

OPINION...

PRO-CHOICE: A DEMOCRATIC RIGHT

by Arlene Glencross

I am pleased to see such interest in the abortion issue among students. Young people armed with informed opinion will surely move us forward toward a more educated and tolerant society, especially as it concerns this issue.

I would like to offer the following figures which should help illustrate the point that women are able to make responsible reproductive choices without laws to tell them what they can and cannot do as regards such an important personal issue.

It is interesting to note that 92% of abortions performed in North America are done during the first trimester - that is, within the first 12 weeks.

The contents of the uterus are, at that time, a small amount of red liquid - a collection of cells which have no ears with which to hear, no eyes with which to see and it feels no pain before, during or after the abortion.

The anti-choice imagery of a tiny body being ripped assunder is simply a fantasy. Any responsible and informed medical doctor knows that. An informed medical practitioner would also know of the rarity of abortions being performed in the third trimester. It is 0.4% of all abortions performed in North America and is almost always done because the life of the mother is in danger.

A law to protect the collection of cells in the early weeks of pregnancy is unnecessary as women, by-and-large, use abortion wisely and responsibly. Those who don't are in the minority and they will still find ways in which to procure an abortion. Women have always known of ways in which to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

With regard to adoption, most people on waiting lists to adopt children want normal, healthy, white infants. There are 400,000 North American children - mostly non-white, older or with special needs, waiting for homes. There are another two million children living in homes where they are abused - sexually, physically or emotionally, who are in need of a safe, healthy environment in which to grow.

I find the argument that we are undermining the population of Canada as a result of abortion particularly offensive, not to mention racist. There is a population explosion in the Third World. Efforts at restricting pregnancy through birth control have largely failed. As a planet, Earth is becoming so over-run with humans, it can barely sustain the population as it is. There are enough people on the planet to ensure the human race will not become extinct as a result of birth control or abortion. The white-faced, pink-cheeked variety might, if the argument holds, suffer.

I was asked a while back how long I had believed in abortion. I don't believe in abortion. I believe in choice. I have always believed in human rights and have worked for several years at promoting women's rights in particular.

I am not pro-abortion. In an ideal world contraception would never fail, there would be no rape or coercion and people would not be swept away in a moment of passion. However, since our world is not ideal and since women, particularly young women, as at a disadvantage in the game of sexual politics, we must have safeguards at the other end.

I am pro-sex education, pro-inexpensive and accessible contraception, pro-fostering young men with respect for a woman's right to say no, and, if all that fails, I am pro-a woman's choice as to whether or not she wants to bring her pregnancy to term.

I will not enter a philosophical argument on whether or not the fetus has a soul and, if so, at what point that soul enters the body. I don't presume to know. No-one knows. However, what I will fight to the death for every woman's right to examine her own beliefs and, based on that, to determine whether or not she will terminate a pregnancy or carry a fetus through to term. Since none of us have the answers to the deeper philosophical arguments, it must remain our right and our responsibility as individuals, to reach inside ourselves to answer those deeper questions. Isn't that what our democracy is about?

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