

LifeNOTES

Life is Precious in Every Circum- stance

Women who have been raped are victims of horrible crimes. It is rare for women who have been raped or who are victims of incest to become pregnant, yet it happens. Right to Life of Michigan hopes to reach out to these women in order to assist them during their pregnancies. During this emotional time, women should know that there are options to abortion.

The following is a fact sheet on abortion in the cases of rape or incest. It contains information on the number of pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, how abortion doesn't help these unfortunate women, and how an unborn child is valuable regardless of the way in which he or she was conceived.

Abortion: Adding to the pain instead of helping

We can all agree that a woman who becomes pregnant as a result of rape or incest is facing a difficult situation. Every child that is conceived as a result of rape is a part of an unintended pregnancy. Many mothers aren't emotionally or financially prepared to raise a child. This is no fault of their own, but circumstances that they must confront while pregnant.

As we examine pregnancies resulting from rape and incest, we must ask who are the victims and who are the perpetrators. The mother is the victim. The father is the perpetrator. The unborn child is an innocent bystander whose life was created through an illegal act. A child's life is no less valuable because of the way in which conception occurred. An unborn child's life shouldn't be taken because his or her father is a criminal. The child has an inalienable right to life no matter who the father is. The rape victim is still the mother of the child regardless of the father's action. Having an abortion after a rape doesn't create a solution to the problem, it just ends the life of an innocent child and adds more emotional damage to a woman who is already in pain.

Some people feel that abortion would be the best solution to this kind of crisis pregnancy. However, abortion isn't a good solution to any problem. Although a mother might get some relief immediately following an abortion, the emotional pain and physical risks that follow an abortion aren't worth the short term relief. There is no evidence that shows that abortion helps women in the long run, while there are studies which show many women suffer from the after affects of abortion later in life^{1,2}.

The Value of Life

Rape and incest are horrible acts that violate women. Abortion is a horrible act that violates a unborn child's right to life. Abortion isn't the cure for rape, only an intrusive procedure that has been found to compound a woman's mental and emotional pain from a rape or incest situation³. Two wrongs don't make a right and this is especially true with rape and abortion. We should be concerned about what will help a women through this difficult time, and there has never been any study to show that abortion is helpful to the mental and physical health of women who have been assaulted.

An unborn child is an innocent and precious creation no matter who his parents are, where he was conceived, or how he was conceived. Abortion sentences this unborn child to a punishment worse than the father's, who committed the crime. Women should think about what this child could become. Every unborn child is endowed with unique gifts and talents. No one will ever know what these gifts are if a child is not given the chance to be born.

Are children who were conceived through consensual intercourse more valuable than children conceived through forcible rape? Should a child pay with his life because his father is a rapist?

Bernard Nathanson, M.D., former abortionist and current prolife advocate, explains it by saying "The intent and moral status of the act of intercourse does not alter the value of the alpha (unborn child) that may result⁴."

The fact is that allowing abortion in instances of rape and incest would send a horrible message. It says that human life should only be protected if the woman consented to having sexual intercourse. This bases the protection of unborn children on the acts of the mother, not on the intrinsic value of human life. We are valuable because we are part of the human race, not because our mother consented to the act that created us. Rape and incest change the circumstances behind conception, but they don't change the fact that the unborn child is a unique individual who deserves the right to life.

Who really cares about victims of rape and incest?

In debates or speeches, pro-abortion advocates often bring up cases of rape and incest to intimidate and frustrate pro-lifers and to win over the audience. Focusing on rape and incest allows pro-abortion advocates to escape from disclosing their extreme positions with regards to partial-birth abortion, parental consent, and informed consent. Pro-abortion groups are for all abortions so to them it doesn't matter if the woman is a victim or not. As long as women are willing to pay for abortions, the abortion industry will offer abortion as a "solution" to an unplanned pregnancy.

The pro-abortion community uses the "hard cases" of abortion as an excuse to cover their true beliefs. Because abortion ends the life of a living innocent human being, no excuse defends this action.

Pro-life people with boldness need to address abortion with regards to rape and incest. Women who have been raped or who are victims of incest need help from family and community members. These women need to know that there are pregnancy counseling centers across the country that can

provide free help including food, clothes, and counseling. There are also “30 to 40 couples” waiting to adopt every newborn and there are numerous non-profit adoption agencies who can help birth mothers find loving homes for their children⁵.

Prolife people shouldn't be ashamed to address these issues. Prolife organizations don't profit from this help. It is the pro-abortion community that should be ashamed, as they manipulate and profit from victims of rape and incest. As pro-abortion groups continue to exploit these women and their situations, the prolife community will continue to offer life-affirming options to women during this troubling time.

Victims can become Victors

Many women who have been raped have overcome the pain of their assault and given birth to children who have made a difference in this world. The following is the story of Julie Makimaa, who, when she was a young woman, discovered that she was conceived during a rape.

Julie was placed for adoption in a Christian home. As a young married woman, Julie searched for her birth parents. After a long three and a half year search, she found her mother, Lee Ezell. Shortly after making contact with her birth mother, Julie was informed that she had been conceived during a rape. Learning this truth motivated Julie to take up the cause of “the least of God's children,” those conceived by sexual assault and considered expendable by society. She founded Fortress International to represent the concerns and needs of pregnant sexual assault victims and their children⁶.

Julie's life and work show that people and children who are conceived through rape and incest are no less valuable than the rest of the world's children. These children have unlimited potential to make their mark on society and their lives should not be snuffed out because of the circumstances around their conception. Julie says, “It doesn't matter how I began. What matters is who I will become.”

In “hard cases” like pregnancies that result from rape or incest, we must give each person what they deserve. For the rapist, time behind bars. For the victim, support, love, care, and compassion. For the unborn child, the precious gift of life.

Bringing the Truth to Light

In cases of pregnancy resulting from incest, abortion is the worst option for the victim. Abortion allows the perpetrator to neatly dispose of the evidence of his crime. Many young women who have been victims of incest see their pregnancy as a opportunity to get out of their incestuous relationship. A visible pregnancy forces the perpetrator to face his illegal activities and gives the victim a chance to reveal the truth about the situation she is in.

The act of incest is what needs to be stopped, not the pregnancy and the life of the unborn child. Abortion ends the child's life while hiding the act of incest, while birth saves the life of the child and can help to free the mother from an incestuous relationship.

Right to Life of Michigan Policy Statement

Abortion

Right to Life of Michigan is an organization of diverse and caring people united to protect the precious gift of innocent human life from fertilization to natural death. Abortion is any induced procedure performed with the sole and willful intent to cause the death of the unborn child. Therefore, Right to Life of Michigan is opposed to abortion in any form.

This position does not oppose medical treatment to save the life of the mother which may result in the unintended death of the child. The unintended death of the child is not to be construed as abortion. When the life of the mother is in danger, many times a doctor can treat both the mother and the unborn child separately. Because of medical advances, it is rare that the child's life cannot also be saved.

Before the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decisions legalizing all abortions, the Michigan statutes governing abortion provided an exception for the life of the mother.

Abortion is not the answer to a pregnancy which is the result of sexual assault. Right to Life abhors the violence of rape and the violation of incest but recognizes that caring for the victims cannot justify the killing of the innocent child. Abortion merely allows society to forget about the acts of rape and incest and pretend that justice has been done, while often the perpetrator is protected from the crime. Often the woman is left alone to deal with the emotions of assault and abortion.

A human being once conceived has the innate right to life regardless of disabilities or gender. Right to Life of Michigan opposes the conception of a child for the purpose of the harvesting of tissues or medical experimentation regardless of any benefit to other members of society.

It is absolutely indisputable that the life within the womb is a unique human being. To say that this irreplaceable life can be deliberately destroyed for any reason denies the intrinsic humanity of the unborn.

For further information relating to this issue and others, check out the following websites:

www.rtl.org - Right to Life of Michigan
www.pregnancycenters.org/ -Pregnancy Centers Online
www.afterabortion.org/rape.html -The Elliot Institute
www.nrlc.org - National Right to Life

References:

- ¹Barnard, C. The Long-Term Psycho-social Effects of Abortion. Portsmouth, N.H.: Institute For Pregnancy Loss., 1990.
²Erikson, R.C. "Abortion Trauma: Application of a Conflict Model." Pre and Perinatal Psychology Journal 8(1):33, Fall, 1993.
³Basile Uddo, "The Hard Cases: Rape, Incest, and Public Policy," The Zero People, edited by Jeff Lane Hensley. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1983, p. 113.
⁴Bernard N. Nathanson, M.D. Aborting America. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1979, p. 238.
⁵According to Alan Hazlett, president of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys. The Lansing State Journal, January 24, 2001.
⁶Reardon, Makimaa, & Sobie, ed., Victims and Victors. Springfield, Illinois: Acorn Books, 2000, p. 105.