

# THE AMERICAN FEMINIST

 FEMINISTS FOR LIFE  
OF AMERICA



FOREVER *Priceless*<sup>SM</sup>

## FFL's First Wave Feminist History Course Quiz

*100 Years Ago*

What was life like for the women who would launch the suffrage movement?



## FFL's First Wave Feminist History Course Quiz

*Reaching the Voter:  
When Picketing Doesn't Cut It*

What was not a way that American suffragists got out their message to the wider public?



# Announcing FFL's First

FFL is making feminist history fun and factual, teaching you what you likely didn't know about our feminist foremothers and forefathers—of all backgrounds—while also highlighting our pro-life creds.

FFL has revealed an article and then a series of pop quizzes, mostly multiple choice along with a few short writing assignments, designed by our Editor and Director of Public Education (aka our Quizmaster Extraordinaire), Damian J. Geminder.

This is a great tool for homeschoolers, boarding schools, colleges and college preparatory schools, parochial schools, public schools—and just for fun for the rest of us!

Our course goes far beyond the minimum curriculum requirements for Common Core, Standards of Learning, the Board of Regents, or other state requirements.

Pro-life groups in high schools and on campus are strongly encouraged to share this NEW tool.

## FFL's First Wave Feminist History Course Quiz

*Nellie Bly's Interview  
with Susan B. Anthony*

What did bicycles, bloomers, and suffrage have to do with women's freedom?



## FFL's First Wave Feminist History Course Quiz

*Live the Legacy*

Although Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton did not live to see their cherished dream of women's suffrage nationwide, they were able to pass the torch to the next generation. Who led the cause to victory with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1920?



## FFL's First Wave Feminist History Course Quiz

### *Remembering Black Suffragists*

Which earlier social movement birthed the suffrage movement?



## FFL's First Wave Feminist History Course Quiz

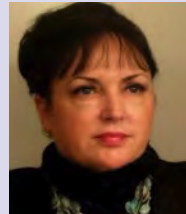
### *Men Have a Feminist Heritage*

Thanks to supportive male legislators, which state put the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment over the top, thus giving women the right to vote?



# Wave Feminist Course!

And thanks to our supporters, FFL is offering FREE kits for BOTH high school and collegiate pro-woman, pro-life groups. The kit materials are perfect for tabling or distribution for an assembly or club meeting while watching FFL President Serrin M. Foster's speech. Student leaders and high school advisers should send their requests to [info@feministsforlife.org](mailto:info@feministsforlife.org). One kit per school please.



## The Feminist Case Against Abortion

Part 1: First Wave Feminists

by: Serrin M. Foster

President of Feminists For Life of America



[www.youtube.com/FeministsForLife](http://www.youtube.com/FeministsForLife)

## FFL's First Wave Feminist History Course Quiz

### *Madame Restell: From Butcher's Maid to Butcher of Women*

How would 19<sup>th</sup> century mainstream press coverage of abortion best be described?



## FFL's First Wave Feminist History Course Quiz

### *From Punjab to London: The Suffragette Princess*

Who served as godmother to Sophia Duleep Singh?



# THE AMERICAN FEMINIST®

A publication of Feminists for Life of America

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Established in 1972, Feminists for Life of America is a nonsectarian, nonpartisan, grassroots organization that seeks real solutions to the challenges women face. Our efforts are shaped by the core feminist values of justice, nondiscrimination, and nonviolence. Feminists for Life of America continues the tradition of early American feminists such as Susan B. Anthony, who opposed abortion.

Feminists for Life of America recognizes that abortion is a reflection that our society has failed to meet the needs of women. We are dedicated to systematically eliminating the root causes that drive women to abortion—primarily lack of practical resources and support—through holistic, woman-centered solutions. Women deserve better than abortion.

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## FOREVER PRICELESS

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WHEN A MAN STEALS TO SATISFY HUNGER, WE MAY SAFELY CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG IN SOCIETY—SO WHEN A WOMAN DESTROYS THE LIFE OF HER UNBORN CHILD, IT IS AN EVIDENCE THAT EITHER BY EDUCATION OR CIRCUMSTANCES SHE HAS BEEN GREATLY WRONGED.

—Mattie Brinkerhoff,

*The Revolution*, September 2, 1869

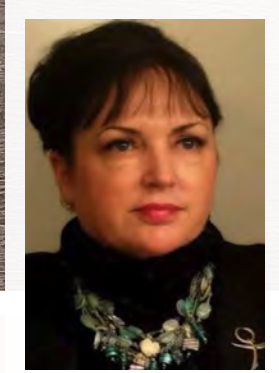
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FEMINISTS FOR LIFE  
OF AMERICA

INTRODUCTION

# HASTEN THE DAY...



You are important because YOU are YOU.

Not because of what designer you wear, what car you drive, what you have in the bank, whom you date, who your parents are, or where or how you were conceived. Your value is who YOU are, the opportunities you take to learn at school, at work, and in life—and what you can do to help others. And even if you have an identical twin, there is no one else just like you.

And there is no one else like your children. Protect them. You have the strength in you, and there are others to help.

Pass it forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Serrin".

**SERRIN M. FOSTER**  
PRESIDENT



# FOREVER PRICELESS

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JOYCE MCCAULEY-BENNER



Have you ever been asked the question, *Why?* I'm not talking about the little *Whys* but the big ones: *Why* am I here? *Why* this major? *Why* go into **this** career?

I was asked one time, *Tell me your Why.*

It's a question that made me pause.

When I was growing up, I had no notions or dreams to become an advocate against sex trafficking. I didn't know that I would manage a domestic violence shelter or a utility assistance program, or march during *Take Back The Night*, a nationwide event where survivors and allies march for violence against women awareness and share their stories. I didn't know what pro-life feminism was or that it would one day become my life's passion.

My *Why* became a combination of many life events, but one night stands out.

I was working two jobs to support myself during college. One of my jobs was at a restaurant. One night, seemingly out of the blue to me, the cook started to make sexual advances toward me. He would push me inside the cooler. No matter the number of times I broke free, it would happen again.

I didn't know how to cope with my fear, so I ignored it.

When he wasn't grabbing me, he was harassing me verbally—asking questions, eyeing my every move.

I shouldn't have been surprised when later that night, he raped me.

You see, the harassment turned to manipulation. The cook knew things about me, where I went to school, what I was struggling with, the neighborhood that I lived in.

I couldn't afford all of my bills. My boyfriend was also financially struggling. Somehow, the cook knew all of this. Throughout the night, as he was harassing me, he kept telling me my boyfriend should take better care of me. The cook kept saying he would do a better job.

I stared at him, incredulously, racking my brain to see if I had let any of this information slip at work. I was shy,

quiet, an introvert. I never shared personal details with workers—it just wasn't a part of my personality.

I HAD NEVER PAID ATTENTION TO HIM BEFORE. I BARELY KNEW HIM. How did he know me so well?

He tried to promise me things. Ways out of a bad spot.

I panicked. How could he possibly know all of this? Years later, my counselor would help me understand that this is what we mean when we talk about "grooming" someone. This is what we mean when we say rape is about power and manipulation. That it can be cold and calculated.

He offered me money for sexual favors, and when I said no, he raped me anyway.

My perpetrator wasn't a trafficker, but he was a drug dealer, with money. It is easy to be lured by someone with money when you have none.

Had I caved in at all that night for the money, who knows what would have happened to me? He wasn't really trafficking girls—he was trafficking drugs—but dealers can still have girls for themselves. I for sure would have ended up on drugs, and without intervention, I likely would have ended up in street-based prostitution, which is how many, many women get there, as I would learn later in my advocacy career.

Desperation can lure you to a dangerous cliff. That is why I have NEVER judged any girl or woman I have worked with. It was *almost* me.

My one horrific night ended. But for so many more women, one night becomes a thousand nights. One perpetrator becomes many more.

The panic that sets in when your privacy is shattered is palpable. Couple that manipulation with low self-esteem—it became easy for me to understand *how* the trafficking cycle works.

I could not judge a victim because I had been in her shoes.

It would be many years after that night when I would take the job as a case manager and advocate for women

involved in prostitution and trafficking.

Walking side by side with these women and girls opened my eyes to a world few have seen—and no one wants to.

**A CLOSE CALL**

I remember first seeing Jessica\* in a picture from the strip club. She was made up and beautiful, certainly a college-age woman. I was confused why we were going to her mother's house.

Jessica's mother was overwhelmed. She had four young children, and she said Jessica was her oldest. She lived on a minimum wage job and said her work kept her from keeping a good eye on Jessica.

She told us Jessica was 14. *In the eighth grade.*

Later, when Jessica got home, I met the shy girl who loved pink ribbons and bubble gum and carried a backpack like any girl in junior high.

I could not wrap my head around the fact that this was the same girl in the picture from the club.

*She had been lured to work there with money, jewelry, and attention.* And she knew her mother needed the help.

**Her mother had no idea.**

Many girls leave their families—even before they are mothers themselves—and find sex work to help out at home. Jessica knew this was her reality, and someone preyed on her, exploiting her and her mother's desperation.

Jessica and her friend found an ad in the local newspaper for dance classes that could lead to auditions. They came to dance and to learn. The exploiters were careful to make everything look legit—the classes continued for a few weeks. Jessica and her friend were complimented, given new clothes to try, and told they could get paid well.

Then one day, they told Jessica that she was special, and they were choosing her, and not her friend.

Jessica was devastated but torn. She wanted to try it out. This caused a rift in their friendship—a fact the exploiters

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were counting on. The stereotype of “cattiness” among girls is used often in luring victims and keeping them from building powerful female alliances. A victim is often taught that other girls are her enemy.

Jessica had no idea that more than just dancing would take place or that the owners purposefully made her look older (and therefore “legal”). Yet at the same time, they could reverse her look to offer a 14-year-old for secret, select customers.

The police were already involved in the case, and we had hoped that Jessica would get out, especially now that her mother knew.

*If only Jessica were the only one.*

In some ways, Jessica was lucky. Her situation was discovered before it escalated.

Most girls like Jessica start out in origin cities, which are places where traffickers find victims.

Origin cities, like Jessica's hometown, are often fraught with complex problems where racism, poverty, lack of opportunities, and key infrastructure intersect. Origin cities are usually near main interstates, waterways, railways, and bus lines—all easily accessible to get to the destination cities. There, customers are plentiful, and tourism and alcohol sales boom—*places where pockets never seem to empty.*

**A DEVIL'S TRAP**

When the story of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell broke, I was reminded of the many stories I had heard as a victims' advocate.

Before any victim came forward, the general public had not heard of Jeffrey Epstein, myself included, let alone Ghislaine Maxwell.

Oftentimes, **the worst criminals are the hidden ones.**

In the underground world of trafficking, the most insidious part the predator plays is that not only does he have all the power, but almost always, even *if* the victim reports the crime, no one will believe her.

It is a devil's trap.

The status quo in society tells you that a young teen from a broken home, who might have committed minor crimes to survive, is not credible, but a person with money, fame, or power is.

They will say she is only out to get his money, failing to realize that his money comes with far too many strings that she has long been trying to cut.

*This is the expertise of the predator—to know with almost impeccable precision whom to prey upon, and when to prey.*

A power structure must be present: The predator holds something the prey needs—sometimes money, oftentimes acceptance, love, and food/shelter.

“

In the underground world of trafficking, the most insidious part the predator plays is that not only does he have all the power, but almost always, even if the victim reports the crime, no one will believe her.

It is a devil's trap.

”



Traffickers find their victims through social networking, local neighborhoods, clubs/bars, school, and on the street. Homeless youth, runaways, and youth in foster care are at extreme risk because of prior abuse/neglect.

Drugs, alcohol, and domestic violence in the family are often risk factors. Whom can she go to? Bond with or trust? Many times, childhood sexual abuse also occurred, setting up potential victims with low self-esteem and unhealthy boundaries.

If all you have known are predators, how can you possibly recognize one? In your world, isn't everyone?

#### **LESSONS LEARNED**

But if the Epstein case has taught us anything, it also teaches that, statistics aside, no one is immune from becoming prey.

Perhaps one of the worst features of the predator is that he turns other prey into recruiters.

Again, Epstein's case illustrates this masterfully.

Even when one victim refused to comply with his sexual advances, he offered her money to simply bring another girl. These were young girls in high school; they could

simply tell their friends how to make extra money—or even invite their “enemies” as revenge.

The original victim who brought more girls to Epstein didn’t think of herself as a criminal, not really comprehending the anguish the new victims would endure, until she was an adult.

Now, she carries an enormous burden of guilt.

The point is, predators find prey everywhere. In my backyard—and yours.

That’s why we come together to learn. Pay attention to what you see, especially in key areas, and if your gut tells you something is off—*say something*. Call the Polaris Project National Human Trafficking hotline at 888-373-7888, or text “BeFree” to 233733. They can help you decide if what you are seeing should be reported and help you find whom to report to locally.

One of the key breakthroughs in Epstein’s case was that the stepmother of one of the victims called the police. She reported that her teenage daughter had \$300 cash on her and said she had received it from “an old, rich man.” Something didn’t sit right with the mother. *That hunch the stepmother had was not only right; it broke open a case that would go on to have many more victims.*

Once trapped, especially the longer the span of time, victims have a hard time leaving.

They have endured a tremendous amount of trauma and psychological manipulation, including seeing anyone outside of the “game” as the enemy.

Victims of trafficking often will blame themselves and feel like everything was their own choice, and they will fiercely defend their trafficker.

Most victims are lured by a physical or psychological need being fulfilled, and only at a much later, strategic time for the predator, will they realize it’s too late to get out.

In a cruel twist of fate, most of the time victims who have been trafficked have been abused before.

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Most traffickers do not want their victims to become pregnant. If they do become pregnant, many times the bottom bitch will help the victim to self-abort. This can be dangerous and possibly land the victim in the ER. Making medication abortions easy to get—especially without a doctor’s visit—increases this exponentially.

If they do go to a clinic for an abortion (or the ER), a false story or IDs will be prepared, and therefore training about red flags is critical—as is reporting any form of suspected abuse.

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Predators often blur the lines of morality. *The worst kind know how to manipulate victims to think it was all their choice—and their own mistake.*

Having been manipulated in this way, victims delay telling anyone about the crime, worrying they will only implicate themselves.

### **A DEADLY INTERSECTION**

This is why we educate. Trafficking does not happen in a vacuum. Hotel workers, urgent care and ER workers, delivery workers, and *abortion workers or crisis pregnancy workers*—all of these people could interface with a victim, and therefore have the power to initiate an escape.

### **When abortion and trafficking intersect, it can be deadly.**

In the trafficking ring, the trafficker often assigns roles to key leaders. The girl/woman who has been with him the longest and who has the most experience is often labeled the “bottom bitch.” She will teach any new recruits the ways of the ring, and sometimes, at the trafficker’s request, carry out punishments to girls who don’t meet quota or who do something wrong. However, if the bottom bitch goes astray, the worst punishments are saved for her.

The relationships set up within the ring are complex and manipulative. Both the trafficker and the bottom bitch are at times cruel and violent, but at other times, they are comforting, providing basic needs, including a sense of “family.” For victims who have birth family trauma in their past, this only compounds their psychological wounds.

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If they do go to a clinic for an abortion (or the ER), a false story or IDs will be prepared, and therefore training about red flags is critical—as is reporting any form of suspected abuse.

Hospital or clinic staff must separate girls from those accompanying them and ask questions. Ask about any visible scars and wounds and how the girl is surviving. Be aware that trafficking inherently leads to distrust and exploitative relationships. Therefore, it is critical to build relationships with victims that are non-transactional. (“You don’t need to do anything for me in order for me to help you or care about you.”)

In order to help, training must be trauma-informed. This means that professionals are exposed to how trauma impacts victims of violence. Also, all training should be survivor-informed; that is, local survivors should have a say in the training and education.

No woman wakes up and decides excitedly to get an abortion. Nor does any person decide to service multiple buyers in one night.

The *Why* is complex and forms over time, just like my story.

### **ILLUSIONS**

Trafficking doesn’t always look like what Hollywood portrays. It could be in a sleazy motel in a side of town you never drive to; or at a strip club where you swear all the dancers are over 18; or happening in a rich man’s home as an inappropriate, erotic massage.

One of the more insidious luring techniques is to use “modeling ads.”

Instagram has fueled the market for posting beautiful pictures. Perhaps you are a teenage girl and you work hard to make your Instagram perfect. Imagine the thrill if a “modeling agent” follows you and sends you a message inviting you to audition. They might even send someone to pick you up or promise to reimburse your travel. However, when you get there, it may be more than modeling the agents were seeking.

Our teens are navigating a difficult world. Teens can feel immortal, and something that sounds fun—like a trip with someone more powerful—could put them in a really risky situation. They are bombarded with images that highlight sexuality and sometimes even by middle school they are answering texts asking for nude pics. Prepare your daughter or son: Does she or he know this is child pornography?

The camera freezes a moment in time that lives on forever in a cyber world.

**How do we get out of this spectrum of abuse?** There isn’t one magical solution, and it will take a multifaceted approach:

- We have to address the drug epidemic that often causes broken homes.
- We have to end the oversexualization of our children’s, teens’, and women’s bodies.

• We MUST address why the DEMAND is so high—and realize that this may implicate those in power whom we seemingly want to trust but **equally** implicates loved ones we may actually know. This is a hard pill to swallow.

There are much deeper issues at play, but one thing is for certain—WOMEN and GIRLS DESERVE BETTER.

The mother of the women’s movement, pro-life feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, asked a question that continues to resonate today: “There must be a remedy even for such a crying evil as this. But where shall it be found, at least where begin, if not in the complete enfranchisement and elevation of woman?”

While ending trafficking and exploitation of women and children may seem like an impossible task, it can start with a simple, but profound, message: YOU ARE FOREVER PRICELESS. Imagine if every young girl and boy grew up surrounded by that message. Imagine a world where it is impossible to set a price tag on a human being and impossible to separate the body from the whole person.

The ongoing saga of the Epstein/Maxwell case should shock and appall us. However, it should also cause us to pause and reflect: How did we get here? *And are we willing to learn the signs—and take the long road out?* □

*\*Name changed to protect identity.*



**FFL Speaker Joyce McCauley-Benner** is available to deliver “**Victory Over Violence**,” her personal story of becoming pregnant after rape and not knowing who the father was, and “**Slaves Among Us: Sex Trafficking in the U.S.**” To have her present at your next event, contact us at [info@feministsforlife.org](mailto:info@feministsforlife.org).

## Watch Out for the 5 Types of Traffickers

**Guerrilla Style:** Uses threats, force, and coercion with victims. Victims are kidnapped or trapped quickly, and their lives or the lives of their loved ones are threatened. The victim is pressured into work quickly and physically forced into submission; she may be drugged. If the victim is rescued, it is easier to break her from the trafficker as the relationship was fear-based.

**Finesse Style:** Victims are psychologically manipulated, lured with promises of “love,” protection, or meeting basic needs. The trafficker builds a relationship over time, first offering resources and support, then starts to demand repayment in the form of “working” for him. Rescue is harder in these cases as the trafficker has established trust with the victim and taught the victim not to trust law enforcement or others in the “system” (social workers, medical professionals, legal aid, etc). Victims often have a prior history of abuse and/or little support system.

**The Wannabe:** Sometimes a single trafficker, not connected to a ring, will try to recruit one or two victims he tries to manage on his own. Often, drugs are involved, and the money made from sex trafficking fuels the drug selling or using.

**Gang-Related:** Powerful gangs can be involved in drug, weapons, and sex trafficking. These most often rule by force and violence. They threaten the lives of loved ones to ensure complicity.

**Buyer-Perpetrated Trafficking:** The buyer is directly exploiting a single victim by offering money, food, and/or shelter, in exchange for sexual exploitation.

Dear Mom and Dad,

Reading all of this must be overwhelming. I am sure so many questions and thoughts are racing through your mind. Has my teen been at risk? Have I missed a sign? Is there any good news in the world right now?!

Let me set your mind at ease with this: The mere fact you are concerned, and willing to learn, already is protecting your teen!!

While it is true that trafficking does happen anywhere, and has affected all kinds of families, we do know that the more involved an informed parent is, the more likely her or his teen is going to be safe.

The following are red flags, and while they should be addressed, they are not a guarantee that the teen is being trafficked:

- Lies about age or has a secret online profile
- Chronically runs away from home, or stays out all night
- Has significantly older boyfriend
- Has clothes, jewelry, or accessories inconsistent with socioeconomic status
- Unexplained scars, wounds, STIs, etc.
- Sudden change or disconnection from previous activities and friends

Sadly, the MOST at-risk teens are the ones in foster care, in the streets, and those without anyone to champion them and mentor them.

Teen girls who have support systems (especially with strong, female mentors), who are encouraged to develop their talents and dreams, and who are aware of red flags are most equipped to protect themselves.

The information presented here is meant to empower them and you. It is also meant to educate, so that we do not demonize those families who are struggling. This is a complex world, with many issues intersecting, and there is no one overnight fix.

It may seem like we have a long way to go, but education and training have increased tenfold over the past decade alone. We are shining a light in the dark underworld, and that is showing us the way out.

Tell your teen she is Forever Priceless. Remember that you are, too. Pass it along: the knowledge and the message.

Because our teens—and women—deserve better,





# UNDERAGE VICTIMS IN AMERICA: NO MINOR ISSUE

DAMIAN J. GEMINDER, EDITOR

On July 7, 2020, *People* magazine reported that the previous day, Mary Kay Letourneau had succumbed to colon cancer:

*“Mary Kay Letourneau, the Washington middle-school teacher who raped 12-year-old student Vili Fualaau and later married him, has died of stage 4 cancer, PEOPLE confirms. She was 58. ... Letourneau was a sixth-grade teacher when she began the illegal relationship with Fualaau, who was then just 12 years old. Ultimately, she was sentenced to more than seven years in prison for child rape. She twice became pregnant with Fualaau’s children before he was 15, despite court orders aimed at keeping them apart.”*

Other than the matter-of-fact quoting of the Letourneau and Fualaau families’ mourning the death, it was a largely unsympathetic piece and drove home the reality that Mary Kay Letourneau repeatedly raped a minor.

Except that is not how *People* reported it 22 years earlier.

No, the cover story on that same magazine on March 30, 1998, featured Letourneau holding the first of two children

she would conceive with her student. It read: “The Teacher and the 6th Grader: Their Bizarre Story of Obsessive Love.” And “Pregnant again after trysting with her former pupil, Mary Kay Letourneau, 36, is back in prison—and still defiant.” The picture was captioned, “Letourneau with the couple’s baby Audrey, born May 1997.”

Yes, *People* referred to a 36-year-old woman and a teenage boy as a “couple.”

Over and over again, as Ej Dickson meticulously reported in *Rolling Stone* two days after Letourneau’s death, the tabloid media reported the sexual abuse in sensationalistic or even glowing terms. Those same outlets could report disapprovingly after the fact, but they could not erase their shameless, enabling coverage two decades prior.

As with all things sex, the question then became about, well, sex. What if the roles were reversed? Would a 30-something *male* teacher impregnating a *female* junior high schooler get such a positive shake in the media? It’s doubtful.

Even today, when the media correctly note the outrageous double standard, the coverage is typically salacious. Case in point: In October 2020, when news reports broke that 33-year-old flight attendant Melissa Nosti of Sydney, Australia, was sentenced to 18 months in jail for having sex with a 15-year-old boy at a school where she worked—only to be freed on bail after just *one week*—it was all but impossible to find media coverage that did not feature pictures of Nosti in suggestive or otherwise compromising poses.

Indeed, it was *South Park*, of all shows, that picked up on the disturbing sexual double standard accepted not merely by the media, but by society at large.

In the vulgarly but accurately titled episode, “Miss Teacher Bangs a Boy,” one of the main characters, Kyle, discovers that his younger brother, Ike, is having a sexual relationship with his kindergarten teacher. Kyle runs to the police to report the abuse under the pseudonym “Brad,” and the scene plays out:

**Police Sergeant:** You did the right thing telling the police, Brad. Now, who is the teacher? What’s his name?

**Kyle:** Well, it isn’t a guy teacher. It’s a woman.

**Officer No. 1:** A *woman*?

**Kyle:** Yeah. She’s having sex with a boy.

**Sergeant’s Partner:** Oh. But, but she’s ugly, right?

**Kyle:** Well, no, not really. It’s the kindergarten teacher, Miss Stevenson.

**Police Sergeant:** The blonde?

**Kyle:** Yeah.

**Officer No. 1:** Some young boy’s having sex with Miss Stevenson?

**Kyle:** Yes.

**Officer No. 1:** Nice.

**Police Sergeant:** Nice.

**Kyle:** What?! No, you don’t understand!

**Officer No. 1:** Are you sure they’ve had sex?

**Kyle:** Yeah!

**Officer No. 2:** Has she performed [a sex act] on him?

**Kyle:** I think so.

**Officer No. 2:** Nice.

**Officer No. 1:** Nicccce!

**Officer No. 2:** Niccccccce.

**Police Sergeant:** So, wait, what’s the crime?

**Officer No. 1:** The crime is she wasn’t doin’ it with me!

*(Everybody but Kyle laughs.)*

**Kyle:** Hey! He’s totally underage! She’s taking advantage of him!

**Police Sergeant:** You’re right! We’re sorry. This *is* serious. We need to track this student down and... give him his “Luckiest Boy in America” medal right away.

*(Everybody but Kyle laughs again, and Kyle runs out of the room screaming furiously.)*

Worth noting: This episode first aired October 18, 2006, 14 years before Letourneau’s death, and about a decade before the #MeToo movement highlighted seemingly countless cases of sexual abuse and harassment of women, men, girls, and boys.

**Live the Legacy. Leave a Legacy.**

Please consider leaving a legacy by including Feminists for Life of America as a beneficiary of your estate so that our vital work may continue for the next generation. Please let us know so that we may properly acknowledge your gift. **Thank you!**

**What a Difference a State Makes**

We are still peeling back the layers of the foul-smelling onion that is the Jeffrey Epstein/Ghislaine Maxwell scandal, and the Harvey Weinstein and Ron Jeremy court cases continue to bear rotten fruit. But still underreported is how the laws governing minors having sex, undergoing abortions, and even marrying intersect in a dangerous way that can lead to covering up multiple abuses.

Although the general marriage age is set at 18 or higher in all 50 states, as of September 2020, the minimum statutory age (that is, the age when a minor might be able to marry once all legal hurdles are overcome) is only 18 in four states: Delaware, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, as well as American Samoa.

It is 17 in 10 states: Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Tennessee.

It is 16 in 21 states: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin, as well as the District of Columbia and Guam. The Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico both set it at 16 for females but 18 for males.

It is 15 in three states: Hawaii, Kansas, and Maryland.

And in two states, the minimum age is just 14: Alaska and North Carolina. The U.S. Virgin Islands set it at 14 for females but 16 for males.

In addition, 10 states have no minimum at all: California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Washington, West Virginia,

and Wyoming. Circumstances for minors marrying typically require parental consent and a court hearing, but it is worth noting that **in Massachusetts, common law dictates a boy as young as 14 and a girl as young as twelve could theoretically marry.** In 2017, Human Rights Watch noted that in some parts of the United States, the standard for child marriage was less strict than that of Afghanistan.

Although children of both sexes are legally married, 87% of minors married between 2000 and 2015 were girls, according to a *Frontline* investigation. The investigation covered 41 states, plus three major counties; at least 207,459 minors were married in those jurisdictions. Most of them were 16 or 17 years old, but among the cases surveyed, 985 children were 14; 51 were 13; and six were just 12 years old. The advocacy group Unchained at Last estimates that **across the entire United States, 297,033 children were married between 2000 and 2018—some as young as 10 years old.** That number includes 232,474 based on actual data, plus 64,559 based on estimates.

North Carolina, in particular, with its 14-year-old minimum age, is reportedly becoming a common destination for adults to take children when their marriages would be illegal in their home states. The International Center for Research on Women found that of the 8,781 minors listed on state marriage license applications between 2000 and 2015, 93% were marrying an adult, as opposed to another minor.

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“ North Carolina, in particular, with its 14-year-old minimum age, is reportedly becoming a common destination for adults to take children when their marriages would be illegal in their home states.

As reported in *Ms.* magazine, “ICRW estimates 9,127 marriage license applications involving minors were submitted in North Carolina between 2000 and 2019. In completed marriages involving a child under age 15, 30 percent had partners that were four or five years older than them—where non-marital sex between the two would be a Class-C felony.” The legal bounds of marriage thus provide a loophole where statutory rape laws do not apply. Perhaps the most egregious case was a marriage between a 57-year-old and a 17-year-old, a four decade difference. And it was completely legal.

The number of states and territories forbidding child marriage has inched up in recent years, but not without opposition. Indeed, **California, one of the aforementioned 10 states with no statutory marriage minimum, attempted to criminalize child marriage in 2017 but was blocked by legislators, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Planned Parenthood, the largest provider of abortions in the United States.**

“

Perhaps the most egregious case was a marriage between a 57-year-old and a 17-year-old, a four decade difference. And it was completely legal.

”

### Who Will Protect Teens from Abortion?

California has set an absolute minimum age of sexual consent at 18, yet it offers no safeguards for parental consent if a minor seeks an abortion—or is coerced into one. The Golden State is also one of a handful of states that does not voluntarily report its abortion statistics to the Centers for Disease Control. As a result, the CDC’s annual abortion estimates are more than 200,000 lower than those of the Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood’s former research arm, whose figures are generally respected on both sides of the abortion divide.

Predictably, Planned Parenthood and other abortion clinics are wary of being transparent about minors consenting to abortion, since it cuts into their business. In 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the state of Louisiana in *June Medical Services, LLC v. Russo*. Louisiana had attempted to impose numerous medical regulations on abortion clinics, but the high court felt the state imposed an undue burden on the ability of a woman—or girl—to receive an abortion. Dozens of girls under the age of 17, the minimum age of sexual consent in Louisiana, received abortions, but state clinics did not note this and thus did not report possible statutory rape charges. The Louisiana attorney general’s office said the state’s abortion clinics have a disturbing pattern of failing to report rapes and that a survey it conducted showed that between 2013 and 2018, at least 66 abortions were performed on girls 11, 12, or 13 years old. Using Guttmacher’s own reporting, **about 30,000 minors receive abortions in the United States nationwide.** (This does not include teens using fake IDs or abortions induced illegally by traffickers.)

In light of these grim statistics, we must ask: Why? Why are children so often bearing the brunt of adults’ neglect, or worse, outright malice? Marriage, sex, and childbearing are adult responsibilities best left for actual adults, not teens and preteens. It is incumbent upon parents and other guardians to instill responsibility in our children before they reach maturity to make such important decisions, but where the law applies, it should reflect today’s standards of maturity and adulthood—and protect the most vulnerable accordingly. □



**FFL Editor Damian J. Geminder** is available to deliver “**Why Men Should be Feminists for Life!**” To have him present at your next event, contact us at [info@feministsforlife.org](mailto:info@feministsforlife.org).



# CARE FOR HER

## An Interview with Rep. Jeff Fortenberry

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DAMIAN J. GEMINDER, EDITOR

“Written by the early feminist author Mattie Brinkerhoff in 1869, the following words have always haunted me: ‘When a man steals to satisfy hunger, we may safely conclude that there is something wrong in society—so when a woman destroys the life of her unborn child, it is an evidence that either by education or circumstances she has been greatly wronged,’” writes Rep. Jeff Fortenberry in the February 1 edition of his weekly “Fort Report.”

“Brinkerhoff goes on to ask: ‘But the question now seems to be, how shall we prevent this destruction of life and health?’ Soon, I will be introducing legislation entitled *Care for Her*. It lets a woman know that we, as a community of care, will be there through the miraculous journey of giving life. The bill would build on existing communities of support to ensure that a pregnant woman knows what is available to her, and fill in gaps with education, job training, and childcare through local and state capacities.

“In the almost 50 years since *Roe v. Wade*, women in America have chosen to have over 62 million abortions. Abortion remains as high as 50% of pregnancies in some communities. I believe that women deserve better.”

Rep. Fortenberry was generous enough to sit down with *The American Feminist* for an exclusive interview:

### **When you first ran for Congress, what informed your opinion on abortion?**

To be frank, I was so compelled by the message of Feminists for Life that I borrowed a lot of their thinking and language. Thank you, Feminists for Life!

### **What has inspired your bill, *Care for Her*?**

A cornerstone principle of civilization is the protection of human dignity. None of the other values we hold dear makes any sense unless we fix our gaze on that ultimate value. We need to ask ourselves: Are we big enough and generous enough to assure that a woman and her unborn child are supported? A new paradigm would invite us to see the fear of an unexpected pregnancy as a chance for the entire community to embrace the woman and child on the journey of life—when her fear becomes our fear, her

obligation as our obligation, her pregnancy as our chance. I call this initiative *Care for Her*. It lets a woman know that we, as a community of care, will be there for her health, economic well-being, and social support.

In a recent *Fort Report*, I shared my idea of *Care for Her*. I received many letters in response. Among them, one woman wrote: "I had an abortion when I was young, and maybe if I had this around me, I would have made a different decision." That's why I am doing this.

**How much has being a husband and father of five daughters influenced your work to end abortion—and your proposed solutions?**

I don't have a good answer. Celeste and I lost two other children to miscarriage. On a scientific level, everything present for life is present at conception. Nothing is added later. On a human level, we love our children.

**Do you expect support across the political and ideological divide for your bill?**

I hope so. Clearly, there is common interest in validating a woman's desire to carry her baby, give life, and raise a healthy child. I hope this transcends partisan divides.

**What do you want Feminists for Life supporters to do to activate more members of Congress to support your bill?**

Call your representatives. Write to them. Invite them to be a part of a community of care that wraps a woman with support through her journey of giving life. By pursuing these policy proposals, maybe we can shift our

national cultural understanding from a binary choice between radical autonomy and relational capacity. Motherhood can be seen as a gift of self for the good of all society.



*Congressman Jeff Fortenberry with Elizabeth, one of his five daughters, who was recently married.*

**“Care for Her is FFL’s priority legislation to support,” said FFL President Serrin M. Foster. “We urge all members of Congress, no matter their party or stance on abortion, to co-sponsor and vote for this bill, and we ask all Feminists for Life to contact their representatives now. Call the United States Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121, or find her or him online at [www.house.gov/representatives](http://www.house.gov/representatives) to send an email.”** □

*Congressman Fortenberry (NE-01) is the Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA). He can be reached through his website, [fortenberry.house.gov](http://fortenberry.house.gov). Follow @JeffFortenberry on Twitter.*

**Editor’s Note:** *Feminists for Life is nonpartisan and nonsectarian and works with people of all parties—and no party—who share in our mission of resources and support.*

# Advocacy in Action

- On October 10, 2020, Savanna's Act—which FFL originally endorsed on December 19, 2018—was signed into law, after passing Congress unanimously. It will help combat the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women by bolstering the government's response to such cases through improving data collection; enabling information sharing; and facilitating coordination among federal, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies to better address this crisis.



Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, a 22-year-old member of the Spirit Lake tribe, was eight months pregnant when she was murdered in 2017 in Fargo, North Dakota. The baby survived and is being raised by the father.

- December 12, 2020: FFL called for Discover to follow American Express and Visa's example and cease its card services on Pornhub, following reports of sexual assault and sex trafficking videos, including of minors, on the site. Thanks to our activists, we succeeded! We also supported Nebraska Sen. Ben Sasse's call for the Department of Justice to investigate the Canadian-based site.



- December 29, 2020: Following our VICTORY on behalf of women and children with the announcement that Discover would indeed remove its services from Pornhub, FFL endorsed Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley's bipartisan bill, which would let sex trafficking and revenge porn victims sue websites like Pornhub. A groundbreaking 2014 Beazley Institute study of trafficking victims found that, on average, there were two abortions for every teen and woman trafficked. "No credit company should ever allow its card to be a part of trafficking and the abuse of women, teens, and children," remarked FFL President Serrin M. Foster. **"When someone buys porn, that person too exploits the most vulnerable and becomes part of trafficking, whether that person admits to it or not. We are talking about a spectrum of violence."**

FFL has been advocating for FGM victims since our 2002 issue of *The American Feminist*, "Crimes Against Women Around the World" (see Page 14, "In the Name of Honor").



- January 5, 2021: After Congress unanimously passed the STOP Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Act of 2020, it was signed into law. This legislation clarifies the commercial nature of FGM so that Congress has authority to ban this horrific practice under the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution. It also provides for a strong 10-year penalty for those who carry out this heinous procedure. It further mandates that FGM rates and risks must be monitored and reported on by federal agencies to increase awareness and encourage prevention.





**YOUR LIFE: IT'S A  
QUESTION OF WORTH**

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CYNTHIA J. WOOD, J.D.

**Girls  
Deserve  
Better™**

**than disrespect.**

**Girls  
Deserve  
Better™**

**than abuse.**

**Girls  
Deserve  
Better™**

**than violence.**

Picture a mother eagle looking on as the first of her two baby eaglets begins to hatch. Online videos allow us to view this amazing event by use of specialized cameras placed so as not to disturb or harass the adult eagles, their fledglings, their eggs, or even the empty nest. There are laws protecting them. Even though the eagle, our beautiful national bird, has been removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, it still enjoys protected status under both the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Violations of these laws could result in fines up to \$250,000 and two years in prison for just disturbing the nest. *Why? It's a question of worth.* Our nation values the eagle and as long as it does, the government will protect the eagle from harm. Should circumstances change and our nation no longer sees its worth, it is open season on this bird.

It is a good thing that we do not let the government or anyone else determine our worth... or do we?

What is your worth and who determines it?

Think for a moment of the outside forces in your life that can affect how you feel about yourself. Parents and family members exert a big influence early on—and maybe throughout your whole life. And then there are your friends and people on social media who can build you up, but who can also tear you down, but only with your continued permission. Teachers and employers whose job it is to evaluate performance may be quick to offer negative feedback about supposed shortcomings. And then there's the bathroom scale or the mirror that reveals hard truths. Some will argue that you alone should determine your worth which we call "self-worth." There is an assumption that a focus on your own feeling of worth could discount negative outside forces. If only it could be that simple.

Unfortunately for many, one's "self-worth" is only a reflection of how others see them, and the same outside forces come into play: parents, family, friends, social media, employers, teachers, etc. "Self-worth" is a flawed term even in how it is defined by Merriam-Webster:

Self-worth is a feeling that you are a good person who deserves to be treated with respect.

The first problem is the word “feeling” because feelings are flighty things, guided by emotion and that can change on a dime. **Your worth is not relative to how you feel—it is a constant. Feelings are not.** Consider how quickly your feelings about yourself can change after receiving negative feedback on a test, a job, or a shared post on social media. Feeling good about yourself in the morning can change the second you learn you did not make the team or get the role in a play. And imagine learning that someone with whom you are in a serious relationship is seeing someone behind your back. The resulting feeling of rejection can throw you into a depression, or worse.

Additionally, one’s self-worth can be inconsistent and even erratic if it relies on the input of others or on one’s own broken self-image. **Those who let others determine their worth or rely on a damaged self-image could leave themselves vulnerable with constant negative self-talk.** “You’re no good. You’re a fat loser. You’re alone, insignificant, unlovable. You’re stupid and useless. You’re WORTHLESS.”

Another problem with self-worth as defined above is that it follows that how you *feel* about yourself should determine whether others should respect or disrespect you. So, if you *feel* that you are a good person, then you deserve to be treated with respect, which is a good thing. But what if you *feel* that you are *not* a good person? Does that mean you do not deserve to be treated with respect? Unfortunately, that is exactly what happens and is just plain wrong. It is not only dangerous to yourself, but **by allowing someone else to disrespect you, you are saying it is perfectly okay for people to disrespect those who have low self-worth.** In fact, it can allow you to disrespect others by judging those you have deemed lacking in worth.

**Consider for a moment a young, unmarried, pregnant student who feels she is unable or incompetent to**

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Education is the answer  
to poverty.

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I will choose someone  
worthy of me.

**handle the pregnancy.** Having no confidence in her own abilities, afraid of being judged by others, feeling she has no choice, she seeks to have an abortion. You may ask how she could do that to her innocent unborn child, but she does not understand the inherent worth that child possesses, since she does not even see her own worth. It is that feeling of unworthiness she transfers to her own child and thus feels able to abort.

**Oftentimes, a woman who lacks self-worth can easily be manipulated—by a boyfriend, a relative, or even her own parents—**into thinking that she would be a terrible mother, or that she would fail to complete school or get a job, if she stays pregnant. (Raising the child is not the issue because open, closed, and semi-open adoption are always options.) So, in essence, what these outside voices (and possibly even her own) are saying to her is: *“You are a loser to begin with, and being pregnant for nine months would only show the whole world what a loser you are.”* **We need to stop such destructive, negative, and false self-talk.**

**So, if negative self-talk and low self-worth are the problems, what is the positive solution?**

You first need to know: If you ask the wrong question, you are very likely to get the wrong answer. So don't ask: *What is my self-worth?* Rather, ask: **What is my worth, and who should determine it?**

Searching for this answer, there are several different paths to take. One can be found in the Preamble to our Declaration of Independence, words that embody the intrinsic worth of every human person. With that intrinsic worth come certain inalienable rights. Our government was established with the main purpose to protect those rights. The words in the Preamble speak volumes of the worth, dignity, and equality of every human person:

We hold these TRUTHS to be **self-evident** (we don't have to prove anything—it is SELF-revealing),  
that we are **ALL created equal** (not born, not naturalized, but created, in the womb, equal),  
and **endowed by our Creator** (not a royal or the federal government),

with certain **unalienable rights**—(they are attached to the essence of our being)—the **Right to Liberty** (our basic freedom to think and express ourselves),

the **Right to the Pursuit of Happiness** (pursuit of all that is good),

and the **Right to Life** (from that moment of your creation or conception until natural death).

**Knowing that your worth is inherent to you at the point of your conception and throughout your entire life—and that you have an intrinsic value—is the ultimate in empowerment.**

**No one can take that fact away from you without your permission.**

Whether you are a rocket scientist or an elementary school student, you have inherent worth and dignity.

Whether you are an Olympic swimmer or a paraplegic, you have inherent worth and dignity.

Whether you are en route to enter this world or ready to make the grand exit, you have inherent worth and dignity.

Once you believe and thoroughly embrace this Truth, you will not allow others to disrespect you or anyone else.

Once you believe and thoroughly embrace this Truth, you will hold and protect your life from any abuse because you know your worth does not have a price. It is never for sale.

Once you believe and thoroughly embrace this Truth, you will be empowered by the fact you are forever priceless.

Now share this Truth with others. ☐



**FFL Speaker Cynthia J. Wood, J.D.** is available to deliver her training course, **“Sexual Harassment: A Pro-Life Issue and a Question of Worth.”** To have her present at your next event, contact us at [info@feministsforlife.org](mailto:info@feministsforlife.org).

Dear Forever Priceless One,

I hope this message of “You are FOREVER Priceless” touches you deeply. I hope that you can hear it, live it, and spread it. The world you have to navigate in is filled with mixed messages and complex events.

You have inherent worth and dignity. Your body is yours, and it is not meant for the pleasure or taking. Your body cannot have a price tag, because YOU are far too priceless.

There is nothing you can do to change this—no matter what you have been through or the choices you have made, you will always be Forever Priceless.

Own this knowledge. Be aware of those who want to use you or your body for their own satisfaction and gain.

Stay focused on your dreams and goals. You do not have to get enough “likes” on social media to be beautiful—you already are. Open up to a trusted family member or mentor. If you need help, go to community-based resources, hotlines, or shelters. Do not trust strangers to have your best interest in mind. Stay vigilant online:

- Be aware of those asking for pictures of your body, and if you are under 18, be aware that sending them could be a form of child pornography. Once in the cyberworld, it is forever in the cyberworld.
- Watch out for online modeling, dance, or film company ads—always research the company and get a trusted adult to help you.
- Be cautious of significantly older men wanting to date you or give you gifts.
- Trust your gut: If something feels “off,” get out right away.
- If a friend wants to take you to a party where you will not know anyone else, tell an adult. Have an exit strategy.

There is power in recognizing your self-worth. You deserve safety, protection, and healthy boundaries.

Because you are forever priceless,



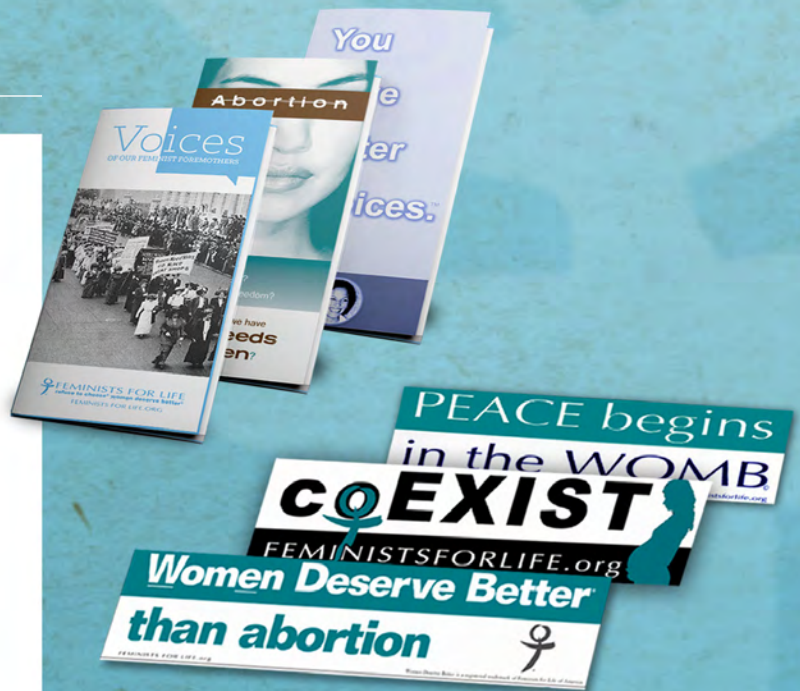
**Congratulations to Georgetown University, who hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Pregnancy Resource Forum<sup>SM</sup> in the fall of 2020, for the first time virtually. FFL Speaker Joyce McCauley-Benner shared her personal story of “Victory Over Violence.”**

**FFL President Serrin M. Foster remarked, “Children born through these efforts here, and replicated across the country, mean that they are now college age—or have even graduated!”**

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