, crime, and other problems.<sup>26</sup>

One question that all these children of servicemen must also face is whether to try to track down their fathers. Various organizations have been created to help in this task: Trans-Atlantic Children’s Enterprise, War Babes, the Dutch Association of Liberation Children, and the like.<sup>27</sup> War Babes founder Shirley McGlade, the daughter of a serviceman and a British woman, successfully sued the U.S. Department of Defense and National Personnel Records Center in the late 1980s in an effort to make more information about servicemen available to children seeking their fathers. In 1990, the Records Center agreed to provide limited address information for living veterans and full address information for those who had died.<sup>28</sup>

Even with this information available to them, however, the ultimate result of the children’s search is uncertain. Some, such as McGlade and Phuong Thao, an Amerasian actress in Vietnam, eventually find their fathers to be still alive, contact them, and receive a warm response.<sup>29</sup> Others find family only to be rebuffed in some way: Sandra Peacham, from Britain, managed to locate an aunt and uncle in the United States who asked her not to contact them again.<sup>30</sup>

Others find family too late: Daniel Cardwell, the son of a black American soldier and a German woman, identified his father in 2006 only to discover the man had died five years earlier. Had he been able to meet his father, Cardwell comments, “I would’ve grabbed him and hugged him.”<sup>31</sup> Still others decide not to pursue the search: Le Ha, a Vietnamese



Amerasian, observes that her father “has another family in America. What’s he going to do with two families? I’m used to living without a father.”<sup>32</sup>

That some children should be “used to living without a father” should cause serious concern among social conservatives. The fact that sending men overseas on military deployments gives rise to such tragic situations is reason enough for those concerned with keeping families intact to oppose the current military establishment and its operations abroad.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Chris Hedges, *What Every Person Should Know about War* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 35; Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013), 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Buruma, *Year Zero*, 25.

<sup>5</sup> John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 127, 130, 579 n. 16, cited in Buruma, *Year Zero*, 38.

<sup>6</sup> “Live Births and Still Births by Marital Status (Metropolitan France within Today’s Frontiers),” France, National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, accessed July 3, 2015, [http://www.insee.fr/en/themes/detail.asp?ref\\_id=ir-sd2005&page=irweb/sd2005/dd/sd2005\\_nais.htm](http://www.insee.fr/en/themes/detail.asp?ref_id=ir-sd2005&page=irweb/sd2005/dd/sd2005_nais.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Buruma, *Year Zero*, 28.

<sup>8</sup> Lacy McCrary, “Decades Later, ‘War Babes’ Seek Their GI Fathers: WWII Secrets and Lies,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1997, A01; Erica Michelstein, “British War Babies Seek Their Yankee Fathers,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 2000, <http://articles.latimes.com/print/2000/oct/01/news/mn-29540>.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Bass, *Vietnam: The War Comes Home* (New York: Soho Press, 1996), 190.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Wiltenburg and Marc Widmann, “WWII G.I. Babies: Children of the Enemy,” *Der Spiegel Online*, January 2, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/wwii-g-i-babies-children-of-the-enemy-a-456835.html>.

<sup>11</sup> “Artifact of the Month: For Spacious Skies by Pearl S. Buck, 1966,” Pearl S. Buck House blog, accessed July 9, 2015, <http://www.psb.org/houseblog?&storyid3444=127&nsc3444=3>.

<sup>12</sup> Bass, *Vietnam*, 121.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>15</sup> Wiltenburg and Widmann, “WWII G.I. Babies.”

<sup>16</sup> Michelstein, “British War Babies Seek Their Yankee Fathers.”

<sup>17</sup> Bass, *Vietnam*, 13, 19-20; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin, 1984), 39.

<sup>18</sup> Bass, *Vietnam*, 122.

<sup>19</sup> Calvin Sims, “A Hard Life for Amerasian Children,” *New York Times*, July 23, 2000, Section 1, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Buruma, *Year Zero*, 45; Wiltenburg and Widmann, “WWII G.I. Babies.”

<sup>21</sup> Christopher M. Lapinigmay, “The Forgotten Amerasians,” *New York Times*, May 28, 2013, A19.

<sup>22</sup> Bass, *Vietnam*, 171.

<sup>23</sup> Lapinigmay, “The Forgotten Amerasians.”

<sup>24</sup> Bass, *Vietnam*, 3-4, 45-46.

<sup>25</sup> Lapinigmay, “The Forgotten Amerasians.”

<sup>26</sup> See Bass, *Vietnam*, 119-120, 126, 143-144, 259-263, 265, 267.

<sup>27</sup> McCrary, “Decades Later, ‘War Babes’ Seek Their GI Fathers.”

<sup>28</sup> Michelstein, “British War Babies Seek Their Yankee Fathers.”

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*; Bass, *Vietnam*, 273-274.

<sup>30</sup> McCrary, “Decades Later, ‘War Babes’ Seek Their GI Fathers.”

<sup>31</sup> Wiltenburg and Widmann, “WWII G.I. Babies.”

<sup>32</sup> Bass, *Vietnam*, 179.

# Coming soon: *Life Lessons with Josh*

Josh Brahm, president of Equal Rights Institute, is partnering with *Life Matters Journal* to bring a column centered around pro-life apologetics.

Send in your questions for pro-life dialogue, apologetics, and hard topics to [info@lifemattersjournal.org](mailto:info@lifemattersjournal.org)





# Influences on the Vulnerable:

## Abortion and assisted suicide decisions are not so “private”

By L.A. Williams

### What do assisted suicide and abortion have in common?

So many things. Like the death of an individual at the hand of a physician. They share an important selling point for those who support both: an insistence on respecting the private relationship between the patient and the doctor.

Here is an example of a good thing being misappropriated to serve a bad end. We can appreciate the privacy that

would allow us to be frank with our doctor about our health. Discussions of symptoms and treatment options are personal. The decision to end one’s life or the life of an unborn child is not just personal.

My choice to end my life or take the life of my unborn child and the state’s sanction of such choices sends a message about the nature of reality. Legalizing assisted suicide and abortion sends the message that it’s a high good to commit an act (a violent act in the case of abortion) that would take a life if that life is somehow inconvenient or poses difficulties to me or someone else. If it’s okay to take a life, how is it not okay to do any number of less serious actions when I am threatened

by discomfort or inconvenience?

Where do we draw the line? This line was beautifully drawn thousands of years ago by a very wise Greek doctor named Hippocrates. He states, in part, “I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy.” This part of the oath has been modified by many medical schools to: “But it may also be within my power to take a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God.” I posit that the schools who altered this oath were playing God when they changed it, thinking that they were somehow less frail (by virtue of what, I do not know) than their Greek counterparts who had the wisdom to know that a line needs to be drawn, not with a dry wipe erase marker but with the firmness and clarity of the original oath.

This private discussion between patient and doctor is not happening in a societal vacuum. The patient or the mother is surrounded by other individuals. These individuals can be many things, but trust me, they have a profound influence on this decision.

First, is assisted suicide or abortion even a health matter? No elective abortion is a matter of the woman’s health because taking the life of the child directly is never necessary to protect or save the mother’s life.

Alan F. Guttmacher, M.D., “the father of Planned Parenthood,” a longtime abortion advocate whose name was used for Planned Parenthood’s sister organization, the Guttmacher Institute, stated in 1967: “Today it is possible for almost any patient to be brought through pregnancy alive, unless she suffers from a fatal illness such as cancer or leukemia, and, if so, abortion would be unlikely to prolong, much less save, life.”<sup>1</sup>

This was said in 1967. How much more is this true with the technology we have today? The mother may be treated for a life-threatening condition or illness with the indirect result of the loss of the baby’s life. The direct taking of the child’s life is not necessary to preserve the woman’s life. The baby’s health is patently not taken into consideration by the nature of the act of abortion. In the matter of a decision to take one’s life, the failure of medicine to effect a cure is the impetus for a discussion of assisted suicide.

Doesn’t this make it a spiritual or psychosocial matter? The meaning of life, of suffering, and of death all comes into this discussion from which we are told to butt out. And while we

as a society butt out, the people closest to this suffering mother or critically ill patient are having their say. And the message, whether subtle or loud and clear, is, “Your quality of life is terrible, you are not wanted, you are a burden, and you need to move aside now, when we say.”

We use euphemisms but the effect is the same. We are madly trying to handle things on our own without reference to any power greater than ourselves. Big things. Things that aren’t bearable alone or with a deficient view of the human person and reality. We can’t really bear to watch another suffer because in our ignorance we can’t make sense of it and the pain of that dissonance, of our inadequacy, of the brevity of life and the finality of death induce us to grasp for control. There is no more vulnerable position to be in than to be pregnant or critically or terminally ill. You are very easily influenced. Take it from someone who has heard the stories of many post-abortive women: they were not supported, loved, cherished, or appreciated. They were pressured, cajoled, or abandoned.

## This private discussion between patient and doctor is not happening in a social vacuum.

This is the same spirit fighting for assisted suicide. Yes, there are heart-wrenching stories of terminally ill and suffering individuals who appear to be fighting for the right to die. Just like the mother who may be treated for a life-threatening condition and lose her child, a terminally ill patient can be made comfortable and slip from this life.

When a physician privately talks with a pregnant mother or a terminally ill patient, remember all the other voices that are having their say. When we clamor for the right to kill under the guise of a right to die, we are doing the opposite of supporting dignity.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Alan F. Guttmacher, M.D., “Abortion—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” in *The Case for Legalized Abortion Now*, ed. Alan F. Guttmacher, M.D. (Berkeley, CA: Diablo Press, 1967), 9.





# A Pro-Life Analysis of *Obergefell v. Hodges*

By Kelsey Hazzard

On June 4, Ryan Bomberger of the Radiance Foundation called out LGBT leaders for their hypocritical support of abortion.<sup>1</sup> In particular, he cited Lambda Legal's statement that "reproductive freedom and LGBT rights have been inextricably linked both legally and politically. The ties between these rights are so strong that we really believe that a threat to one directly and profoundly impacts the other."<sup>2</sup>

On June 26, the U.S. Supreme Court released its opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, declaring state laws against same-sex marriage void.<sup>3</sup> The majority opinion was written by Justice Kennedy, who is widely recognized to be the Court's swing vote on abortion. Notably, he did not cite any abortion cases. However, he did cite contraception cases, which were expanded upon to invent a "right" to abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. This has some pro-life leaders worried that *Obergefell* could be a bad decision for the unborn.

Since I am a lawyer, I share this summary for the benefit of pro-life legal advocates as well as the pro-life community at large. In my view, *Obergefell* is a mixed bag. It provides language the abortion industry can use. It also provides language the pro-life movement can use, and Justice Kennedy's refusal to cite an abortion case is very encouraging. At the end of the day, though, *Obergefell* is unlikely to have a significant impact on abortion jurisprudence.

Justice Kennedy's opinion opens with a discussion of the history of marriage:

*From the beginning to their most recent age, the annals of human history reveal the transcendent*

*importance of marriage. The lifelong union of a man and a woman has always promised nobility and dignity to all persons, without regard to their station in life. Marriage is sacred to those who live by their religions and offers unique fulfillment to those who find meaning in the secular realm. Its dynamic allows two people to find a life that could not be found alone, for a marriage becomes more than just the two persons. Rising from the most basic human needs, marriage is essential to our most profound hopes and aspirations.*<sup>4</sup>

Justice Kennedy then turns to the personal stories of some of the plaintiffs: James Obergefell, whose partner died of ALS shortly after they traveled outside of their home state to marry; April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse, who are jointly raising three children but cannot jointly adopt them; Ijpe DeKoe, who served in Afghanistan with the support of his stateside partner Thomas Kostura. "Their stories reveal that they seek not to denigrate marriage but rather to live their lives, or honor their spouses' memory, joined by its bond."

The opinion next discusses how opposite-sex marriage has changed over time, particularly with respect to the abandonment of "coverture," a doctrine that effectively subsumed a wife's legal identity under her husband's. "These new insights have strengthened, not weakened, the institution of marriage. Indeed, changed understandings of marriage are characteristic of a Nation where new dimensions of freedom become apparent to new generations, often through perspectives that begin in pleas or protests and then are considered in the political sphere and the judicial process."

This segues into a discussion of the LGBT rights move-

ment, beginning with homosexual activity criminalized and homosexuality viewed as mental disorder, through the Supreme Court decisions in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, *Romer v. Evans*, *Lawrence v. Texas*, and finally the various same-sex marriage decisions in the lower courts.

Finally, the introductions are over and Justice Kennedy begins his discussion of the Due Process Clause. He cites the contraception cases, writing: “[T]hese liberties extend to certain personal choices central to individual dignity and autonomy, including intimate choices that define personal identity and beliefs. See, e.g., *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, 405 U.S. 438, 453 (1972); *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479, 484-486 (1965).”

In a passage that certainly rings true to me as a fighter against the injustice of abortion, Justice Kennedy declares:

*The nature of injustice is that we may not always see it in our own times. The generations that wrote and ratified the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment did not presume to know the extent of freedom in all of its dimensions, and so they entrusted to future generations a charter protecting the right of all persons to enjoy liberty as we learn its meaning. When new insight reveals a discord between the Constitution’s central protections and a received legal structure, a claim to liberty must be addressed.<sup>5</sup>*

“Applying these established legal tenets,” the Court decided *Loving v. Virginia* (allowing interracial couples to marry), *Zablocki v. Redhail* (allowing men behind on child support to marry), and *Turner v. Safley* (allowing prison inmates to marry).

Justice Kennedy states four reasons why same-sex marriage must receive the same type of Constitutional protection under the Due Process Clause: (1) “[T]he right to personal choice regarding marriage is inherent in the concept of individual autonomy.” The opinion points to *Loving* first, but adds: “Like cases concerning contraception, family relationships, procreation, and childbearing, all of which are protected by the Constitution, decisions concerning marriage are among the most intimate that an individual can make.” As far as the right to life is concerned, that is the most troubling line in the opinion. “Intimate decisions about childbearing” can be read as polite legalese for killing preborn children.

The remainder of this section, however, focuses on the unique nature of marriage.

(2) “[T]he right to marry is fundamental because it supports a two-person union unlike any other in its importance to the committed individuals.”

Justice Kennedy quotes a passage from *Griswold* about the “association” of marriage, as well as passages from *Windsor* and *Lawrence*. The Court adds: “Marriage responds to the universal fear that a lonely person might call out only to find no one there. It offers the hope of companionship and understanding and assurance that while both still live there will be someone to care for the other.”

(3) “A third basis for protecting the right to marry is that it safeguards children and families and thus draws meaning from related rights of childbearing, procreation, and education.” Here the Court cites precedents protecting a parent’s right to place children in private education. The Court emphasizes that children of same-sex couples will benefit from the increased stability offered by marriage. (At the same time, it recognizes that marriages without children are valid too.) This is a decent section for pro-life advocates. Abortion obviously does not safeguard children. Quite the opposite.

(4) “Fourth and finally, this Court’s cases and the Nation’s traditions make clear that marriage is a keystone of our social order.” Here Justice Kennedy outlines some of the many legal benefits connected to marriage. The consequence of this legal framework is that, without same-sex marriage, LGBT couples “are consigned to an instability many opposite-sex couples would deem intolerable in their own lives.”

Justice Kennedy then moves to a fifth basis for the opinion: the Equal Protection Clause. “[I]n interpreting the Equal Protection Clause, the Court has recognized that new insights can reveal unjustified inequality within our most fundamental institutions that once passed unnoticed and unchallenged.” This is exactly the argument that pro-life advocates make with respect to the preborn, whose legal personhood has been stripped from them despite the scientific advancements that make it clear that preborn human beings are as human and alive as the rest of us.

So where does all of that leave us? Justice Kennedy was smart. By writing an opinion that does not cite any abortion cases, he has assured that *Obergefell* will withstand the reversal of *Roe* and *Casey*. Lambda Legal’s statement that abortion and LGBT rights are

**Lambda Legal’s statement that abortion and LGBT rights are “inextricably linked” has been proven very wrong.**

“inextricably linked” has been proven very wrong. That took restraint on Justice Kennedy’s part, because *Casey* contains

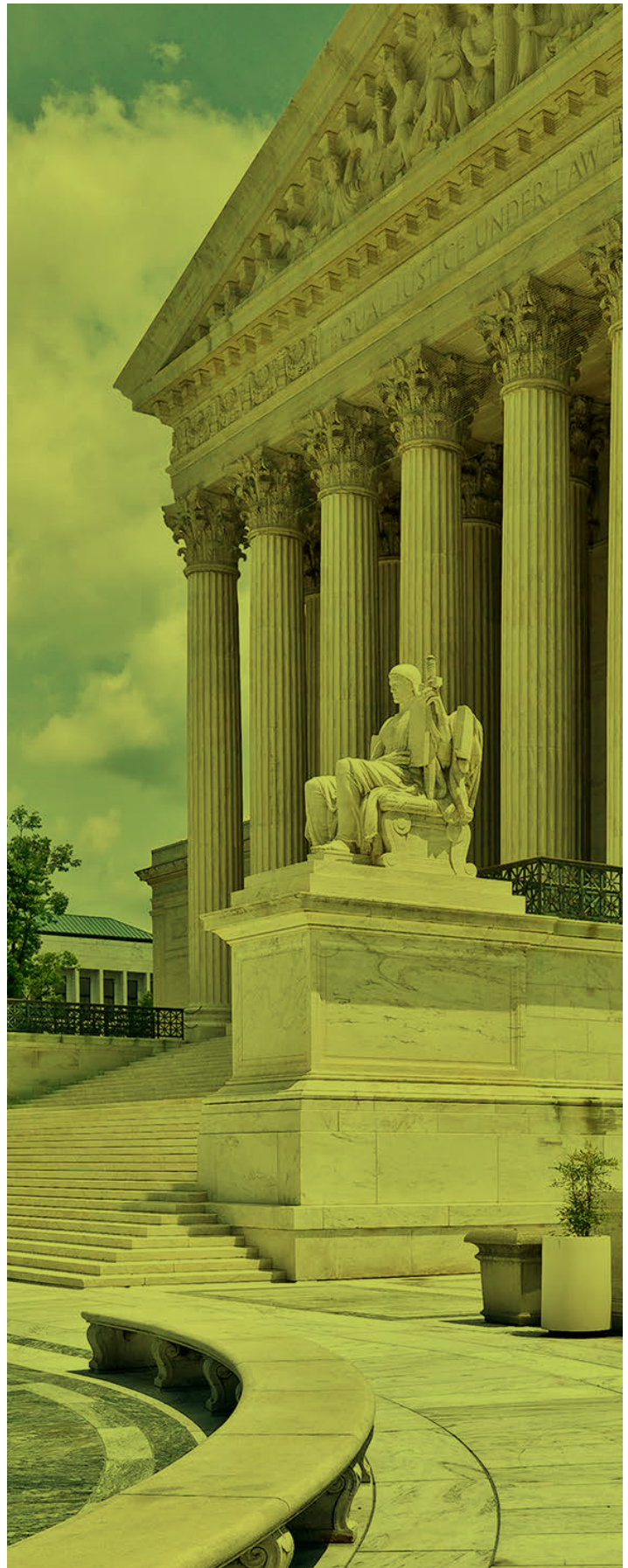


a lengthy discussion of the Due Process Clause—which he authored. He could have had a grand time quoting himself. Instead, crickets. That leaves the door open for him to step back from *Casey* in the future and be a fifth pro-life vote. It’s no guarantee, of course. But if he had cited *Casey*, I would be writing a very pessimistic article. The fact that he didn’t gives me hope.

That doesn’t mean abortion advocates won’t try to add *Obergefell* to their arsenal, of course. Naturally, they’ll try any legal argument they can. But *Obergefell* doesn’t say much that’s helpful to the abortion industry beyond what was already present in the contraception cases. And *Obergefell* contains arguments that are helpful to the pro-life cause, too, chief among them the recognition that legal injustices that were once commonly accepted may come to light with time and be undone by the Court. Ultimately, *Obergefell* is an opinion about the centrality of marriage in people’s lives. It is an opinion about “the hope of companionship,” commitment, family, and love. Abortion is many things, but abortion will never be about love.

#### Notes:

1. <http://www.lifenews.com/2015/06/04/why-are-gay-rights-groups-fighting-for-equality-for-everyone-except-unborn-children/>
2. Ibid.
3. Syllabus: *Obergefell et al. v. Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health, et al.*
4. Ibid.
5. *ibid.*





# Rejecting Mass Murder: Looking back on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

By John Whitehead

The United States devastated the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on, respectively, August 6th and 9th, 1945, in what were—to date—the only occasions in history that atomic bombs were used in wartime. The atomic bombings killed tens of thousands of people instantly, with many more dying of injuries in the following hours, days, and weeks. By the end of 1945, an estimated 210,000 people had perished as a result of the bombings. Because the use of atomic bombs against these two cities contributed to the surrender of Japan and the end of the Second World War, many have argued that the bombings saved lives that would otherwise have been lost in continued warfare and thus that bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki was justified. For adherents to a consistent ethic of life, however, these uses of atomic bombs

were not justified—they amounted simply to mass murder.

Those who advocate a consistent ethic of life vary in their precise attitudes toward war. Some are pacifists who regard all killing in war as inherently wrong. For these pacifists, destroying a city with an atomic bomb must be rejected in the same way that any killing must be.

Other consistent ethic of life advocates are not absolutist in their opposition to war but adhere to Just War Theory or other ethical philosophies that allow that killing in war could be justified, at least under certain circumstances. For these non-pacifists, the reasons for rejecting the use of atomic bombs against cities are less straightforward than they are for pacifists. Even viewed from such non-absolutist consistent ethic of life perspectives, however, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is difficult to justify, for two reasons.

First, violent means to achieve an end cannot be justified if



nonviolent means can achieve the same end. Just War Theory acknowledges this basic principle by requiring that war must be a last resort in order to be justified. In 1945, the end pursued by the United States and other Allied powers—the surrender of their wartime enemy, Japan—could have been achieved by diplomatic means without resorting to the threatened or actual use of atomic bombs against the Japanese.

A major obstacle in bringing the war with Japan to an end through negotiation was the Allied insistence, expressed in the Cairo Declaration of 1943 and Potsdam Declaration of 1945, that Japan surrender unconditionally. Such insistence left the Japanese uncertain about what the fate would be of the Emperor Hirohito, the Japanese head of state who held divine status in the eyes of many Japanese. The Allied Potsdam Declaration, which promised that “stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals” even left open the possibility that Hirohito might be executed or imprisoned by the victorious Allied powers.

Such a possibility was unacceptable to the Japanese government. Indeed, so unacceptable were threats to the emperor and his position that even after atomic bombs had devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Japanese government was willing to come to surrender terms, wholly unconditional surrender was out of the question. To the very end, Japan’s rulers insisted that Hirohito remain sovereign, and the war only came to an end when it did because the United States was willing to relent and allow Hirohito to stay, at least provisionally. Had the Allies relented on this point sooner, the war might have been brought to a successful conclusion without atomic bombs ever being used.

Even if such diplomatic means of ending the war had not been available, however, the atomic bombings would still not have been justified, for a second and ultimately far more important reason.

A fundamental principle of Just War Theory—and one that even those who do not wholly endorse Just War Theory can appreciate—is that military forces should discriminate between enemy military personnel and enemy civilians when using violence. Enemy citizens who by their status as members of the armed forces are authorized and prepared to use lethal violence in wartime may be reciprocally regarded as legitimate targets of such violence; enemy citizens who are not in the armed forces and are not authorized to play such a violent role are not legitimate targets.

Granted (to echo a point made by Just War Theory ethicist Michael Walzer), the line that divides military personnel and civilians can be difficult to draw. Some enemy citizens may belong to military reserves or militias that act as auxiliaries to regular military forces; other citizens work in industries that produce weapons and thereby contribute, at least indirectly, to violence. Nevertheless (again echoing Walzer), some en-

emy citizens will always fall into categories that place them clearly outside the military realm: children (both inside and outside the womb), the elderly, and the sick and disabled. Further, I would argue that other classes of people who might serve in military capacities but perform clearly nonviolent functions—doctors and nurses, clergy—also fall into the protected category of civilians.

To target these clearly inoffensive, non-military people is unjust. Such people were targeted in the devastations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and did perish as a result. Using a weapon of such overwhelming destructive power as an atomic bomb against an entire city inevitably involves targeting people who should be protected from violence, even in wartime.

In addition to the pacifist and Just War Theory reasons given above, consistent ethic of life advocates have one more important reason for rejecting the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and any similar slaughter of civilians. The essential argument made by defenders of the bombings—killing huge numbers of people, including children, ultimately achieved a worthwhile goal—can be invoked to justify other forms of violence, including abortion. Don’t worthwhile goals (so the argument would go) such as gender equality, curbing overpopulation, reducing poverty and crime, or preventing child abuse justify the deaths of countless unborn children? Consistent ethic of life advocates know better than to accept such toxic rationales, whether in the realm of abortion or warfare.

*A version of this piece previously appeared on the blog of Consistent Life (<http://consistent-life.org/blog/>).*





# Women and Girls in *The Wizard of Oz*

*The International L. Frank Baum & All Things Oz Historical Foundation held a fundraiser in August 2014 in connection with the house in Syracuse, New York, that belonged to L. Frank Baum's sister, Harriet Baum Neal. This house was where Baum met his future wife, Maud Gage. Pro-life feminist Carol Crossed, who is the president of the Board of Directors of the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum, gave a talk at the fundraiser on Maud Gage and her mother Matilda Joslyn Gage, both first wave feminists, and their influence on Baum and the Oz books. That talk, abridged and edited, is reproduced here.*

## By Carol Crossed

Just as the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum memorializes the birth of one of America's greatest heroines, the Baum House memorializes the birth of another monumental mover of our history: the relationship of Frank Baum and Maud Gage. For without the Gages, Frank Baum's most lauded novels, the *Oz* series, may never have come to fruition. And without Baum, the Gages would not have had such a lasting legacy of feminist influence. It is only fitting that the Baum house be the location not where Frank Baum himself was born or grew up, but where he met his other half, his inspiration, and his strength.

Maud and her mother, Matilda Joslyn Gage, were first wave feminists—they struggled for gender equity in a man's world, for rights that we take for granted today, like the right to vote, to own property, and the right to education. First wave feminists like the Gages, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton recognized that all humans, slave or free, born or unborn, male or female, were equal in value and deserved human dignity.

Matilda was a force to be reckoned with. She joined the women's movement in 1852 when the second women's rights conven-

tion came to Syracuse. It was there she met Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. For years, the three of them worked side by side, founding and running the National Woman Suffrage Association and co-editing the first three volumes of *The History of Woman Suffrage*. These three women were radical for their time, and they relied on each other as both co-activists and as friends.

But Anthony and Stanton were willing to make sacrifices for their cause that Matilda Joslyn Gage wasn't able to stomach. Their focus solely on suffrage opened doors to a broad range of women, from free love advocate Victoria Woodhull to Christian women who, for instance, wanted to use their vote to enact tougher laws for temperance. Most of the suffragist activists were going to do whatever it took to have a voice in government, including aligning themselves with those they disagreed with on religion and other issues.

Matilda Joslyn Gage, however, wasn't about to waver, and for that reason she's been cast aside in history. While Anthony and Stanton's legacies were carried on via the 19th Amendment and Anthony's face proudly engraved on the dollar coin, few Americans recognize Matilda's name at all. But this isn't to say she didn't leave a legacy or have a powerful impact on society—not at all. A prolific writer, she authored pamphlets about courageous women and





penned her masterpiece book, *Woman, Church, and State*, a text that would still be radical today.

Though she wanted to be a doctor, Matilda never had the opportunity to pursue her dreams—women in those days didn't earn medical degrees. Like all of us, she wanted more for her children, particularly her youngest child, Maud. Maud was bright, practical, hardworking, and according to her college peers, lively—a trait that got her into trouble in school. Outnumbered five to one by the boys at Cornell University, girls were often subject to teasing, bullying, and vicious gossip. The torment was worse for a young woman like Maud who was not only “lively,” but had a well-known radical feminist for a mother, which incited either mockery or anger from her male peers. Still, Maud persevered, working toward a career as a doctor or a lawyer as per her mother's wishes.

Maud showed exceptional promise—so when she told her mother she wanted to marry a poor actor and give up her degree and her career, her mother was, of course, appalled. It was only when Maud demonstrated her own strength that Matilda laughed and recognized a lesson that we are all still learning today: feminism is not about valuing career over family. We have the capability to strive for both.

It didn't take long for Matilda to realize that Maud had made a worthwhile choice in life partner, despite Frank Baum's severe shortcomings. He wrote a scathing editorial disparaging Native Americans, despite Matilda's strong affinity with the Haudenosaunee Indians. He was a poor money-manager and businessman. But he adored his wife, valued her for her intellect and her poise, and took the back seat in their marriage. Their wedding ceremony eschewed traditional values of female obedience in favor of equality and justice. Maud took over the family finances, made the decisions, and was the most adequate pundit of Frank's writing. They shared a passionate marriage, with “few quarrels”, according to Frank's twenty-five year wedding anniversary invitation. Even better, he was willing to let his radical mother-in-law live with them for several months out of every year!

Matilda's presence in the Baum household proved to be an in-

spiration for Frank, himself, as a writer, and for the Oz series as a whole. It was she who introduced the couple to a blending of Buddhism and Hinduism that served as the foundation for the yellow-brick road. And it was she who chastised society for its hatred of witches, which Frank incorporated into his Oz tales as both protagonists and antagonists. It was Matilda who told Frank, “Now you are a good writer and I advise you to try. If you could get up a series of adventures or a Dakota blizzard . . . or maybe bring in a cyclone from North Dakota.” And it was Matilda's staunch feminism that can be thanked for Dorothy, a girl, as the main character in a story about adventure.

Whether Frank Baum was a feminist before he met Maud and her mother Matilda is difficult to say, but he was undoubtedly an ally of the women's rights movement after he met them. In a newspaper editorial, he wrote that men who weren't allies of early feminism were “selfish, opinionated, conceited, or unjust—and perhaps all four combined.” He served as the secretary for the Aberdeen Women's Suffrage Club and urged his peers to vote for women's suffrage.

His most long-lasting and influential act within the women's rights movement was not the editorial letters or his work as secretary, but his writing of the Oz series. Baum claimed that his books weren't meant to be political—but whether they were meant to be political or not, their impact certainly was. Feminists have long argued that “the personal is political,” that our everyday lives cannot be separated from the greater picture of reality. Much like the Victorian Sunday Salons, at which many suffragists led discussions on philosophy and culture, literature was a way of consciousness-raising. It opens minds to new possibilities, to worlds unseen, and can be a way of connecting with characters similar to ourselves in a way that validates our own experiences. So although Baum claimed to not have any intention of subverting society through his children's books, he opened fantastical doors to his young readers that his wife and mother-in-law were seeking to open in reality.

Baum created fictional female characters that are well-round-

**Baum created  
fictional female  
characters that are well-  
rounded, diverse, and  
unshakably human.**

ed, diverse, and unshakably human. Dorothy, the title protagonist for the Oz series, is not only strong, brave, and resourceful, but kind and had periodic moments of weakness. She, like Matilda and Maud, wants something more than her sheltered life. She longs for adventure and new experiences. She explores a world populated by other strong women, modeled after a feminist utopia of Matilda's imagination, and they don't fit stereotypes. Baum's wicked witch, while indomitable and powerful, exhibits fear, a reminder that even those who seem formidable have a softer side. And the good witch, while wise and kind, doesn't know all the answers—she is not an all-knowing entity without flaw. Baum created good characters with flaws and evil characters to whom the reader could be sympathetic. The women in his tale are different from one another and were multi-dimensional.

Baum created a main character who grows and develops—but not because she needs to change, but because she needs the opportunity to explore the potential in herself. Dorothy, a young girl, doesn't realize her own strength until she ends up having experiences that challenge her. Inspired by the feminist women in his life, Baum knew that girls and women throughout the world were capable of more than they were given the chance to demonstrate. In a world like Oz, women have the space to be themselves, to be complicated and messy. They don't fit into a mold.

But Oz wasn't just for women, but for men as well. Feminism was never about improving the condition of women at the expense of men but realizing that the same society that told women they shouldn't be bold and have careers was the same society that told men not to be timid and stay at home. Baum defied cultural constructs of his day—he was a mild man with no business acumen. He took the back seat to his wife.

He worked as an actor; he was expressive and enjoyed dressing up in costumes. While Maud was the strict parent who enforced order and structure, Baum was sympathetic. He was known to sneak food to the children after Maud had sent them to bed without food for misbehaving. Just as much as Matilda and Maud sought opportunities so that they could express themselves freely, Baum sought a world in which he, too, was able to be himself. Oz was that place.

Like the suffragists, Dorothy challenges the men she is around to become more nurturing. Suffragists like temperance leader Frances Willard sought not to attain equal rights for women to enter the bars and drink too but to bring men back into the home with the family. They did not want to become like men in all ways, but for men to become a little more like women. Dorothy challenges the scarecrow to recognize that he does have a brain and that it can be used for the common good. She challenges the lion to recognize that he does have courage—not just bravado, but courage to be compassionate and change the world. She challenges the Tin Man

to recognize that he does have a heart, a heart to love everyone equally.

It is not just the characters that empower women and girls, but the world itself. Many early feminists began their social justice work in the abolitionist movement, working against a system in which people worked without pay. Women, like Susan B. Anthony who was a teacher, worked but received only 25 percent of her male counterpart's pay. Like slaves, they had no voice in government and had limited freedoms. Married women in the 1800s could not own property. Their inherited wealth, and if they worked, their income went straight to their husbands. Matilda Joslyn Gage and first wave feminists knew firsthand the impact that financial inequality had on daily life. So it is no surprise that in the feminist utopia of Oz, people lived without money—there was no economic hierarchy.

Better yet, Baum's Oz is just as much reality as Kansas is, and Dorothy is able to transition between them. Baum realized the sacrifices that Maud had made in marrying him, foregoing her own education and career in favor of marriage and children, so he dreamed of a place in which women weren't forced to make those decisions. First wave feminists knew that women deserved better than an either-or scenario in life. Like women then and now, Dorothy feels intensely the push-pull of loving the adventure that was

the yellow brick road while continually wanting to go back to her family in Kansas.

So why Kansas? Why not a blizzard in South Dakota, like Maud suggested? Kansas was and still is the nation's hotbed of social justice activism, giving rise to such figures as anti-temperance campaigner Carrie Nation. Christian reformers who only 25 years ago flocked by the hundreds to Wichita to protest abortion clinics

were following in the footsteps of Free Methodist Anna Witteman, who rescued young girls from the sex trade that went hand in hand with Kansas saloons. Kansas was the staging ground for abolitionist John Brown. Susan B. Anthony's brother Merritt moved to Kansas and became part of Brown's crusade to free the slaves. Both he and Susan's other brother Daniel were part of the early settlers who moved there to influence through their vote whether Kansas would be a free state or a slave state. More importantly, in 1857, Kansas was the first state in the Union to grant women voting rights in municipal elections. After all, strong and courageous pioneer women were the backbone of the state that tamed a barren landscape only fit for cattle and the men who rustled them. The Kansas state flower, the sunflower, became the suffrage symbol throughout the campaign to win women the vote.

For Baum, Dorothy going home to Kansas meant returning to the multiple kinds of social ills that went beyond Aunt Em and domestic life. Early feminists knew that all people deserved to live in a

Like the suffragists,  
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world of justice, nondiscrimination, and nonviolence. These values were the key to true social equality, so were they incorporated in Baum's Oz? To some extent, yes.

Oz is a world of justice: bad actions usually have bad results. Wicked witches meet their demise, and those who did good are rewarded in the end. More importantly though, it is a world of nondiscrimination and of social equity. Oz is a world of unique individuals—flying monkeys, munchkins, a live saw-horse, a talking scarecrow. They are widely diverse and yet treated as equals. All people (or non-people) are valuable and have something to contribute. And when the Scarecrow is asked if he's unusual, he responds, "Not more so than yourself. Everything in life is unusual until you get accustomed to it." It is a subtle reminder that regardless of our appearances, we all have dignity and worth.

Baum doesn't gloss over people's differences, nor does he harp on them. Their differences are what make them unique and what shape their experiences, but ultimately it is not those differences that define them. The Scarecrow is unique more because he doesn't have a brain than because he's made of straw. Readers have the opportunity to understand that each of us have something to contribute and that we shouldn't discriminate based on appearance or identity.

But did Baum exemplify nonviolence? That question is more complicated. In an early review, the *New York Times* wrote that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* "does not dwell upon killing and deeds of violence," despite being an engaging adventure story. And compared to the gory, blood-filled folk tales of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Anderson, that analysis may be fair. And yet, Dorothy and her friends kill more than 100 characters throughout the series. Her house lands on the Wicked Witch of the East and the Land of Oz celebrates her death by singing and dancing triumphantly, lauding Dorothy as their hero.

But this death isn't enough: the Wizard of Oz asks Dorothy to kill another witch if she wants to get back to Kansas. "But I cannot!" Dorothy exclaims, "I never killed anything willingly... I am sure I do not want to kill anybody, even to see Aunt Em again."

But when our confused heroine realizes the effect that water has on the witch, Dorothy purposely douses her. In other words, Dorothy resorts to using violence for her own benefit—a moral that early American feminists would not have supported. Violence was a way of holding power and controlling others. It was not a way to protect freedom and equality, but a method of enforcing dominance and equality. Suffragists would have believed that women can and should get ahead without oppressing others. This is why the suffragists not only opposed slavery, but also unanimously opposed abortion: a violent method of getting ahead at the expense of another human being.

Susan B. Anthony's newspaper *The Revolution's* policy, stated in its inaugural edition, was opposition to both standing armies and advertisements for abortion. The military and destroying the pre-born were accommodations to a man's world, the kind of patriarchal world that used violence to solve human problems.

So even though Frank Baum created a world heavily inspired by his radical feminist wife and mother-in-law, one in which both women and men were free to be themselves, he created a world still heavily influenced by the world he actually lived in: one that promoted violence as a solution.

Over a century after Baum's text, we are still struggling with some of the same core issues that early feminists of the 19th century were working against. Women today are still forced to choose between family and career. Men are still criticized for being "too emotional" or "weak." Some within the feminist movement are willing to gain rights for women at the expense of others, forgetting that all of us are equal in value and deserve human dignity. They are straying

from the core tenets of justice, nondiscrimination, and nonviolence, in favor of independent gain.

What we need to do is return to our roots in a new wave of feminism, called the fourth wave. This is the idea that all people, by virtue of their human dignity, have a right to live without violence from conception to natural death. It is a value set put forth by first wave feminists like Matilda Joselyn Gage and Susan B. Anthony, and a value set that is rarely upheld in our time.

These women were not only radical and revolutionary for their time, but they are radical and revolutionary for today. They were not single-minded in their approach to equality and social justice but sought freedom for all people, working for the rights of other

unemancipated segments of the population. They supported abolitionism, child labor laws, worker and immigrant rights, and the rights of the unborn.

Similarly, fourth wave feminists of today progress beyond justice for women to include justice based on class, race, ability, and development. We have moved beyond terms like "reproductive justice" to a broader "inclusive justice" that stands against all forms of violence, including war, the death penalty, and abortion. We believe, as our first wave feminist foremothers do, that all humans deserve human rights.

We would be wise to walk in the footsteps of Frank Baum and learn as much as we can from these women and to remember that while there's no place like home, there can be a place like Oz.

Over a century after Baum's text, we are still struggling with some of the same core issues that early feminists of the 19th century were working against.



# “Many that Live Deserve Death”

But *The Fellowship* suggests taking courage instead of taking life

Amelia and Joey are members of *The Fellowship of the Geeks* team, which is a project of *Life Matters Journal* dedicated to media reviews and discussion. To learn more about it, visit [thefellowshipofthegeeks.tumblr.com](http://thefellowshipofthegeeks.tumblr.com).

By Joey Garrity and Amelia Haynes

The legendary story of *The Lord of the Rings* begins with *The Fellowship of the Ring*, in which all of Hobbiton is preparing to celebrate the hobbit, Bilbo Baggins' 111st birthday. But after Bilbo disappears using the ring he acquired from Gollum in the novel *The Hobbit* and leaves it to Frodo, it becomes clear that there is something much more evil at work. After a few years, the wizard Gandalf returns to Bag End to examine the ring. He tells Frodo the story of its making and path through history, explaining that it was created by the Dark Lord Sauron, and provides a source of almost unlimited power to any who chooses to wield it; and finally, he also explains how it can be destroyed once and for all.

One of the greatest arguments against the death penalty can be found in Gandalf's story of Gollum, and discussion with Frodo at Bag End. Upon hearing the story of Gollum's past and the death he caused to many (including his own family), Frodo states that he has no pity for Gollum and cannot understand why his uncle Bilbo spared him during the events of *The Hobbit*. Gandalf responds with one of the greatest summaries of the consistent life ethic to be found in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, if not any literature in human history: “Deserves it! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends. I have not much hope that

Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it.”

Of course, it turns out in the end that Gollum does not turn from his evil ways. But this does not mean that he should have been killed by Bilbo when they first met, or by Frodo or Sam, because if he hadn't been spared, then Frodo and Sam may have not been able to get into Mordor to destroy the One Ring. We never know if one who has committed great crimes will one day turn from them but in the meantime we should always give them the benefit of the doubt and respect their right to live as a human being. This also can be applied to post-abortive women because despite committing a heinous act many have come to realize the horror of abortion, and now dedicate all of their strength and efforts to ending the legalized injustice they once accepted.

Confronted with the potential task of taking the One Ring to the Cracks of Doom to destroy it once and for all, Frodo feels a passion to see the One Ring destroyed, but a reluctance to make the journey, and wishes the Ring had never come to him. To this, Gandalf answers: “You may be sure it was not for any merit that others do not possess: not for power or wisdom, at any rate. But you have been chosen, and you must therefore use such strength and heart and wits as you have.” Often when we are confronted with injustice in our world, we feel a powerlessness to do anything even though we have a strong passion to help. But as Gandalf says, what we have to offer is enough. Even a tiny hobbit with no combat experience can stand up against the ultimate evil and win. We may feel like we are not powerful enough to stop the injustices of abortion, unjust war, and all other legalized violence. But we



will stand against it with “such strength and heart and wit” as we have. And we will not back down even in the face of great evil with all the power and influence in the world. Just as Frodo sets off with Sam, Merry, and Pippin on the first steps of his journey, so we begin with others; we are not alone either. We all have the power to take a stand together.

The second half of *The Fellowship of the Ring* begins with Frodo waking in Rivendell, and transitions from the quest of the hobbits simply getting the One Ring away from the Shire to their decision to take a stand against the evil of Sauron and participate in having the One Ring destroyed. The decisions of the hobbits (and other characters) frequently demonstrate courage, perseverance, and selflessness when they have to choose between doing what is right and what is easy. Thus, like us, the ordinary hobbits are called to move from a simple understanding of “right” to an active choice to defend it, from the more passive quest of fleeing with the Ring to decisive task of putting their will and lives into destroying it, whatever the personal cost.

When Glóin the Dwarf explains that messengers of Sauron have been threatening the dwarves and demanding information concerning Bilbo (and thereby, the One Ring, as Sauron believes Bilbo still possesses it), he shows the courage of the dwarves as they have refused to sell out Bilbo. “There is naught that you can do, other than to resist, with hope or without it. But you do not stand alone.” The dwarves are well aware that Sauron is an evil, unjust destroyer of life, and they have stood firm in refusing to betray their friend. Often when people take a stand against injustice it can seem very hopeless. But that does not mean we should give up on standing for what’s right. Forty-two years ago, *Roe v. Wade* was passed, striking down all restrictions on the willful taking of human life through the act of abortion. But today, because so many pro-lifers have made a stand and used their voices, most babies in the United States are protected from abortion at least in the third trimester of pregnancy. Many are also protected in the second trimester. Though there is still a long way to go, we also have come a long way. Similar to the Hobbits who travelled a long way just to get to Rivendell, we have travelled far, bringing us closer and closer to protecting the most vulnerable of our fellow human beings. It may have seemed hopeless before, but the courage of those who refused to give up on fighting injustice has brought about change.

Perhaps one of the most significant demonstrations of courage in the entirety of *The Lord of the Rings* is when Frodo volunteers himself to destroy the One Ring. The members of the Council are silent, knowing that someone has to fulfill the task at hand—until Frodo speaks up: “I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way.” By all accounts, Frodo is far from the best-suited for the task: he is small, not strong, nor well-travelled—he does not know the lands between Riven-

dell and Mordor. But he sees a need and rises to the task. I think most people have a point in their lives when they are aware there is some injustice going on, but feel they are helpless. It’s easy to think we need a great leader like Martin Luther King Jr. or Sophie Scholl or William Wilberforce to end injustice. But every great leader was a normal human being who, like Frodo, saw something that needed to be fought, and took a stand—they did not always know how they could end injustice, but like Frodo, they were willing to do whatever it took. The buildup of the first half of *The Fellowship of the Ring* demonstrates just how lighthearted the hobbits were, just how easy their lives were, only to turn them out into the world – they leave all of that behind willingly, knowing the danger and not knowing it, and step out of themselves. Everyone who stands against injustice starts somewhere, and he or she starts with a choice, not knowing the outcome.

One important sub-theme within the Fellowship is the unity of the races. They all have different cultures and lifestyles, yet they are able to come together for a common cause. The friendship of Gimli and Legolas is particularly significant as the elves and dwarves have been enemies for around six thousand years at this point. In Lothlórien, the elves again extend friendship towards Gimli, despite the millennia of odds between their races. “May it be a sign that though the world is now dark better days are at hand, and that friendship shall be renewed between our people,” Celeborn—the Lord of Lothlórien and husband of Galadriel—tells Gimli. The unity of the Fellowship demonstrates that when there is an injustice that needs to be fought, we need to be united with, and not divided from, those who are different.

Whether it’s different political views, religions, skin colors, habits, personal choices, or a whole other range of things, justice can’t wait. We can’t stand aside while the lives and liberties of others are threatened just because someone looks or thinks differently than us. Unity is vital to the cause of justice.

If there is one thing to take away from the protagonists in the Fellowship, it is their enduring courage. They are continually given a choice between what they know is right, and what looks easy, and they choose to do what is right. Taking a stand to defend the right to life is often difficult and intimidating at times, but if we don’t take a stand, who will? It doesn’t take someone with great strength or great public speaking skills to change the world. Justice needs everyone; people of every color, faith, sexual orientation, and political view to say “No more.” Not moving forward for the Fellowship did not mean staying put. It meant going backward. Sauron was coming for the Ring. In the same way, *life cannot wait*. If we are not standing up actively, we are allowing the Culture of Death to advance. We must say, “No more.” “I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way.”



FRI

SAT

SUN

MON

TUE

# Women are in Need of Complete Information on the Pill

*Life Matters Journal is collaborating with The Guiding Star Project to bring you this regular column. April Jaure is the Blog Coordinator at The Guiding Star Project. Please visit [theguidingstarproject.com](http://theguidingstarproject.com) to learn more about them.*

By April Jaure

Recently I was having a conversation with my hairdresser about contraception. Despite the fact that I am a Natural Family Planning (NFP) instructor, it's not a topic that I typically discuss in casual conversations, as I'm afraid of coming on too strong. I had mentioned that I was going to Tampa, Florida the following week and she had asked what I was going to be doing there.

I explained that I was on the Board of Directors for an organization called the Guiding Star Project, a nonprofit that is working towards establishing centers across the United States that will offer women holistic, life-affirming care for many of the issues they face. I excitedly told her that our first center was opening in Tampa. I explained that our Guiding Star centers will have a variety of practitioners all located under a single roof. A woman could see her doctor or midwife, get help from a lactation consultant, see a doula or NFP instructor, and even get crisis pregnancy help all at one location. The centers would also include drop-in childcare to help women attend appointments more easily and maybe even little coffee

shops too to help women relax for moment in an otherwise busy day.

When I mentioned Natural Family Planning, she informed me that she's never liked the pill and that she was thankful that she has not been on it for some time. She never felt right about "messing with the natural way [her] body works."

"Yes," I agreed, "It is not good for women's health. In fact, in 2005 the World Health Organization listed oral contraceptives as a Group 1 carcinogen."<sup>1</sup> "No way," she said, shocked. I continued on, "It's a class one carcinogen for breast, liver, and cervical cancer. Class one. That's up there with cigarettes and asbestos." She was very surprised at this and stated that she was definitely going to look into it more.

As this is 2015, a full ten years after the pill was given this classification (a classification that is given only when ample evidence has proven that a substance is carcinogenic to humans), I'm saddened by the number of women I encounter who are still unaware. Especially given the amount of attention that is given to Breast Cancer Awareness in recent years, from pink-ribboned snack packages, hats, mugs, and sweat-shirts, to the pink-gloved-and-socked NFL players every Oc-



tober, there seems to be a conspiracy of silence when it comes to informing women about the most preventable risk factor for breast cancer. (Breast cancer is the most common cause of cancer-related death for women of childbearing age today.<sup>2</sup>) This is especially dangerous since premenopausal breast cancer, unlike postmenopausal breast cancer, tends to be particularly aggressive.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the women that come to me for NFP instruction also don't know of the pill's carcinogenic side effects. Many

## I've even heard the pill referred to as a "rite of passage" for teen girls today.

clients have chosen to go off the pill for various reasons, but a significant portion of them were put on it as teenagers, many due to irregular periods. I've even heard the pill referred to as a "rite of passage" for teen girls today. This trend is especially alarming since the carcinogenic risk is highest for women who have been on the pill for four or more years prior to their first full-term pregnancy,<sup>4</sup> and even more disturbing to realize that it is normal for teen girls to have irregular periods!<sup>5</sup> Often a girl's periods will not establish a regular pattern until she is in her late teens or even early twenties. Though no one knows for sure, some researchers believe that cycle irregularity has a protective function for girls, since increased estrogen exposure is known to be a risk factor for cancer. Lengthy or anovulatory cycles in teens may prevent girls from being regularly exposed to higher amounts of estrogen in the early years of their cycle, postponing regular exposure until their bodies are fully mature and ready for motherhood.

Although the harms of the pill are not common knowledge, it is hopeful that the information is becoming more readily available from a variety of sources. For example, Holly Grigg-Spall's work, *Sweetening the Pill*, and the subsequent documentary that is currently being produced of the same name, will hopefully bring into the mainstream the knowledge that women don't have to bear with the side effects of birth control in order to plan their family size. Although Grigg-Spall makes known her pro-choice beliefs, it is nevertheless refreshing to hear her get it exactly right when she asks, "What is the social impact of providing 80 percent of generally healthy women with a drug that makes them sick?"<sup>6</sup>

I am hopeful that one day soon it will be common knowledge that the pill isn't as safe as it has been made out to be.

I'm hopeful that women like my hairdresser, my clients, and young teens and their parents will know that femaleness itself isn't a medical condition requiring medication. Women naturally are really pretty fantastic just the way they are.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Department of Reproductive Health and Research, "Carcinogenicity of Combined Hormonal Contraceptives and Combined Menopausal Treatment," *World Health Organization*, (September 2005) [http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/ageing/cocs\\_hrt\\_statement.pdf](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/ageing/cocs_hrt_statement.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "Women's Health Fact Sheet," *World Health Organization*, last modified September 2013, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en/>.

<sup>3</sup> Jessica M. Dolle et al. "Risk Factors for Triple-Negative Breast Cancer in Women Under the Age of 45 Years," *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* 18 (April 2009): 1157. <http://cebp.aacrjournals.org/content/18/4/1157>. Chris Khalenborn et al. "Oral Contraceptive Use as a Risk Factor for Premenopausal Breast Cancer: A Meta-analysis," *Mayo-Clinic Proceedings* 81 no. 10 (Oct 2006): 1290-302. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17036554>

<sup>5</sup> "Menstruation in Girls and Adolescents: Using the Menstrual Cycle as a Vital Sign," *Committee Opinion of the American Academy of Gynecologists*, no. 349 (Nov 2006, Reaffirmed 2009). <http://www.acog.org/Resources-And-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Adolescent-Health-Care/Menstruation-in-Girls-and-Adolescents-Using-the-Menstrual-Cycle-as-a-Vital-Sign>

<sup>6</sup> Holly Grigg-Spall, *Sweetening the Pill: Or How We Got Hooked on Hormonal Contraception*. (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2013). Review copy 148.



Photo credit: Nate Grigg, Flickr Creative Commons



# Voting Matters: The Battle for the Soul of America

Photo credit: Denise Cross Photography, Flickr Creative Commons

By Aimee Murphy

I don't think I know of a single person who would deny that voting matters.

In our Democratic Republic, we have a chance to participate in the governance of society. We have a chance to make our political opinions known. We cast a vote and hope that our view, our vote, will be in the majority.

It's quite hard to be true to the Consistent Life Ethic in voting when neither party is entirely consistent. We are shouted at from all sides: abortion is the most important issue, or economics and the underlying causes of abortion are the most important issue, or that war policy is the most important, or sometimes even that healthcare is the most important. And it's vital that we have these conversations – because, in the end, what we are fighting for is the soul of America.

But perhaps you misunderstand my meaning: though our vote matters for the outcome of our elections, it matters infinitely more to the moral and ethical well-being and formation of our own souls. When we vote, we are perhaps one of 20,000 votes in our local elections, or one of 2 million votes in our state elections, or one of 120 million in the national election. While our votes cast might mean a drop in the bucket in making the difference between one politician taking office or another, voting itself as a moral action has the

power to change the landscape of our own souls<sup>1</sup> for better or for worse.

As someone who adheres to the Consistent Ethic of Life, I look for politicians who both comprehend and work to protect the life and dignity of every human being. Knowing that the respect for the human person isn't negotiable or based on circumstances or abilities, I vote for measures and representatives that will oppose legal abortion, slavery, capital punishment, euthanasia, torture, embryonic stem cell research, unjust war, abuse, and all forms of violence that threaten members of our human family.

But, of course, that's not how our political field looks these days. I find people on both sides of the political spectrum compromising for the sake of a candidate “who has a shot at winning” or even just for the pleasure of voting for someone instead of doing a write-in. I know of pro-life leaders who have led bully-like campaigns to insist that we, as pro-lifers, must fall in behind the major Republican candidate. I also know of people who claim to be Consistent Life Ethic supporters who have cast unabashed votes for politicians who support abortion.

Neither of these strategies is truly consistent in its respect for the voters, nor the interconnectedness of life issues. The longer we compromise just to get a candidate who *might* represent our perspective on one issue of human rights, the longer it will be until we can actually get a candidate who stands for our holistic voice. The pro-life movement has been trailing along after whatever Republican candidate is the “most popular choice” instead of standing on principle and refusing to be bought with a token nod to pro-life values. I'm



not saying that the candidates have to be perfect, but let's understand that our vote has a far greater capacity to affect us as moral individuals than it does to affect the political state of our nation.

I have only voted in a national election twice in my life; considering I'm only 26 years old, I've only had two chances. The first election was in 2008. I was 19, and I had supported a candidate who seemed to be quite consistent in regard to life issues; he (Ron Paul) opposed unjust war, torture, abortion, and embryonic stem cell research.<sup>2</sup> But he was not the Republican Party's candidate on Election Day. I certainly would not be voting for a candidate who supported the right of a mother to have her child killed. I was very uncomfortable with John McCain's policies on supporting pre-emptive war and his mixed record on abortion – but I sucked it up and toed the line that I'd been told I must.

I cannot properly describe the sinking feeling I had after I submitted my vote. I felt dirty and disingenuous. I had done what I'd been told to do because I wanted to be a True Pro-Lifer(TM), but I hadn't followed my conscience. I hadn't adhered to the whole of my principles. I promised myself that I would never do it again. So in 2012, when faced with

I cannot properly describe the sinking feeling I had after I submitted my vote. I felt dirty and disingenuous.

Mitt Romney and Barack Obama as the two major choices, I thought and prayed and researched. I knew I wouldn't be voting for Obama, but could I, in good conscience, vote for Romney? Mitt Romney not only stood for hawkish policies on war and torture, but he didn't even have a solidly pro-life foundation.<sup>3</sup> He stood for life, except in the cases of rape,

incest, and the life and health of the mother. As many pro-lifers know, the "health of the mother" exception is one that can be twisted and used for nearly any reason. I opted, after much consideration, to do a write-in vote. I didn't vote for anyone who supported abortion, nor unjust war, nor torture, nor embryonic stem cell research. I voted my conscience and it has affirmed in me the principles for which I stand instead of watering down my message.

After an experience recently where certain folks have attempted to co-opt my voice, I found it especially salient that I didn't toe the line in 2012. My voice is my own: my principles are those of a consistent respect for each and every human being, and in the end, my vote cannot be bought.

We should not leave our principles at the door when we decide for whom we are voting. You shouldn't leave some of your conscience outside when you cast your ballot. But I'm also not saying you should never ever vote – ever. Just understand that compromising on your principles eventually can and will catch up to you. Voting, as a moral action, can chill your soul to the truth of human dignity in all circumstances if you get too caught up in the popularity contest or the partisan mudslinging.

So, can you do anything other than vote for politically-negligible write-ins when election time comes around? You can, but you can't just say that one of these issues doesn't matter. What does that mean in terms of the moral compromise that we take on when voting?

The issues that should be most important to us as voters are the issues of legal aggressive violence: those instances where our government has sought fit to legalize, sanction, and even subsidize practices of aggression. I would posit that the gravest moral issue that we take on when voting is elective abortion. It takes over 2,900 human lives each day — the most of any issue of violence or health in our nation — and it is seen as morally acceptable and is enshrined in national law.<sup>4</sup> The use of unjust war practices (like pre-emptive war, nuclear armament, and torture) are an important, but perhaps secondary consideration, especially when we consider the causes and side effects like the proliferation of the military industrial complex, PTSD, military suicides, and homelessness of

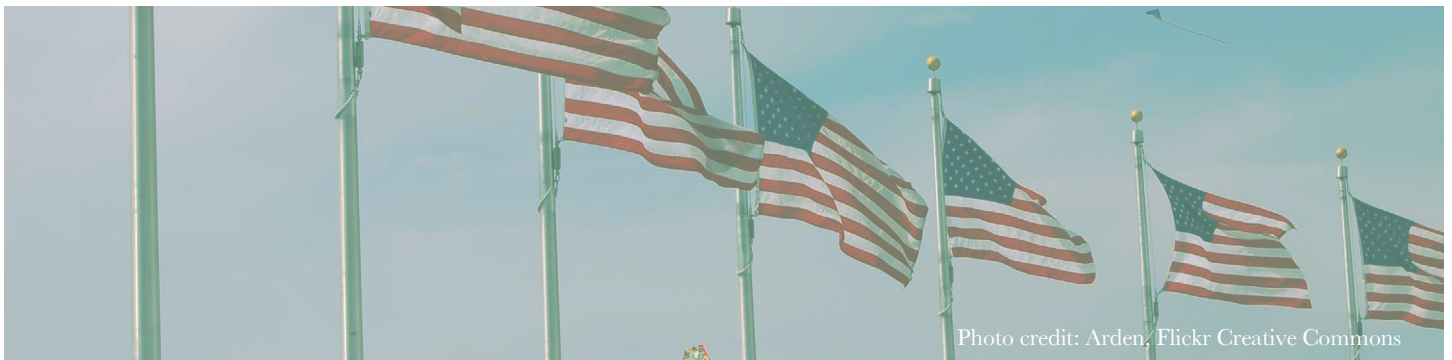


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veterans. Next we might consider embryonic stem-cell research (legal federally), capital punishment (legal in most states, but in decline), and euthanasia (legal in some states, but potentially growing).

Financial issues tend to be more widely disputed even in the field of economics, so I will just say that no matter which way we vote, we must do so with the intent to help our fellow man, even if we disagree on how that goal is best attained.

Something major to consider that is central to this whole discussion is subsidiarity and the scale and effect of your vote. The region over which a politician has representation and to which level of governance they report will be instructive regarding which issues they can influence.

- If it's a small city election (for mayor, city councilman, judges, the school board, etc.), your vote is likely to have a much greater effect on the entire outcome. The opinions of local politicians are most vital when it comes to abortion and human trafficking. Don't shrug off such voting opportunities; in Pittsburgh (where I live), the school board recently voted to bring Planned Parenthood into the schools to teach sex ed. These local politicians need to be held accountable and know we are paying attention.

- If it's a statewide election (for state senators or representatives and for governor), the candidates' opinions on abortion, capital punishment, human trafficking, and euthanasia are most salient to their voting capabilities.

- If it's a national election (for U.S. senators or representatives), the candidates' opinions on all matters are salient. Abortion and war are the most deadly acts that Congress can allow or enact, respectively. Congress also drafts bills and approves Supreme Court nominations.

- If it's a national election (for President), the candidates' opinions on all life matters are salient. As the Commander-in-Chief, the President also takes action in asking Congress to declare war, and has sway with the people as a whole in times of crisis. The President also has veto power on Congressional bills and nominates justices for the Supreme Court (which must be approved by Congress).

As you can see, abortion does have salience to the politicians on every level of governance. It is pervasive, and even the school board members and city councilmen have a say over things like Planned Parenthood (the #1 abortion provid-

er in the nation) working with schoolchildren.<sup>5</sup> I don't fault the Pro-Life movement for the way it has weighted abortion over all else. But it is not the only issue. We cannot and should not be single-issue voters who are content to vote for candidates who don't truly present a holistic pro-life worldview without so much as a blink.

I propose that we think of it this way: we are primary-issue voters. Not single-issue voters, but primary-issue voters. We vote pro-life first, because abortion is the #1 cause of death in our country with over 1 million induced abortions annually.<sup>6</sup> But voting pro-life first doesn't mean that you can't write in a name if you're dissatisfied with the record and the principles of the candidates before you. I think if we compromise on

abortion, if we vote for a candidate who supports the "right" of women to choose to have their children dismembered or poisoned or burned or starved, then we are participating in the moral dereliction of our own souls. There is no good justification for elective abortion — for example, "self-defense" — but is there for other cases of aggressive violence? Is there some sort of way we can vote for

someone who is staunchly against abortion, but favors the use of capital punishment?

This past year, in the Pennsylvania statewide election for governor, I had three major choices: I could write-in vote my vote, I could vote for Tom Wolf (who has worked for Planned Parenthood as a clinic escort before, but opposes the death penalty),<sup>7</sup> or I could vote for Tom Corbett (who has helped to enact pro-life legislation in PA, but is for the death penalty).<sup>8</sup> I did research for hours and hours to try to weigh my options. I couldn't vote for Tom Wolf: he not only had a grave misunderstanding of human development and human rights, but he supported an abortion business and they in turn have supported him right back. I would feel just as slimy voting for him as I did after voting for John McCain. So now I faced the next question: do I vote for Corbett, or write-in a candidate?

After much thought, I determined that the principle of subsidiarity proposed that I take active part in this local election -- with one big condition. Corbett's opinion on the death penalty was one that would have perhaps fatal consequences for some 186 death row inmates. While that number is obviously less than the 32,000 preborn humans killed every year by elective abortion in PA,<sup>9</sup> I knew that I couldn't sit idly by if I cast my vote for him. So I made another deal with myself: I would vote for Corbett, with the condition that I would write

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to him weekly, attempt to set up meetings with him on a local level, and do my utmost to change his position on capital punishment. This is obviously the sort of action that would seem quite absurd to propose on a national level: the idea of meeting with the President or getting my letters to the desk of Barack Obama sound difficult, if not impossible to achieve.

A question to which I'm not even sure I have a hard and fast answer to is this: Is there some sort of moral calculus in which we have to engage if we want to vote, or must we never compromise? I'm not sure if my vote for Corbett was the most principled action I could have taken, and I'm still working to form my conscience. But there is one thing of which I'm abundantly sure: our nation's soul will be formed through our participation in the ballot box. Voting is a moral action, and it has the power to shape us and our conscience if we allow our voices, our votes, to be bought and manipulated by our political system.

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of clarity, when I refer to "souls" I refer to moral character, not necessarily some religiously-grounded metaphysical substance. I think it's easy enough to understand you don't need to have a handle on any particular religion to grasp that our actions have great consequence to our moral character, and likewise, our moral

character will continue to affect our actions.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ontheissues.org/Ron\\_Paul.htm](http://www.ontheissues.org/Ron_Paul.htm)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.ontheissues.org/Mitt\\_Romney.htm](http://www.ontheissues.org/Mitt_Romney.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.gutmacher.org/pubs/fb\\_induced\\_abortion.html](http://www.gutmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.lifenews.com/2014/02/06/planned-parenthood-now-does-one-third-of-all-abortions-in-the-u-s/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ontheissues.org/Tom\\_Wolf.htm](http://www.ontheissues.org/Tom_Wolf.htm)

<sup>8</sup> [http://wn.com/governor\\_tom\\_corbett\\_on\\_the\\_death\\_penalty\\_in\\_pennsylvania](http://wn.com/governor_tom_corbett_on_the_death_penalty_in_pennsylvania)

<sup>9</sup> <http://abortionispersonal.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/abortion-report.pdf>



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