

THE AMERICAN FEMINIST[®]

Feminists for Life of America



METAMORPHOSIS

Women who have abortions cite lack of resources and support as the determining factor.

**Women
Deserve
Better*
than Abortion**

means
women deserve
holistic, woman-
centered solutions.

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Spring 2013

THE AMERICAN FEMINIST®

A publication of Feminists for Life of America

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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.

Feminists for Life of America is a 501(c)3 organization. All donations are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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Feminists for Life welcomes all people, regardless of political or religious affiliation. Left, right, independent, or politically homeless, those who walk in the shoes of early American feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton—who opposed abortion and worked for “the complete elevation and enfranchisement of women”—are invited to call Feminists for Life home. The opinions expressed in this issue are those of the authors, and are not necessarily those of the Board, staff, or editor.

met·a·mor·pho·sis [met-uh-mawr-fuh-sis] n.:

A profound change in form from one stage to the next in the life history of an organism.

FEMINISTS FOR LIFE OF AMERICA



Contents

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 4 | Individual Evolutions Can Start Peaceful Revolutions
<i>Serrin M. Foster</i> | 16 | Jewels Green |
| 6 | What can you do to invite more people to join our movement? | 18 | Kristen Hatten |
| 7 | Feminists for Life Remembers Mary Krane Derr
<i>Serrin M. Foster</i> | 20 | Maria Gallagher |
| 8 | Rose Marie Jackson | 22 | Aimee Murphy |
| 10 | Ellen Judith Reich | 24 | Beatrice Fedor |
| 12 | Sally A. Winn | 26 | Tricia Green |
| 14 | Araminta Barlow | 28 | Sharon Long |
| 15 | Marybeth T. Hagan | 30 | Weddington's Betrayal of Women
<i>Serrin M. Foster</i> |
| | | 32 | Voices of Women Who Mourn
<i>Carla Stream</i> |

“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

Individual evolutions

Dear Serrin,

In 2006 I attended a talk you gave on my campus in Delaware entitled “The Feminist Case *Against* Abortion.” At the time I found the title absurd and planned to snicker with my friends in the back row and argue with you during the Q&A.

I was militantly pro-choice & I’ve come to realize that my anger was most likely rooted in my hurt, suffering and denial. I’ve had a conversion on this issue; I have experienced a lot of healing in my life.

I want you to know what an important seed you planted in my thought the day you spoke at my campus. Your points disturbed me (in a good way) and your loving tone/spirit touched me deeply.

I vividly remember you traversing the auditorium before your talk, shaking each person’s hand and thanking each of us for coming to hear you.

I felt such shame in that moment because I saw such a stark contrast between your kind sincerity and my own snide, unkind attitude.

Now I donate to our pregnancy care center and am exploring the possibility of facilitating a shelter. Thank you so much, Serrin.

Dear Feminists for Life,

What is it about FFL that has helped so many people become pro-life feminists when they were one or neither?

Years ago on a trip to Texas I was greeted by a young woman carrying a single Joan of Arc rose. (You may know that Alice Paul—author of the Equal Rights Amendment and the woman who called abortion the “ultimate exploitation of women”—dressed another suffragist named Inez Milholland Boissevain as Joan of Arc to lead the suffrage parade in Washington, D.C.)

This young woman, who had volunteered to pick me up for my speech, told me that years earlier she was also “militantly pro-choice.” She saw a Feminists for Life ad in Mother Jones magazine that said the early feminists were pro-life. She remembered how *angry* she was. But when the magazine editors published an apology to their readers, accusing FFL of lying, she knew in her heart they were lying.

The young woman searched for us for years. Social media wasn’t around then, but she finally found our volunteers at a table and burst into tears saying, “I’m home.”

Then there are the stories of pro-lifers who tell us years later that they became major leaders in the

can start peaceful revolutions.

movement after hearing my speech in the 1990s. One other speaker at the Room at the Inn groundbreaking ceremony told FFL Board Chair Pat O’Kane and me about his change of heart years earlier when he heard FFL’s message and solutions at the very same event that I was driven to by the young woman with the rose!

There are Members of Congress (yes, plural) who have said they heard our message back in college and it changed the way they see abortion—meaning their understanding about abortion and the resources women need. (One of them was given a gift subscription to *The American Feminist* by his mother!)

There is another story of a Hispanic celebrity who for years tried to convince her neighbor that being pro-woman meant being pro-life. So another pro-life women’s organization asked me to meet with this VIP. It was the day after my father died, but I knew he’d want me to meet her. I told her that when she talked to her neighbor to **remember that women deserve better, and invite her to look at our website.**

The neighbor, a life-long pro-choice activist, became pro-life in an hour.

After another event, a woman asked if we ever changed anyone’s mind. I said yes, and most often those who come to protest Feminists for Life leave saying they agree with 95% of what FFL says.

The woman then revealed that she told her friends earlier in the day that she planned to go to medical school to become an abortion provider, but after hearing my lecture she would never perform an abortion, nor refer anyone to a clinic. Instead, this former clinic escort said she wanted to work with us for on-campus resources. I asked her to write it down. And she did.

Most recently a man who was blind took the mic after my lecture to publically thank Feminists for Life for standing up for him and his “brothers” in wheel chairs, who are deaf or blind, and especially those with Down syndrome—who are overwhelmingly aborted. “I have a right to be here” he told the crowd. Privately he told me after the crowd left that he was a pro-choice atheist until he heard me present FFL’s philosophy at a prior event in Chicago.

That’s the power of the truth, of listening to heartbreak, of believing in the strength and dignity of women and the potential in every human life—and reacting in love, with meaningful solutions—*that’s the power of Feminists for Life.*

Other FFL speakers have their own stories of reaching people with our pro-woman, pro-life message and solutions, including our Vice President Sally Winn and editor Jewels Green who share their own conversion stories within these pages.

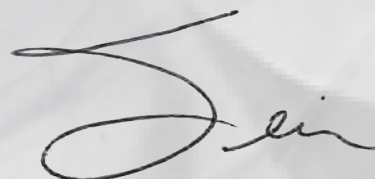
We need to help most feminists understand that women deserve better than abortion, and help many pro-lifers understand that “women deserve better” means more than just saying “no” to abortion. It means practical resources and holistic support.

Individual evolutions can start peaceful revolutions.

Our message, our solutions, and the feminist history that we have revealed—thanks to supporters like you—are why we have impressive results *and such a rich opportunity before us to reach people that no one else has—or could.*

Let the next transformation start because of you.

Because women deserve better,



Serrin M. Foster
President





What can you do to invite more people to join our movement?

- Know your rich pro-life feminist history and the basic tenets of feminism—nondiscrimination, nonviolence, and justice for all—so that you can help people reconsider abortion from a feminist point of view, and reconsider feminism from a pro-life perspective.
- Don't assume you know someone's opinion about pro-life issues and/or feminism. It's safer to assume that they or someone they know have had or participated in an abortion.
- Invite conversation by letting people know that you are a Feminist for Life. "Like" us on Facebook. Proudly display your Feminists for Life bumper sticker.
- Don't belittle people—even when you are right! Being smug doesn't change anyone's mind. And if we don't change hearts and minds, we can't change the circumstances that drive women to abortion.
- Remember that most people want to help others. Start with areas of agreement.
- Share beautiful images of pregnant women and intact unborn children.
- Learn and quote from FFL's Pro-Woman Answers to Pro-Choice Questions.SM
- Recognize the difference between someone who is hurting and someone who is just arguing for the sake of argument.
- Don't engage in unproductive arguments, especially online. Don't feed the trolls.
- Remember the pain, the fear, the shame that others bear—even if they come to a different conclusion—and acknowledge this if they share with you.
- Keep confidences.
- Walk your talk by helping those at highest risk of abortion—the poor, college-age and working women, victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, mothers (yes, mothers) and women who have had abortions already—as well as birthmothers.
- Help those who need help. Direct people to "Raising Kids on a Shoestring" at www.feministsforlife.org.
- Keep your membership or financial support current so that FFL can reach more people with the best materials, original research, and pro-woman, pro-life solutions.
- Give a gift membership.
- Remember, women deserve better than abortion.

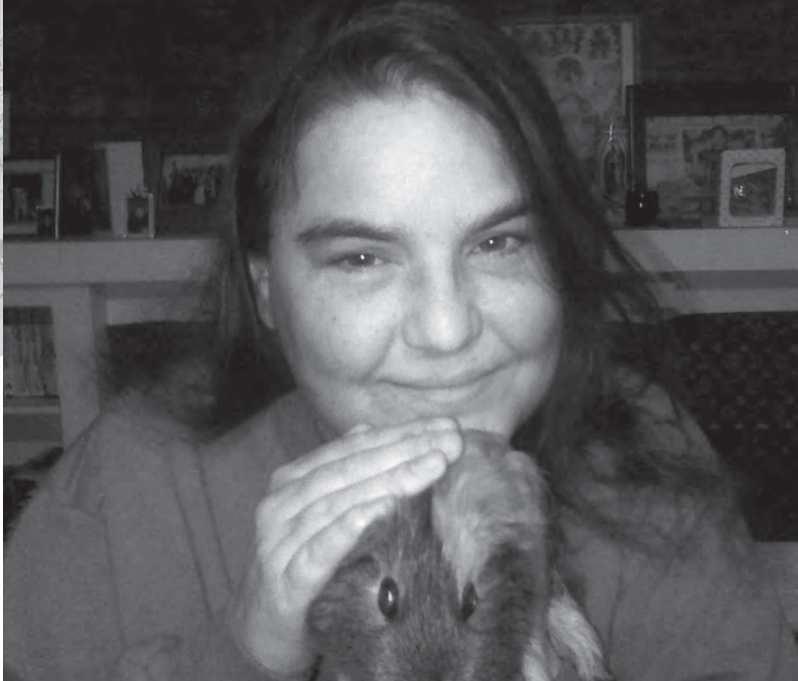


FFL REMEMBERS

Pro-Life Feminist Historian

Mary Krane Derr

Serrin M. Foster
President

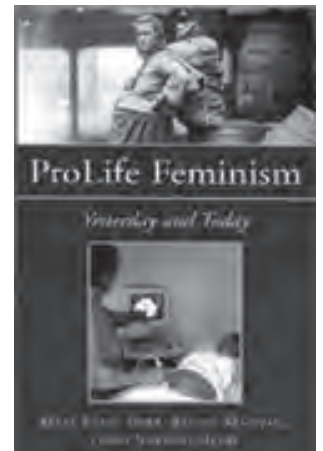


Mary is pictured here with her beloved guinea pig, Gemma.

Perhaps no one was more responsible than Mary Krane Derr for revealing our rich pro-life feminist history. She contributed numerous essays for FFL's "Herstory" series but may be best remembered as co-editor of *ProLife Feminism: Yesterday and Today* along with former FFL President Rachel MacNair and Linda Naranjo-Huebl.

Mary consistently advocated the protection of life and was committed to seeking peaceful solutions for complex situations that people face.

In 1998 Mary attended FFL's Pregnancy Resource ForumSM at her alma mater, the University of Chicago. She recalled her own pregnancy while she was a student and the pressure to abort, especially because Mary faced significant health issues. By then Mary was a trained counselor herself. She told the Forum panelists that the best thing other counselors can do when telling a woman that she is pregnant is to let her take some time to absorb the news, adding, "Once you are pregnant you are changed no matter what you choose. Counselors should ask the woman 'What would be the best outcome for you and your child?' – then help her achieve that dream." Her then-ten-year-old daughter, Sarah, was at her side. I share that story at the close of every



Pregnancy Resource Forum I moderate.



Mary is pictured holding her young cousin.

Mary suffered from several chronic diseases. She became ill in India, where she was doing a poetry reading, and died at age 49 on Nov. 30, 2012, after returning to her family in Chicago.

We will honor Mary by continuing to share the pro-life feminist history that she so carefully researched for us to enjoy today. May she find the peace she consistently advocated for others.

ROSE MARIE JACKSON

“...you can't let a snake into the house and think it won't bite.”

I became a social worker because I wanted to dedicate my life to helping the most vulnerable in society. It was my honor to serve as an officer at the state level for the National Association of Social Workers. Shortly after the US Supreme Court handed down *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, I was asked to present a position paper before the New Jersey State Assembly in support of full and open access to abortion services.

I was so angry about the injustice and abuse done to women across the social spectrum that I did not take time to think before I acted. On that day in Trenton when I read the profession's statement, I believed what I read.

And I acted on the day that Leona (not her real name) furtively arrived at my office, sitting like a child wrapped in her own arms as she told me her story. Raised in Trinidad-Tobago in extreme poverty, she created and sold jewelry to vacationing tourists. When a friend of the family arranged for her to come to the United States, she jumped at the chance. The



Rose Marie Jackson is a clinical social worker and the Executive Director of First Concern Pregnancy Resource Center in Clinton, Massachusetts.

friend of the friend met her at the airport, took her into his home, and taught her the fine art of prostitution. Part of that lesson included raping her. The rape resulted in pregnancy. She thought now that she was carrying his baby, he would take her off the streets. She was wrong. There are those in the trade who seek the pregnant. She began to despise him and by extension, the child she was carrying. She came to me to help her get an abortion. She said she was not quite three months pregnant. To my lifelong sorrow, I did what I thought was best for her at the time.

We went to a clinic in Manhattan where it was determined that she was too far along for an early surgical abortion, so they injected saline solution directly into her womb. We came back to my home. She slept on my bed and I slept on the floor while she experienced the full pain of labor and delivered a perfectly formed baby boy who had been burned and poisoned to death in his mother's body. I caught him in an orange plastic bowl and placed

him in a bread bag. He had been growing for almost five months.

It is a slippery slope into self-deception. I had already publicly given my support to the practice of abortion and now I had personally participated in one. Though I felt that abortion should remain legal to help those in extreme circumstances, and though I had been a willing partner in an abortion, I deluded myself into thinking that abortion should be available, but it would never apply to me. I would never have an abortion. But you can't let a snake into the house and think it won't bite.

I became pregnant in my first year at graduate school. Though shocked at the reality, my initial reaction was joy. Because although America was still debating the viability of the fetus, every pregnant woman knows that she is carrying a child. The father, in fear and denial, said that I had gotten pregnant on purpose. My mother believed that it wasn't really a baby until the third month, and she questioned my ability to succeed if I had the responsibility of raising a child alone before finishing my degree. My brother begged me to let the child live, as did the family of a friend. The fear, uncertainty, and flurry of intense contradicting emotions were excruciating. I just wanted it all to stop. On Valentine's Day 1975, I chose death. A year later, I chose death again.



Denial and dissociation are effective numbing agents. It wasn't until one afternoon many years later, while I was holding my twin babies in my arms and praising God for his goodness to me, that the grief surrounding the loss of my first two babies erupted unexpectedly. It seemed bottomless.

My first step toward healing came when I became involved with the work of a crisis pregnancy center. I read about the possibility of experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following an abortion, completed a workshop on post-abortion healing, and found that we can be free to face the pain, knowing that God's touch heals and makes new. Seven years after my first abortion, my husband and I married on Valentine's Day. A day marked earlier by loss is now filled with great love, and four children who fill our hearts with great joy.

Editor's note: There is a difference between the clinical diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the far more common experience of post-abortion regret. Most women do not experience clinical trauma, but many may experience regret.





I have always lived my life asking questions, researching positions and challenging assertions, accepting few things without proof. The necessity of legalized elective abortion was one of those few things. I was born a feminist and resented the idea that women couldn't do and be whatever we wanted. Unwanted pregnancies seemed a quick way to shut down plans and dreams. This view was reinforced within my Reform Jewish community.

ELLEN JUDITH REICH

I accepted the "it's a blob of tissue" argument. I believed that if something needed another person's body to live, it was part of that person--one and the same.

My husband and I were married in the mid-80s and were eager to start a family. After two miscarriages I was reeling with pain and confusion. How could I be so sad about the loss of "a potential" life? Was I thrown because I expected to be in control? I finally realized I was grieving, but still tried to insist to myself that the grief was for lost opportunities, not lost babies.

I became pro-life because I opened my eyes. It's not very dramatic or poetic, but I'd based my previous beliefs on practicality and principles, not on facts.

I am astounded that I was over 30 before I noticed I hadn't asked any questions about the legitimacy of elective abortion. I grew up in the 1960s with parents who believed legalization of abortion was a rational, welcome relief. Safe, elective abortions allowed women to make their own choices. What else was there to know?

Pregnancy number three brought out the big guns of personal research. Knowledge is power and I wanted some kind of power in this essentially powerless situation. I began dissecting each week of pregnancy under a virtual microscope. Oh my, a heart was beating *already*? *Three weeks* after conception?

This almost flipped the light on. But my go-to logic supporting my pro-choice beliefs was, "if it can't live outside me, *it is me*; it's my body." I am baffled at the ability of the human brain to see and hear what it wants or expects to see and

hear. DNA--how was it I understood DNA yet never placed “DNA” and “pregnancy” in a sentence together? My hair, my arm, my breast, my kidney--those are parts of *my* body. Those share a common DNA. That baby has its own DNA, from the moment of conception. Not mine, not Dad’s, but his or her own--inescapably *not* my body.

“But,” my pro-choice feminist brain screamed, “it’s still *in* my body! That makes it different!” But does it? Relentlessly analytical, even with myself, I knew this needed further picking apart.

My core beliefs include valuing people equally without regard to race, gender, age, size, popularity or intellect. Randy Alcorn, in *Pro-life Answers to Prochoice Arguments*, suggested adding “place of residence” as another unacceptable reason to discriminate. While true, defining a woman as “a place of residence” for her baby wasn’t quite working for me. I needed to expand my understanding *why* the “in my body” argument wasn’t morally strong enough.

If a person is an unwelcome intruder, even a thief, morally you can’t kill someone just because she is on your turf. If your life is in danger and you will die if you don’t act, you are morally permitted to save yourself. But if your life is not in danger, you must deal with the situation in another way.

Traditionally, Rabbis permitted abortion from this principle of self-defense. If continuing a pregnancy would cause the mother to die, abortion is permitted. No problem here – that is pro-life. Modern Reform Judaism, however, maintains a far more flexible standard. It is simply a woman’s choice to continue or end “a pregnancy.”

Judaism is driven by a very practical and passionate commitment to social justice. Reform Jews embrace

these values and typically consider legalized abortion as practical support for women. I feel completely isolated in my pro-life beliefs. One of the things I love about Judaism is the willingness to think critically, to “wrestle with God,” and to embrace scientific fact and exploration. Yet my community is failing to even discuss the issue, much less think critically and embrace science.

I am deeply aware of the power of words and, as a writer, am firmly committed to calling things by their proper names. It is wildly irritating to me that the debate over elective abortion still is hidden by the claim that “we don’t know when life begins.” Science answers that clearly. The unstated subtext is, “when does *valuable* life begin?”

My moral code does not allow for relative value of human beings.

SOCIETY IS MEASURED BY THE WAY IT PROTECTS THE WEAK AND VULNERABLE.

Society is measured by the way it protects the weak and vulnerable. I want to live in a world that tries its best to protect those who can’t protect themselves. Don’t we all? I know my fellow Jews do. Even if we’re not capable of reaching our ideals, sacrificing them for practical solutions ensures we will never become who we most want to be.

Ellen Judith Reich lives in Charlotte, North Carolina and is a member of Beth El Synagogue. She is the author of Waiting: A Diary of Loss & Hope in Pregnancy, and a second memoir, Beginning at the Well: Jewish, Feminist & Pro-Life (not yet published).

I realized abortion is a huge civil rights abuse, the largest in my day. It was about subjugating an entire class of people, and about forcing women to pass as men. I knew immediately I wanted to be a part of changing that.

a new war to oppose, fascinating classes to take (and skip), and did I mention the number of parties on a Big Ten campus? That piqued my interest, too!

Three of my four grandparents were professors, and my dad has four master's degrees and a doctorate. I grew up on campuses across the country—I was finally in my element! Well, all of those horizon-expanding experiences came to a screeching halt one morning my junior year. Despite my faithful attempts to avoid it, I became pregnant. I knew precisely when it had happened. But that one brief moment in time redefined me.

Stunned and panicked, I got out the phone book and started calling offices on campus. When I called to inquire about where I might live should I have the child, I was told there was no family housing available to undergraduates. This made sense to me: I mean I'd never seen anyone my age on campus who was pregnant.

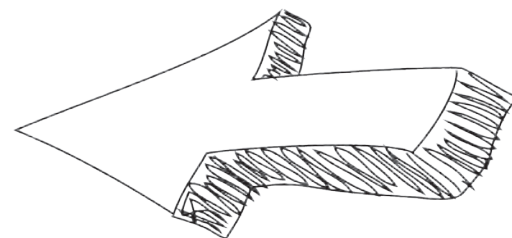
Even if I lived in an apartment off campus, I still faced the issue of

what I would do with a kid while I was in classes. I found and called the campus daycare center. Fortunately, the woman on the other end of the line assured me spaces were available...on a limited basis. Enrollment went first to tenured professors, then those on the tenure track, then associate and adjunct professors, then graduate students and then--dangling at the bottom of the food chain--were undergraduate students.

Unfortunately, there was no room available at that time but I was free to leave my name on a waiting list. I suppose I was to pack "the kid" around in my backpack until there was an opening? As for daycare off campus, I found very few were willing to take newborns and those that did were cost prohibitive on a student's limited budget.

Then there was dealing with the cost of delivery. I didn't want to think about it, but I knew somehow "it" had to get OUT of me. It turned out that there was no maternity coverage in my student healthcare. **Some schools offered abortion coverage in their healthcare, but few would pay a dime for delivery or post-natal care.**

I was a pregnant 21-year-old student facing the facts of no place to



I was raised in a very progressive, left-leaning household. My father marched for Civil Rights and both of my parents were actively involved in opposing the Vietnam conflict. Being an activist was like breathing, it was never discussed, or expected, it just was.

As I got older, I tended to gravitate toward the strong feminist teachers in school--taking more classes from them and learning all that I could. I identified with them. I saw them as strong, intelligent, and competent. It's funny looking back, because I knew nothing about feminist history or really even feminism. I just knew I wanted to be one of them...that I wasn't going to allow a door to be shut in my face simply because I was a girl.

In 1990 I headed off to college, and it was like a whole new world. There was



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live, no place to leave a child while in class, and no help in paying for delivery from my university health insurance. I placed more phone calls that week than any week of my life. At any time it would have seemed far easier to make one phone call, one appointment where they take MasterCard, Visa, and Discover, and be rid of the whole situation.

I was adamantly pro-choice when I became pregnant, as in card-carrying, bumper-sticker on the car pro-choice, because I drank the Kool-Aid and that's what *real* feminists believed, or so I thought at that time. And I have to tell you that the decision I made, the *choice* I made, was embarrassingly flippant.

I didn't weigh the morality of the issue, I wasn't in that place in my life. I didn't think about slogans or political stances, there was no bumper sticker that could make this decision for me. I did what most anyone in my position would do: I looked at my own survival. I took a mental inventory of what kind of financial resources and emotional support I had. I felt as though all of my plans for the future were derailed with that little pink plus sign on the pregnancy test.

I transferred to a smaller campus to be closer to family. We moved into an apartment large enough for a child. I did a little digging and found out I could be covered under family health

How am I supposed to fit my belly into THAT?!



insurance. Essentially, I found that I didn't have a compelling reason to terminate the pregnancy.

Well, that "lack of a compelling reason" has a name, and it is Emily. She's 19 and in her first year at college.

I was able to find a way to have her without relying on the school's programs, but so many other students are not that fortunate. Even with the larger issues of housing, daycare, and maternity coverage being addressed; you're still left with parking spaces far from campus and desks that don't accommodate a pregnant woman's figure. Student parents are often forced to change diapers on bathroom floors and find privacy for nursing in bathroom stalls.

When a woman becomes pregnant on campus she looks around and sees that there are no resources, there is no support, and there are no examples to look up to. It feels like there is *no choice*.

Over the next few years, another pregnancy, and thanks to the prenatal book *Your Pregnancy Week by Week*, I slowly realized that I was being inconsistent in my views. **I realized abortion is a huge civil rights abuse,**

the largest in my day. It was about subjugating an entire class of people, and about forcing women to pass as men. I knew immediately I wanted to be a part of changing that.

I was in the process of writing a letter to the DNC in 1996 which later became an article called "The Pro-Life View from the Left." In the article I pushed for affordable health care, housing, and daycare for pregnant women. I shared it with a group of friends and one of them said to me, "Sounds like Feminists for Life." I am still here.

I am proud to work for an organization that believes women deserve better than abortion. And I will continue to work so no woman feels forced to choose between her future or *her* Emily.



Sally A. Winn, above with daughters Emily [L] and Hannah [R], serves as Vice President of Feminists for Life.



ARAMINTA BARLOW

I eventually came to see that being pro-life was more deeply feminist than being pro-choice because the pro-life position was woman centered.

I attended Oxford University as an undergraduate 20 years ago to study English Language and Literature. As a serious and intellectual 18-year-old, I began to develop my feminism and my Christian faith as a Roman Catholic. Although in many ways I found that my feminism and my faith were compatible, abortion seemed to be an area where it was not possible to be both a good feminist and a good Catholic.

The right to choose, reproductive rights, control over one's body--these were standard feminist beliefs expressed through a commitment to campaigning for abortion on demand. Abortion on demand was--and still is--illegal in England. Abortions on demand are carried out via a loophole whereby two doctors sign that a woman's physical or mental health will suffer if she continues with her pregnancy. But as a Christian, and particularly as a Catholic, I knew life to be sacred. I thought I had to choose between my feminism and my faith.

I was confused and scared. I didn't want to choose between my feminist friends and my Catholic friends. I desperately wanted acceptance within this new group of mainly like-minded feminist women and so I was afraid to speak out against abortion in these feminist circles. I allowed all the feminists around me to assume I was pro-choice. I was also scared of myself. Given my ambivalence, I didn't trust myself to reject abortion as an option, were I to find myself in a difficult situation, however unlikely this would have been. After an abusive childhood, I felt fragmented. Part of me was loving but also weak; another part was assertive, angry, and selfish; yet another part was intellectual but cold. My intellectual side ruled me, and it was undecided on abortion. This made me nervous and insecure.

As I continued to develop intellectually, however, I explored feminist theory and traditions more deeply. By doing so, I discovered that the modern Anglo-American feminist tradition that said that women must gain political equality with men by emulating them and promoting abortion, was only one brand of feminism. I was excited to discover a different feminist tradition: French feminism, which I quickly learned to be more female-centered than its Anglo-American counterpart. In the French tradition, woman is not defined in relation to man. Woman can reclaim herself, her writing, and her body. Physical differences between men and women are not downplayed, but rather celebrated. The womb is the center of a woman's sexual identity, and abortion is, in short, a denial of womanhood. I eventually came to see that being pro-life was more deeply feminist than being pro-choice, because the pro-life position was woman-centered.

So ultimately (and amazingly, given the conflict with which I began), I found that the seeds of my pro-life, refuse-to-choose belief lie as much in my feminism as in my faith.

Araminta Barlow blogs about pro-life, pro-woman issues at www.masalabou.wordpress.com

MARYBETH T. HAGAN

My rude awakening to the realities of “choice” came slowly. Even as I heard the ongoing arguments for and against abortion, I sat on the fence over this divisive issue for decades.

For years, through my freewheeling days as a single person, and then a failed first marriage, during a glamour-girl phase as an NFL cheerleader, through my successful second marriage and subsequent pregnancies and miscarriages, while a stay-at-home mother and later a midlife college student completing a bachelor’s degree in journalism – all that time I remained ambivalent about abortion.

Abortion’s truths first aimed at my heart in the late 1980s. From the earliest stirrings within my womb, to the later kicks and punches that formed the bumps on my belly, there was no denying life in the womb. The rhythm of the babies’ heartbeats during those first trimester check-ups further confirmed this. Like any fine works of art, newborns are the sum of their developmental parts.

Moreover, science smacked me with certainty during the single sonogram that I had while pregnant. As the technician moved the cool tip of the ultrasound machine’s magic wand across my stomach, I spotted human contours on the screen.

THIS FRAGILE LIFE THAT I SAW VIA ULTRASOUND ASTOUNDED ME AND FOREVER CHANGED MY VIEWS ABOUT ABORTION.

There was my daughter’s round head, her delicate profile, tiny limbs and curled body attached to the cord that connected us. This fragile life that I saw via ultrasound astounded me and forever changed my views about abortion.

Maternal loss taught me even more. Four months into a pregnancy, I lost a baby to miscarriage. Medical attention was required to cleanse my uterus and reproductive system. The piece of equipment used for this procedure whirred like a vacuum cleaner. The sound sickened me.

Since I accepted miscarriage as God’s will and nature’s way of ending a pregnancy, I moved on with my life. Or so I thought. One September day – five years after that horrible experience – I sobbed as I drove past our children’s elementary school. It suddenly occurred to me that my deceased baby would have entered kindergarten that year.

That’s when I began wondering about post-abortive women’s feelings. I wondered what they were thinking as they drifted in

and out of consciousness during the procedure. I wondered if they sometimes had delayed reactions to their losses, as I did. I wondered if they ever speculated about the child who might have been, as I did. I wondered, though I never asked those friends who’d had abortions, for fear that such questions would be too intrusive or hurtful.

About five years later I began writing. My freelance newspaper commentaries covered lots of many topics, including abortion. Curiously, that issue badgered me until I was willing to give it my undivided attention. I decided to follow my gut feelings about abortion, and began with research.

A first stop in this investigation was attending a lecture by Feminists for Life’s President Serrin Foster at Villanova University in 2003. Ms. Foster taught me genuine feminist history. I continued by digging up facts about abortion from other sources. Before I knew it, I’d written a book that I never planned to write about a tough subject that once meant little to me.

I later lectured for the educational group Pennsylvanians for Human Life for several years. I created a website, “Mother May I...Be Born?” where I wrote a daily blog. Today, I contribute weekly to the Pro-Life Union of Greater Philadelphia’s “Facts of Life” blog, and support both PHL and the Pro-Life Union when opportunities arise.

Being a pro-life apologist is a challenge, but whenever I encounter others in the movement or at the annual March for Life in Washington, I count myself lucky to be in such good company.

*Marybeth T. Hagan is the author of **Abortion: A Mother’s Plea for Maternity and the Unborn**. Her commentaries and stories have been published in local and national newspapers and magazines. She writes for the Pro-Life Union of Greater Philadelphia’s “Facts of Life” blog.*



Jewels Green

I was a 17-year-old drug-using high school dropout when I learned I was pregnant for the first time. Everyone around me wanted me to get an abortion ... except me. I already thought of myself as a new mother. While I was terrified, I still assumed that I was going to have a baby.

I stopped using drugs, checked out a book from the library titled *Under 18 and Pregnant*, and called the local assistance office to get on Medicaid. I scheduled my first prenatal check-up. The pressure over the ensuing few weeks, from all sides, was relentless. I felt alone and abandoned.

My first appointment for an abortion I literally ran out of the clinic when it was time to disrobe. But two days later I finally caved to my boyfriend's insistence not to have our baby. I had the abortion. It nearly killed me. Not the surgical procedure, but the psychological aftermath. A few weeks after my abortion, consumed by intractable guilt, I tried to kill myself.

Thankfully, I survived my suicide attempt and spent a month in an adolescent psychiatric unit to recover. But my wounded psyche seemed to construct a shield as protection from further examination of what I'd done, and to prevent me from accepting responsibility for my part in the death of my first child.

In spite of all I went through, I remained pro-choice. So much so that within weeks of my discharge from the psych unit I marched in Washington in support of abortion and soon after started volunteering as an escort at an abortion clinic. Eventually I was hired as a full-time employee, and worked at that abortion clinic for more than five years. In hindsight, I seemed to have been surrounding myself with people who thought abortion was OK, no big deal, in the hope that someday I would believe that, too.

I did every job at the clinic except doctor and nurse: I answered the phone, took payments, counseled, was a medical assistant, and

Children were now commodities to be created, bought, sold, or discarded at will – and I could no longer call myself pro-choice.

scrubbed and sterilized surgical instruments. I have seen it all. But it wasn't until learning of a surrogate mother who was paid her contract price IN FULL to abort the baby diagnosed with Down syndrome she was carrying that I finally became pro-life. It was a true "ah-HA" moment for me. Abortion was wrong on a fundamental level. Children were now commodities to be created, bought, sold, or discarded at will – and I could no longer call myself pro-choice.

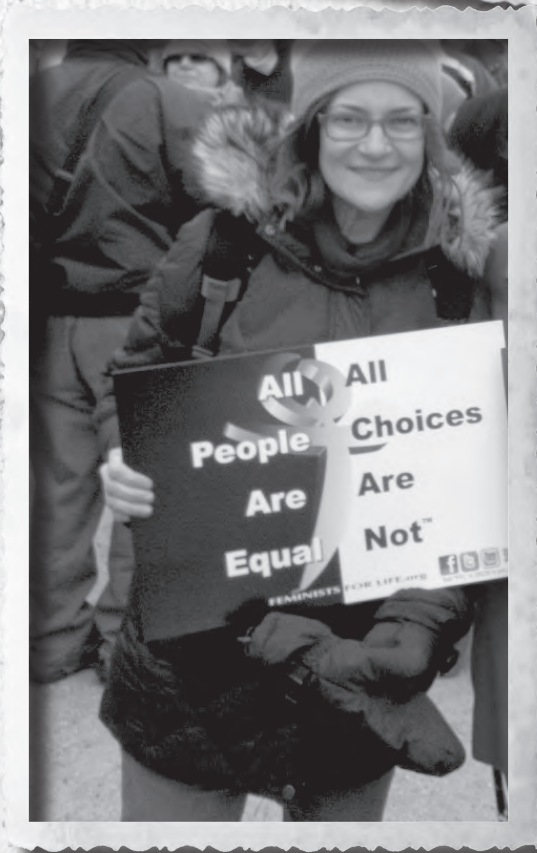
This horrifying truth led me to question abortion and fully examine my position, ask myself the hard questions, and ultimately assume responsibility for my own abortion and my role in the abortion industry.

Feminists for Life's mission hit home with me immediately: eliminate abortion by addressing

the root causes that drive women to such a desperate “choice.” Most importantly for me are the lack of resources and support for the most vulnerable—students, working women, poor and struggling families, and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Feminists for Life was the first pro-life organization I joined, and I’d been volunteering for FFL for a year and a half before coming on board as editor of *The American Feminist*.

I think stories like mine offer perspective into the processes by which a mind can be changed. I’m honored to be named FFL’s newest speaker. If my story can help to raise expectations for the lives of women to choose life for themselves and their children, then I’ll keep telling it.

Jewels Green is a pro-life writer, mother, activist, public speaker, and editor for FFL.



Kristen Hatten

I couldn't have told you why I was pro-choice – not with any depth, anyway. It just came with the feminist starter kit. I was an intelligent woman in my twenties, so of course I was pro-choice. If anybody argued with me about it, I would yell talking points and phrases I'd gleaned from the media: "bodily autonomy," "reproductive rights", etc. but the conversation never got any deeper than that. If it had, I would have been in over my head. For years, I was never challenged, and I was able to keep my illusions.

Then I reconnected with a friend. I'll call her Sadie. We had been friends since high school, but had lost touch for some time.

Shortly after we were back in contact, she came to pick me up one afternoon. Her husband was in the Army and stationed overseas. She asked if I would spend the night to keep her and her kids company.

The Sadie of old was a gothy feminist, in wicked black boots and burgundy lipstick. The new Sadie was wearing sweats and driving a mini-van, replete with two adorable young children. I was a bit surprised, but a greater shock hit me when I read her bumper sticker: "CHOOSE LIFE." To me, the label "pro-life" meant "conservative" and "Christian," words that were synonymous with "mean" and "ignorant." I was smart. I was a woman. I was a *feminist*. Of course I was pro-choice.

I kept my mouth shut about the bumper sticker. For a while.

Later at her house, the kids were in bed, and Sadie and I were drinking a little whisky and playing Lord of the Rings Trivial Pursuit. Finally, my tongue loosened by the liquor, I blurted out: "What gives? I know you married a Catholic, I know you're all "stay-at-home- mom/ Army-wife" now, but Sadie... You've gone too far. I thought you were a feminist!"

Sadie replied calmly that she was still a feminist. Then she told me something that blew my mind: "I've always been pro-life."

I don't know if it was the whisky or the shock of this revelation, but then, for the first time ever, I allowed someone to make a pro-life argument to me. I not only allowed it – I invited it. I asked her, "Okay. Let's hear it. Why are you pro-life?"

She talked. I asked questions and she answered them. She didn't bring up God or religion. If she had, I would have rolled my eyes and begun to dismiss her. I wasn't a believer, but I didn't have to be. This was not about God; this was about right and wrong, human and inhuman, war and peace.

Sadie spoke of human rights, ethics, and science. She explained the provable fact that the unborn human is a distinct and separate life from the moment of its conception. She shared the statistic that in more than 99% of cases, the pregnant woman willingly engaged in the act that led to her pregnancy. How then, she asked, could she treat her baby as an unwanted alien invader, a nutrient-stealing parasite, in order to justify its killing?

Kristen Hatten is
a pro-life activist, blogs for
Live Action News, and
is the Vice President of
New Wave Feminists.





She also talked about the harm done to women by the abortion procedure – physically, mentally, and emotionally. She talked about the brutality of abortion, how the fetus is often ripped limb from limb, and how the woman is often left wounded – and sometimes infertile. She explained “partial-birth abortion.” She made me understand the cycle of violence that is continued when a woman, feeling oppressed herself, passes that oppression on to her children.

I asked to see the photographs to which she’d alluded during our conversation. I saw them. I saw proof of what abortion does, and the lie that says that an unborn child is just a “clump of cells” or a “blob of tissue” was destroyed for me – forever. My ignorance was gone, and I was pro-life.

Don’t get me wrong – I’d seen those images before, but I’d never *really* seen them. I did not see the humanity of the children shown in those images until my heart was opened to the fact that I was looking at a human being. As a pro-choice woman, when I was shown graphic images of aborted fetuses – held up in front of clinics, at protests, or seen accidentally while surfing the Web – I did not see murdered human beings. I saw my own opinion, assaulted. I saw crazy people holding gross signs, and my mind glossed over the rest.

To this day I have many friends of various opinions on abortion. I don’t know a single person who has been converted by an unexpected graphic image waved in their face, and I don’t like the idea of making a clinic look like a safe haven from the scary people outside. But when I was ready, and asked to see them, graphic images of intact and aborted unborn children were the final nail in the coffin of my pro-abortion beliefs.

I kept saying to Sadie, “Oh my God. You just made me pro-life.”

I spent the next week on the Internet trying to “un-convince” myself of the truth of abortion, hoping that something would make me pro-choice again. But you can’t unlearn what you’ve learned. Information made me pro-life. Information about the early feminists and their pro-life views convinced me that Sadie told the truth when she called herself a feminist.

Over time, I’ve become passionate about informing women that abortion is not empowerment, and that feminism does not mean passing tyranny on to our children.

A year after that fateful conversation with Sadie, I was Catholic. Today, I call myself a conservative. But I don’t believe you need to be religious or conservative to be pro-life. In fact, Sadie has done an about-face herself. She considers herself proudly liberal, but she is still pro-life.

And we are both still, proudly, feminists.

*But you can't
unlearn what you've
learned. Information
made me pro-life.*



MARIA
GALLAGHER

When I was working as a general assignment reporter for a public radio station, if you would have told me that one day I'd serve as a pro-life lobbyist, I would have laughed.

After all, despite eleven years of Catholic education, my thinking had evolved on the issue of abortion. Having grown up in the post-Roe era, I could not imagine America without legal abortion. Without legalized abortion, wouldn't desperate women simply self-abort? And though I never considered abortion to be a good thing, it seemed a necessary evil. And those self-described "pro-lifers"—why did they have to harass women outside abortion clinics? Weren't they like the street preachers who screamed at passersby, proclaiming the name of Jesus while condemning all women in their path?

At one point, I imagined myself running for state representative and telling a roomful of reporters, "I am personally pro-life. I will pray every day for an end to abortion. But my political stand is pro-choice."

But then a curious thing happened. A pro-life friend introduced me to literature that described the development of the unborn child. Even though as a journalist, I had written many stories about abortion—even winning an award for one—I did not know that a human heart starts beating 24 days after conception, or that brain waves can be detected at 43 days. I had no idea that at 49 days after conception, a preborn child looks like a little doll. If that were true, I reasoned, there could be no justification for abortion.

I began to see the cracks within the pro-choice argument. For instance, I was under the impression that late-term abortions were only performed if the life of the mother were at stake. But then I read a 1995 letter to members of the U.S. House of Representatives from the National Abortion Federation stating that such abortions were sought by "very young teenagers who have not recognized the signs of their pregnancies until too late." I read a study by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the former research arm of Planned Parenthood—the nation's largest abortion operation—that indicated that nearly half of the women who obtained abortions after 16 weeks did so because they "found it hard to make arrangements."

Once these facts were staring me in the face, I came to the conclusion that the pro-choice position was based on some false assumptions. If I truly believed in the dignity of women, how could I deny the dignity of the woman in the womb? Did not that female child have just as much of a right to live as me? If I were that girl, wouldn't I want adult women to fight for my rights?

I also became aware of some ground-breaking research indicating the harmful effects of abortion on women—the increased risk of

substance abuse, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, and breast cancer. **Rather than empowering women, abortion seemed to exploit them, leading to a host of problems, while solving none.**

My maternal grandmother was a suffragist, and my strong, caring mother instilled in me an appreciation for women's rights. My father was extremely encouraging, telling me that I could achieve whatever I put my mind to. It was their unwavering support that enabled me to excel in school and to pursue my dream of becoming a broadcast journalist.

IF I TRULY BELIEVED IN THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN, HOW COULD I DENY THE DIGNITY OF THE WOMAN IN THE WOMB? DID NOT THAT FEMALE CHILD HAVE JUST AS MUCH OF A RIGHT TO LIVE AS ME? IF I WERE THAT GIRL, WOULDN'T I WANT ADULT WOMEN TO FIGHT FOR MY RIGHTS?

I remain a feminist—but one who recognizes that legal abortion is not a pathway to female empowerment. I support the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* for the good of the nation, but more specifically, for the advancement of women. I want the best for my daughter—and that means a world in which pregnant women are supported, nurtured, and celebrated.

Maria Gallagher is the Legislative Director of the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation and has written and reported for various online, broadcast, and print media outlets including National Public Radio, CBS Radio, and AP Radio.



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For as long as I had known about abortion, I had supported a woman's right to choose abortion if she felt it necessary. I had been lukewarm on the issue, not really vocal or anything, but I was certainly pro-choice. I was a self-proclaimed feminist, after all, and I had left behind the morals my parents had tried to teach me to live a life of freedom and self-determination. But my steadfast position on a woman's choice withered away in the space of a few terrifyingly long days in my sophomore year of high school.

I was 16. I was scared and I felt so alone and I didn't know what to do. I had "skipped" one month and I was waiting anxiously for Aunt Flo to arrive on my doorstep. I had been gaining weight, and I was starting to feel sick. I was mortified. What if I was really pregnant? What would my parents think? What would my friends think? What would the guy think?

And in that moment I began to think, "It's not a baby, I can get rid of this problem like *that*."

But the guy, we had talked about this. We said we were going to be together--if we had a child, we'd raise it together. We'd work for that.

I didn't know what to do or to think, and my friends were picking up that something wasn't right. A few days later in my drafting class, I was brooding terribly, and the guy walked in. He pulled me out of class to talk. We were speaking low in the hallway and I hadn't seen him in three days--since I intimated to him that I might be pregnant. I was furious that he would pull me out of class to talk about this now, after he'd ignored me for days. We spoke calmly for a few minutes before it came out.

"You need to get an abortion, Aimee. I can take you and we'll get it taken care of. I can't possibly tell my mom what we've been doing. I can't..."

"But you said that we'd work it out--!"

"I know, but we can't. Honestly, I've been thinking... I dunno... I might kill you and then myself."

"Leave. Go. Now. I have to go back to class. We'll talk about this some other time."



AIMEE MURPHY

Aimee Murphy is the Executive Director of *Life Matters Journal*, a pro-life consistent life ethic publication.

My mind was reeling. *I might kill you and then myself.* If I'd had the presence of mind, I suppose I would have run to the police or at least the Vice Principal. But I was shocked and scared and I felt so utterly alone.

And yet, in that moment, I knew something else, too: **if I was indeed with child, that preborn human life within me would be worthy of the same protections as me. If I were to be killed, we would both be the victims of the same violence. So what right did I have to inflict the same harm that was being threatened against me upon an innocent human being?** How much better would I be than the guy if I chose the path of violence to reach my goals in life?

So I looked up fetal development and I searched resources on pregnancy and adoption. And I educated myself and looked at the science of prenatal biology. It was so utterly apparent that even after everything I'd been through, I was not being a mere sentimentalist. My decision to become pro-life was based in science, reason, and logical conclusions. The impetus, of course, was a very twisted situation which no woman should ever have to endure, but it helped to turn the light on for me, and it charged my research with even greater purpose.

I told my parents what was going on. I took several home pregnancy tests (none to the satisfaction of my mother) and eventually went to get a check-up with a doctor. I wasn't pregnant. It was a relief, but it simultaneously put a weight on my heart: I had desired abortion a mere four days ago. This wrenched me and I wept ...but as a 16-year-old, I was grateful for the new chance that I was given without having to inflict any violence. My story would not end in pain and suffering, a broken body, or a broken heart. **The threat of violence helped me to recognize the value of every human life, and the importance of those voices that spoke out for the dignity of both woman and child.**

While I was at Carnegie Mellon University, our pro-life student group, Life Matters, brought in FFL President Serrin Foster to present "The Feminist Case *Against* Abortion." Since graduating, I've worked with the *Life Matters Journal* to bring to the fore non-partisan, non-sectarian discussion on all life issues--whether they be about the ethics of abortion, unjust war, capital punishment, euthanasia, or other human life issues. I hope to bring an end to violence. Becoming pro-life for me wasn't just about being against abortion, but about beginning the fight to stand up for all human life. I would not be here but for a terrible threat that brought the reality to me: this is about equality, this is about all human rights.



Beatrice

Fedor

*I've heard pro-choice sisters
respond many times when
recalling an abortion memory,
"You don't want to go there."*

Before my teenage pregnancy, I was never in favor of abortion. Bowing to my boyfriend's decision to abort our baby compelled me to build an emotional wall. After I let abortion enter my life, there were two persons in me: the pro-choice feminist and the broken-hearted girl.

The former was trying hard to convince herself that she did the right thing, and that abortion was a matter of women's rights. Getting rid of a clump of parasitic cells was merely part of life. Glowing with lip gloss, sexy outfits, and engaging in "no strings attached" relationships, she clung to her anti-motherhood privileges. The latter, recoiled in her shell, was afraid to give her trust and love, and was grieving her baby.

To be able to survive, I denied my baby's humanity, the violence of abortion, and my maternal instinct. But I was also wounded and horrified by the drama within which I had been both victim and actor.

Once in a movie, I saw a caricature portrayal of angry anti-abortion people. They were shoving a tiny plastic figure in a pregnant girl's face saying, "This is your baby." The liberal feminist in me was outraged and the broken-hearted girl was feeling judged.

After my second abortion, I lost interest in my sexual conquests. The despair had become stronger than the Parisian romance lifestyle. The deep cut in my heart made it harder and harder to rationalize the evil of my actions.

One day, I noticed a "Pray to end abortion" bumper sticker on my fiancé's mother's car. His sister had participated in a March for Life in Washington, DC. These events made me feel dirty, a little outraged, and mostly confused.

I've heard pro-choice sisters respond many times when recalling an abortion memory, "You don't want to go *there*." *There* is exactly where pro-life folks want to go, trying to open the door we slammed shut after we sold our souls to abortion. They make us feel uncomfortable because they remind us of one of our darkest deeds. We are hurt not because of their actions, but because of our own. We want freedom, but we cling to our chains. As long as we keep the door shut, freedom will escape us. We need to keep the door open and say "welcome."

The wound of abortion needs to be revealed in the light in order for it to be healed.

Beatrice Fedor learned of Feminists for Life through the Silent No More Awareness Campaign in 2008. As a regional coordinator, she received a copy of "Pro-Woman Answers to Pro-Choice Questions" authored by Feminists for Life President Serrin Foster. For the past four years Ms. Fedor has been sharing her story, counseling women seeking abortions, and reaching out to others like her who have had abortions, all in cooperation with Rachel's Vineyard Retreat, local faith-based organizations, and radio outlets. She blogs about women's issues, and is always open to dialogue with pro-choice people.

When I was in my early twenties, I relinquished a child for adoption. When I became pregnant again, I decided to abort – partly because my experience relinquishing my firstborn was so isolating and unsupported. I still remember having a dream about aborted babies after the abortion. I began to do some research on fetal development and decided, based purely on that research, that abortion is harmful for women and for babies. Then I started to work through my grief for my own aborted child.

My now 30-year-old daughter was born a few years later. Because I was a social worker, I was approached by the director of a local church-based Crisis Pregnancy Centre to join him and his board of directors to set up another CPC. During my work I became aware of the divide I was experiencing between my feminist ideology and some of the local pro-life stances that, while well-meaning, put me at odds with others over some of the

I began to do some research on fetal development and decided, based purely on that research, that abortion is harmful for women and for babies.

main reasons why women abort and how best to work with those who do not share Christian beliefs.

That was when I became aware of Feminists for Life. A friend and I joined another Canadian woman who wanted to start a pro-life feminist group. We began to approach pro-life groups to start a dialogue concerning more effective ways to work with women experiencing crisis pregnancies. It was a bit of a disaster and I felt disheartened. We also could not make any in-roads



with feminist groups in Vancouver and Vancouver Island – they were just not open to any dialogue.

Although our attempts to start a Canadian feminist pro-life group did not come to fruition, I continued to work with women in crisis at

the CPC and was grateful that the director was himself a feminist. The board then set up a safe house for pregnant and vulnerable women as well as a crisis telephone line for rape victims, which I staffed.

The more I did post-abortion counseling, the more I went to the FFL website to get ideas and answers about how best to work with women and how better to respond to both Christian and feminist groups. After I made him aware of the amazing content,

the director also became a faithful reader of the FFL website.

In all of my subsequent social work positions I have been able to work with women of all ages experiencing crisis pregnancies. I am indebted to FFL for all the work they do for those experiencing a crisis pregnancy. My best ideas have come from reading FFL's materials and passing on what I have learned to my feminist pro-choice and pro-life friends. Thank you FFL!

Tricia Green has worked in the social services field for government, church, and community non-profit agencies for the past 35 years. Ms. Green currently works as a Family Coach in Calgary Alberta.





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TAF05-13

Sharon Long

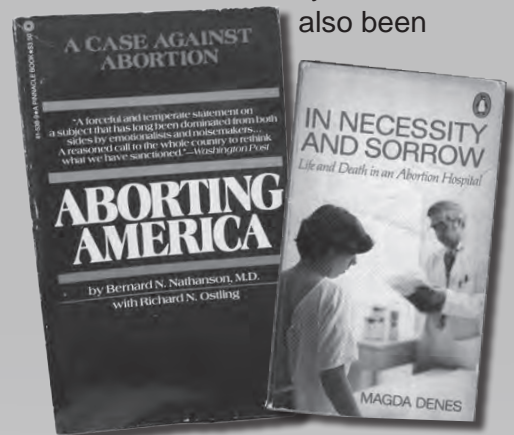
I am a liberal. I believe in a comprehensive, government-funded social welfare network, national health insurance, more spending on foreign aid, and a reduced military budget. I am also a liberal Jew. I believe in a symbolic interpretation of the Bible and support women's and marriage equality within Judaism.

My opinion of abortion first developed about a year after the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalized abortion nationwide. Based on the inaccurate information I received in my 10th grade health class, I decided that a fetus became a human being at about 12 weeks gestation, and therefore abortion on demand should be permitted before then. I could not understand why I saw "Abortion is Murder" bumper stickers, nor why another student wanted to start a pro-life group in my high school.

I began doing some volunteer work in a local veteran's hospital and started thinking about what gave life meaning and purpose. Did I believe that the people under my care – those so mentally and physically debilitated and so dependent upon others – truly had lives worth living? Later, as I worked summers as a nurse's aide in a nursing home, I continued debating these questions within myself.

While working at the nursing home, I read two books that have made the most impact on my life. One was *In Necessity and Sorrow: Life and Death in an Abortion Hospital* by Magda Denés, a psychologist who described what

happened in an abortion clinic. She provided graphic depictions of aborted fetuses as well as interviews with the women who'd had abortions, most of whom felt forced to abort because of difficult circumstances. The other was *Aborting America* by Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson, an atheist gynecologist of Jewish heritage. He was the medical director of one of the first free-standing abortion centers in the country, and had also been



a leader in the abortion rights movement. He described in a very dispassionate and rational way how he had become pro-life through his study of fetal development and ultrasound. This made sense to me, and I continued to wonder where the line could be drawn in fetal development – when did a human life become a person? I also wondered when in the continuum of human life did a human being stop being a person?

I knew instinctively that the lives of my nursing home patients had meaning and purpose. **Regardless of how “useless” they might appear to be in the eyes of society or even in their own eyes, my patients were of infinite value and worth.** They were sacred by virtue of being human.

I asked myself, if I believed in personhood at the end of life, then, logically speaking, what should my belief be as to the value of the fetus?

The answer was clear. If life that was debilitated and dependent at the end of life was sacred, then human life at its beginning must also be sacred. A fetus, too, had to be a person, regardless of the value conferred upon it by others.

I became a reluctant pro-lifer.

I could hardly believe it myself. I was liberal and hip. I went to a feminist women's college. How could I not believe that a woman had a right to control her own body under all circumstances? How could I not believe that the right to control one's own body was the right on which all other rights were based, as I was told over and over? How could I be so politically incorrect?

I called the National Right to Life Committee and said that I was a liberal but I was pro-life – was there anything out there for me? The person on the other end of the line chuckled as she referred me to Feminists for Life.

FFL sent me pamphlets that blew me away, especially those by Rosemary Bottcher and Elise Rose that explained how abortion continues women's oppression in society and does nothing but maintain the status quo. Rather than meeting the real needs of women and children, society offers abortion. I asked myself, "Where has Feminists for Life been all my life?"

Soon I made the right-to-life movement and pro-life feminism the center of my life. I became involved with many pro-life organizations, some progressive, some not. I wrote and spoke about pro-life feminism. I traveled all over the country attending conferences. I joined the executive board of Feminists for Life. I volunteered at crisis pregnancy centers. I contributed thousands of dollars and hours to the pro-life movement. Most of my close friends were pro-life. I bored my family by talking about it so much.

Though I often felt culturally alone in pro-life circles – sometimes very painfully so – I have found in general that pro-lifers are more tolerant of progressives than progressives are of pro-lifers.

I knew all along that pro-lifers' only real enemies were the economy and the culture. If we enable women to have real choices, choices that do not pit their survival against the survival of their children, very few would choose abortions. If we work with others

who are interested in human and economic rights issues, and especially with those who wish to empower women and poor people, we may have a chance.

Ultimately the root cause of abortion is alienation, which sociologists define as powerlessness. After close to thirty years in the pro-life movement, I have spiritually come full circle, reuniting with my progressive community. We need to realize FFL's mission. The way to limit abortion is to provide social and economic support to enable women to have children. I believe that nothing else will be truly effective. **By joining with those who disagree with us, to empower women and to achieve a more just society, we will liberate not only pregnant women but ourselves as well.**

Sharon Long served as secretary of the board of Feminists for Life. She is a psychiatric nurse and lives in New York.

Like Susan B. Anthony and other early American feminists, today's pro-life feminists envision a better world, where no woman would be driven by desperation to abortion.

If you have been wondering where you fit in, please consider this your invitation to

join Feminists for Life.

Become a member, renew your membership, or give the gift of membership today!

Membership is still \$25 for regular members and just \$15 for students.

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Feminists for Life is a 501(c)3 organization. All membership contributions and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Weddington's Betrayal of Women

On the fortieth anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, many focus on the undeniable humanity of the unborn child now seen clearly by millions through sophisticated sonograms shared by proud parents eagerly awaiting the birth of their children.

It is also a good time to evaluate the impact on women of the choice made by attorney Sarah Weddington in 1973.



As her arguments for abortion before the Supreme Court made clear, Weddington saw the discrimination and other injustices faced by pregnant women. But she did not demand that these injustices be remedied. Instead, she demanded for women the “right” to submit to these injustices by destroying their pregnancies. Weddington rightly pointed out the unmet needs of students: “...there are many schools where a woman is forced to quit if she becomes pregnant.” But Weddington didn’t argue against pregnancy discrimination or even for alternate solutions for a pregnant student.

Weddington did no better for women in the workplace. “In the matter of employment, she often is forced to quit at an early point in her pregnancy. She has no provision for maternity leave...She cannot get unemployment compensation under our laws, because the laws hold that she is not eligible for employment, being pregnant, and therefore is eligible for no unemployment compensation.”

For women with serious medical needs, she further noted: “There is no duty for employers to rehire women if they must drop out to carry a pregnancy to term. And, of course, this is especially hard on the many women in Texas who are heads of their own households and must provide for their already existing children.”

Weddington clearly saw the bind low-income women face when experiencing unplanned pregnancy: “At the same time, she can get no welfare to help her at a time when she has no unemployment compensation and she’s not eligible for any help in getting a job to provide for herself.”

Weddington repeatedly said that women need “relief” from pregnancy, instead of arguing that women need relief from these injustices.

What if Weddington had used her legal acumen to challenge the system and address women’s needs? By accepting pregnancy discrimination in school and the workplace and the lack of support in society for pregnant women and parents, especially the

poor, Weddington and the Supreme Court betrayed women and undermined the support women need and deserve.

Since then, millions of women have paid the price, struggling in school and the workplace without societal support. After all, when it's "her body, her choice," it's her problem.

Here's the disturbing report card. According to the Guttmacher Institute, the former research arm of Planned Parenthood, the largest provider of abortion in America:

- 75% say that having a baby would interfere with work, school, or the ability to care for dependents;
- 75% say they can't afford a child;
- 69% are economically disadvantaged;
- 61% already have at least one child; and
- 44% of all abortions are performed on college-age women.

Abortion has masked—rather than solved—the problems women face.

Since 1994, Feminists for Life has worked to address the unmet needs of pregnant and parenting students and staff on college campuses. For the past 17 years FFL Pregnancy Resource ForumsSM on campuses across the country have revealed the still-unmet needs of pregnant and parenting students—especially a lack of housing, child care, telecommuting options, maternity coverage, and medical riders for additional children. FFL found there is rarely a central place on campus for pregnancy and parenting resources. Even when resources are available, they are often not publicized. For pregnant and parenting students kept in the dark about the help they need and deserve, their perception is their reality.

Similarly, we must ramp up efforts to systemically address the unmet needs of struggling parents, birthparents, and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

This anniversary, thousands of pregnancy care centers along with Feminists for Life and other organizations across the country will continue our efforts to help women so that they don't feel driven to choose between sacrificing their children or their education and career plans.

There was one thing Weddington got right. "Whether she's unmarried; whether she's pursuing an education; whether she's pursuing a career; whether she has family problems; all of the problems of personal and family life, for a woman, are bound up in the problem of abortion."

Abortion is a reflection that we have not met the needs of women.



Forty years after Weddington capitulated to inherently unfair practices against pregnant and parenting women, those on both sides of the abortion debate should unite and say "no" to the status quo. Clearly women deserve better.[®]

Serrin M. Foster is president of Feminists for Life of America. She is the creator of the Women Deserve Better[®] than Abortion campaign. Her landmark speech "The Feminist Case Against Abortion" was named one of the "Great Speeches in History" in the anthology Women's Rights.

Serrin's opinion editorial was published by the Washington Examiner on January 25, 2013 in observance of the 40th annual March for Life.

Hear the actual recording of Sarah Weddington's oral argument before the U.S. Supreme Court and FFL President Serrin Foster's response.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKaVuymKg3A>

Voices

OF WOMEN WHO MOURN

I was 24 when I found out I was pregnant. I didn't know what to do and wasn't sure to whom I could turn. I told my roommate who offered to drive me to an abortion clinic. The only other person I told didn't say anything. I didn't want an abortion. I wanted help and hope and support. My fear and confusion quickly became desperation. I was so unsure of myself and yet the only choice I could see was abortion. I took that ride from my roommate.

My abortion was the most horrifying experience of my life. The women were treated like human cattle. I was told over and over about "a bunch of cells" even though I was 10 weeks along. I was only asked, "Will that be Visa or MasterCard today?" I believed all of the lies that I was told.

The relief lasted about a day and then denial set in. I went right back to drinking and partying and struggled with depression and guilt. I felt that I had done something wrong but didn't know what to do about it. **I had nightmares, suicidal thoughts, and I made one suicide attempt. I guess that is what is called "getting on with your life."**

Five years later I was married and pregnant. I was very excited and longing to somehow make up for what I had done. Ten weeks into my pregnancy, I started to bleed. I was told my baby's heart had stopped beating. I was miscarrying. I ended up delivering that little one into my hand. I saw with my own eyes that this WASN'T "a bunch of cells"! I saw tiny toes, feet and legs, fingers, hands and arms, a tiny little rump, and a precious little face.

I began the journey of abortion recovery. It has not been easy. I had to accept the truth and face the pain and grief of loss. I have received grace and forgiveness and now offer that to other women through Rachel's Vineyard.

Carla Stream is a pro-life speaker, sidewalk counselor, and a Rachel's Vineyard Facilitator. She is also the lead moderator on Jill Stanek's blog. <http://jillstane.com> Jill was named a Remarkable Pro-Life Woman® by Feminists for Life in 2003.

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