

opinions

Getting to a solution on abortion

I certainly sympathize with women who are concerned that they are being legislated as to what they can and can't do with their bodies. They feel that they are being forced to have a baby, and will not stand for it.

However, I have always been taught that I must face the consequences of my actions. Although it is my right to drink, I know that there is a time and a place for it, and behind the wheel of a car is not where I should be. So too with sex, there are implications that must be considered, with respect to pregnancy and health. Because a 'mistake' has occurred, that does not give one the right to create another victim in the matter (again, in my opinion).

Perhaps one of the problems many have with the Pro-life movement, is that they feel the movement is unsympathetic to the inconvenience that an unplanned pregnancy may cause in one's life, especially when this burden is placed solely on the mother. I agree that this is one area that needs improvement drastically. Whereas some see the solution to this difficult burden being subsidized abortion, to me the solution is financial assistance, and tougher measures against fathers who 'duck out.'

As the statistics for women with more than one abortion increase, and for abortions by women over 30, the

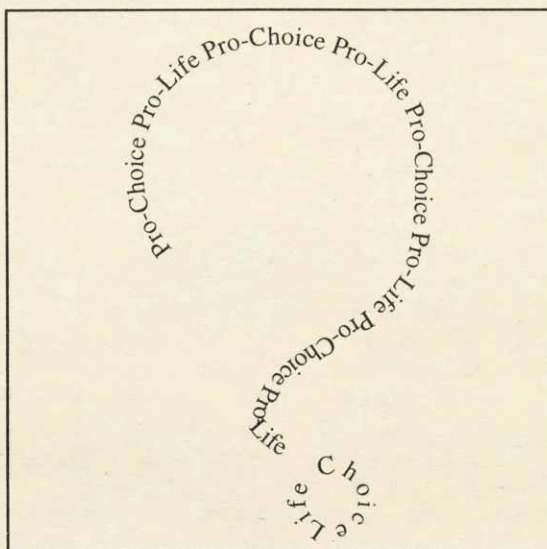
arguments concerning teenage girls and 'one-time mistakes' no longer work. Clearly abortion is becoming a form of birth control, but no longer by avoiding conception, but destroying it. The author mentions that women are being 'coerced' into having less children, but I think that it's purely a self-gratifying choice.

For instance, the Quebec government has been drastically trying to turn around its shrinking birth rate, with various (namely financial) incentives, but with less success than they would have liked. No, parents are choosing to have less children, and must not place the blame on someone else as we are often so apt to do.

To me, there is definitely a solution, although I do not know what it specifically might be. It is clear that neither sides can (or ever will) agree on abortion — so, alternatives must be sought so that we can avoid this ethical issue that might never reach consensus. The Pro-life sympathize with the women, just not as much as they do with the unborn baby.

Many Pro-choice also feel that

destroying the baby is unfortunate, if not wrong, but it is less wrong than forcing a woman to have a child. So, there is a level of understanding between the two groups, and morse, there are individuals on both sides



who are willing to cross the fence, shake hands, and try and talk things out. This is awfully important, since first and foremost, we must be friends with each other, and then we must be open and honest. With those two key ingredients, the results are bound to be positive.

As far as human nature goes, if you shout, I will most likely not listen, and vice versa I'm sure. I understand that at 16, having a child is definitely a major kink in one's plan. So would catching an STD however,

so perhaps the natural conclusion is that sex at 16 is not a good idea, and that should be the theme of sex education. "Sex without sex" perhaps. Also, perhaps we should turn around the stereotype propagated by some like Hilary Clinton that being a house-wife is not a valuable contribution to society (hmm... tell that to Einstein or Mozart's mother, or part-time workers with children).

Perhaps part of the reason that a child is unwanted in these days and times, is because that is exactly what we are teaching our women to believe. Also, I sometimes fear that abortion serves the needs of the men more than

the women. Coersion from the male in the relationship for an abortion can sometimes have an overwhelming influence on the female, who might otherwise carry the child to term. The Pro-life movement fears that this also occurs with euthanasia, where an elderly or sick person

begins to feel like a burden or drain on their family, and in result, unselfishly offers to rid their family of this 'chore.'

For now, the fists must be lowered so that we can eventually reach consensus on this matter. There is no reason that you and I shouldn't be able to discuss this rationally over a beer at the Grawood. When insults fly or extremists inflict violence, that is counter-productive to the mediation process.

Pro-choice individuals should understand that the Pro-life movement sees abortion as a travesty - a violent act, and will lead to greater ills than some might like to consider.

Pro-life individuals should understand that women are concerned about the possibility that someone could tell a woman what she can and can't do with her body. Pro-life individuals must also understand that 9 months of pregnancy is a large price to pay for a child that is not wanted and society sometimes doesn't make pregnancy the easiest thing to handle under some circumstances.

Granted, I do not know the solution to all of this as of yet, but I'm pretty sure I know how to get there.

Steve Franklin

And one for the road...a true story

Let me tell you a true story.

On the evening of Saturday, March 11, 1995, a guy — who we'll call "John" (age 20-22) — was out partying with his friends at a downtown Halifax bar that we'll call... uhh... Garry's.

John went into the guy's washroom and waited for a stall, because both the bar and the loo were packed. There were guys at the urinals and guys milling around, when a stall opened. A guy walked out (doing up his fly) looked at John and said, "You're next" — and then left the washroom.

When John entered the stall, he found a girl in there — semi-conscious, sitting on the tank of the toilet, naked from the waist down with her knees spread. As she got up, John backed up and she stumbled out of the washroom and out of the bar.

John went on with his night.

The next day, John felt that this made appropriate lunch conversation and gave all the details while the men and women in his party ate lunch.

Gail, (her real name) one of the women in the party was understandably disgusted and outraged. She questioned John: did he leave her there? No, he said — she walked out on her own. How long was she in there? Did he alert any of the staff? No — he figured that they knew she was in there anyway. Besides (John said) maybe they were boyfriend and girlfriend. This would lead one to wonder why the boyfriend would A) walk away from her in that state, B) offer her to John like some piece of an entertainment center he'd gotten sick of using.

John couldn't understand why this upset Gail so much. John's girlfriend consoled him and told him it was ok... it was ok. Gail didn't finish the

rest of her lunch.

Gail called her girlfriend "Joan" (not her real name, either) to vent. She was angry at the situation and she was angry with John. Didn't John know that what he witnessed may have been a 'man-overpower-woman' situation, and that it wasn't an appropriate 'light,' congenial lunch conversation topic?

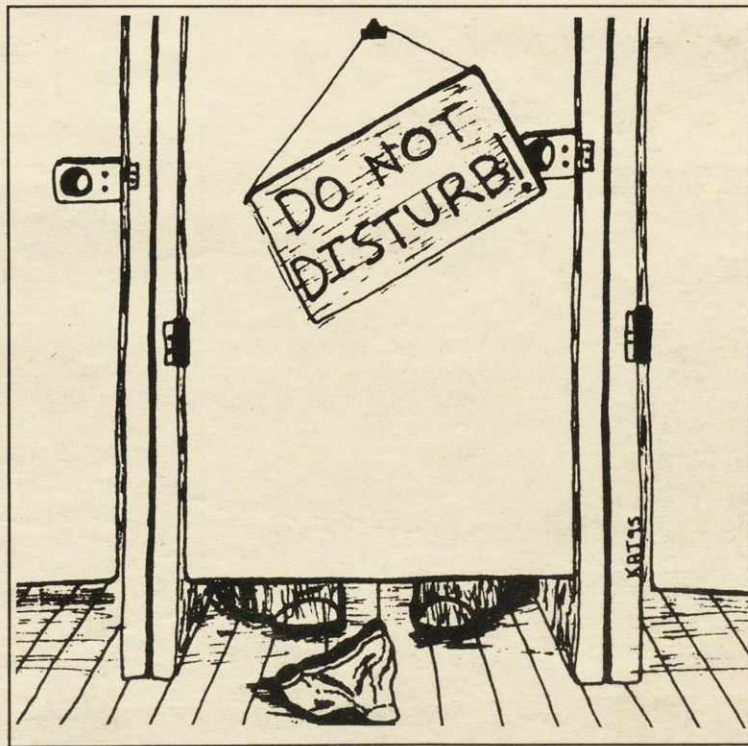
Gail wanted to call Garry's Bar and complain, but Joan said, "no, you're too upset. Let me do it." Joan told the assistant manager that she was a concerned patron as she related the story. She didn't get the assistant manager's name, but the conversation followed the following line.

The assistant manager said that when a man enters the women's washroom, everyone knows about it. When a woman enters the men's washroom, she's 'welcomed' in.

Joan asked why there isn't a bouncer posted at each washroom door? He said that they need the staff in other areas. It was a very busy night that night and gave her a staff to patron ratio. (Wouldn't that be all the more reason?!) Then he said — why didn't the guy notify someone? Had they known that something was happening, they could have done something. Both

Joan and Gail realized by the false tone of his voice that in one brilliant move, they had washed their hands of the entire incident. He had dumped the responsibility of protecting the girl on the bar's own property on both John and the girl — had she wanted help, she was too drunk to obtain it.

Joan told him that if he didn't do something to remedy the situation (put bouncers on the washrooms or



something), they didn't feel safe in his establishment anymore. The assistant manager didn't say anything. I guess he felt that they were only two customers out of hundreds. So what?

All of this comes on the heels of a woman being assaulted and confined by three men outside of Guppy's Bar on Saturday, March 25.

So what's your beef, you're say-

ing? Well, first of all, it's that these kinds of incidents happen far too often in downtown Halifax, and as a society we keep on collectively turning our heads. It's so easy for us to point fingers, and the first one usually gets pointed at the woman.

Go on and deny it, but the first thing that will enter most people's heads during the Garry's incident was that obviously the girl must be some kind of slut, or just stupid to

allow something like that to happen to her. That's right — like a girl is asked beforehand if she would like to be assaulted or not. Nobody even knows if this girl knows what happened to her. I'm willing to bet the farm that someone is thinking, while reading this: "She must have been asking for it."

I think the thorn that really stuck in my mind is the total lack of responsibility that establishments like "Garry's" take on for their patrons.

I talked to a legal councillor at Public Aid and asked about what a bar's responsibilities are exactly.

There are no hard and fast laws pertaining to how bars serve liquor to already intoxicated people, but new precedence are being set all the time through court cases. It has been established that bars have a "duty of care" to third parties — that is, a

duty to care for a patron who is determined to drive when the bar owners or servers know that this patron is in an intoxicated state. They are viewed as negligible when by common sense they know a customer may inflict harm on others, they have to cut them off. The problem is, nobody has contested whether possible harm or damage to the patron themselves is equally as much the bar's liability. Logic would dictate that it would.

Admittedly, legally this is a very grey situation. If we lived in the States where people are far more lawsuit-happy, any bar related to this kind of incident would be in litigation up to their mirrored-disco balls.

The fact remains that most bar owners around here probably don't give a damn when it comes to their patrons getting home safely or even from getting molested. I know for a fact that one downtown bar where if a girl goes in the boy's washroom (because she's really drunk and wants to skip the line-up or whatever) they kick her out. That's it — put her on the street for the paddywagon or God-knows-what to carry her off.

So where do we draw the line? Of course the individual assumes part of the responsibility to drink reasonably, but we all know that's a line that starts to shift once we begin to imbibe. Maybe if bars started giving less of a shit on how much money they made on their watered-down vodka and limes, and more about the state of their patrons, then stories like this wouldn't happen.

But then again, there's no profit in responsibility, is there?

p.s. Just as a sidenote. Let them know that women are more than just sperm receptacles? I wouldn't go to Garry's again — over my prone body.

Patti Waller