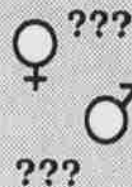


Abortion

WOMEN'S
ISSUES
Part 2 of 7

Opposing sides present their views

pro-choice

The basis of the pro-choice argument for abortion rights is the unprovable biological fact that life does not begin at conception. This is a religious belief and one cannot assume that all people believe life begins at conception. This is what makes abortion such a religious issue with religion being the more moral argument to many people who are "pro-life." What constitutes a moral issue may vary from person to person.

One of the greatest misunderstandings of the pro-choice argument is that it is "pro-abortion" or "anti-life." Instead, it favors a woman's right to make her own decisions and choices about her own destiny. People who are "pro-choice" do not necessarily believe in the process of abortion, but believe in a woman's right to choose. This is a fundamental right for women to have control over their own bodies.

Most women who have abortions have never had one before, according to the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), and 90 percent obtain them within the first trimester, with 50 percent within the first eight weeks. Less than 1 percent of abortions occur in the third trimester of pregnancy and are done to save the life or health of the woman, under the recommendations of her doctor.

Abortion has been around for centuries, both legally and illegally. Women have them for various reasons, such as finances, lack of support from family or partner, or health, with the biggest factor being age.

Whatever the reason, the decision to abort a potential child may not come easily. Women may be faced with guilt from themselves, family, the church or society. Young women under the age of 25 make up the majority of

women who seek abortions and are often faced with the decision of having to involve their parents. Although 50 percent of them do voluntarily tell their parents about an unplanned pregnancy, the 50 percent of them that do not, usually have legitimate reasons for not doing so. Many teenage girls do not want to face their parents with an unplanned pregnancy for fear of "letting them down."

We live in a "sex-drenched" society and most teenagers will have sex before they are 16. If abortion rates are to go down, education of proper forms of contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies is one solution to the problem. Teaching children early about "safe sex" and "smart sex" are important tools to help lower the need for abortions.

If a woman's right to choose is taken away and she can no longer obtain a safe, legal abortion, she may obtain one illegally. The chances of her surviving from a "back alley" abortion, or a self-attempt to abort are slim. Now, approximately one woman every three minutes dies from illegal or self-induced abortions, according to NARAL, throughout the world.

Whether or not abortion is legal or illegal, women will seek them. The difference is legal abortion will provide women with a safer alternative.

by Melanie McEvoy, President,
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The above article is the opinion of the author and does not represent the opinion of The Rebel Yell.

pro-life

In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court made two major rulings pertinent to the abortion issue: *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*. The first decision stated that abortion was to be permissible during the first two trimesters on demand, and to be allowed during the third trimester only to preserve the life or health of the mother. However, *Doe* defined health in such broad terms including financial, mental, emotional and non life-threatening physical problems, that women can have abortions for virtually any reason during the third trimester. The current law essentially allows for abortion on demand for all nine months of pregnancy.

The typical pro-life view holds that the unborn is fully human from the moment of conception, and therefore deserving of legal protection unless there is a significant threat to the life of the mother (in other words, it is better that one should live than that two should die). It needs to be said that many pro-lifers are interested in the health and well-being of both mother and child, not only during, but also after the pregnancy. There are both religious and secular pro-life groups that are financially involved in aiding the parents (whether only the mother, or both parents) and children.

While some pro-lifers hold their views for solely religious reasons, there may be many who believe the pro-life view for other, philosophical reasons. For example, some may believe that "humanness" is determined by one's essence rather than one's abilities. The unborn are not potential persons; they are persons with potential. A slightly more moderate view holds that the unborn attain

full humanness when brain waves are first detected, at about 41 days.

While not everyone agrees with these pro-life views, there are a number of people who are in favor of restrictions on abortion. A March 1989 *Boston Globe* and *WBZ Broadcasting* Poll found the following: In cases where the mother was a minor, 50 percent were in favor of banning abortion, 82 percent were in favor of banning abortions motivated by the reason that it was the "wrong time in life to have a child," 93 percent were against sex selection abortions, and 89 percent were against abortions used as birth control.

"While 78 percent of the nation would keep abortion legal in limited circumstances, according to the poll, those circumstances account for a tiny percentage of the reasons," wrote Ethan Bronner in *The Boston Globe*, March 31, 1989.

Another position, certainly not in agreement with the typical pro-life view, but again dissenting from the radical pro-choice view, is that abortion should be prohibited after viability (which is now earlier than the 24 weeks stated in *Roe*) - unless there is a clear and present danger to the mother's life.

While the strong pro-life views might be in the minority, albeit a large and growing minority, the views reflect the concern for the welfare of mother and child, before and after birth.

by Dennis Monokroussos

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