

SESSION 1

Restoring Meaning to the Word "Abortion"

I. INTRODUCTION

A WHAT WILL YOU GAIN FROM THIS COURSE?

- 1. The goal of this course is to train you in the art of pro-life persuasion.
2. The pro-life view holds that elective abortion unjustly takes the life of a defenseless human being.
a. We want to persuade others of this fact.
b. We want to convince others never to choose abortion themselves.
c. We want to help others understand that if we're right, no government should ever allow abortion to take place.
3. We have a case that is extremely solid.
a. Our argument is sound. We have science, philosophy, and moral common sense on our side.
b. Those who oppose us use flawed reasoning and emotional appeals meant to obscure the real issue, which is that abortion kills innocent human beings.
4. If you master this material – and it's not hard – you will be able to enter any arena with full confidence that your case is solid and your appeal is just.

B YOU CAN DO IT IF YOU COMMIT TO LEARN THE MATERIAL.

- 1. You can help the pro-life movement – with our help – if you just decide to. We've done everything we can to ensure your success if you apply yourself.
2. This course will be an interactive learning experience. That means it employs a variety of elements, including hearing, seeing, and especially doing.
3. You will be involved in . . .
a. Discussion
b. Role-playing
c. Self-assessment quizzes
d. Recall exercises
e. Memory tools
f. Directed reflection
g. Class feedback
h. Games and competition

NOTES

Horizontal lines for taking notes.



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N O T E S

Lined area for taking notes.

- 4. Everything in the presentation is contained in this workbook, so you don't have to worry about taking notes.
- 5. All you have to do is participate and give faithful attention to the interactive exercises and the exercises intended for you to complete between class sessions.
- 6. If you decide to learn and follow our instructions, you will become an effective defender of millions of innocent children yet to be born.

© MAKING ABORTION UNTHINKABLE INVOLVES FOUR ESSENTIAL TASKS.

TASK #1 We must restore meaning to the word “abortion.”

TASK #2 We must simplify the abortion issue for those who think it's complex.

TASK #3 We must offer a sound, reasonable, coherent argument.

TASK #4 We must answer the objections of pro-abortion rhetoric.



AMBASSADOR SKILLS

Always keep in mind this basic action plan. It will help you organize your thoughts whenever the abortion issue arises. In fact, it's a great model to use when dealing with any issue.

- First, make the issue meaningful.
- Second, simplify the issue.
- Third, give a good argument.
- Finally, anticipate objections and answer them.

STUDENT INTERACTIVE



Think for a moment about the logical order of these four points. Rehearse them in your mind. Write them out in order without using your notes. (3 minutes)

Lined area for student interactive activity.



N O T E S

Lined area for taking notes.



WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST:

Pro-choice advocates defend abortion on the basis of choice, privacy, rape and incest, "It's my own body," economics, child abuse, physical defect, and other things. We must overcome this line of defense.

The common justifications for abortion are irrelevant because they avoid the real issue: abortion itself.

Therefore, we must address our first task: restoring meaning to the word "abortion."

II. THE PROBLEM: THE WORD "ABORTION" HAS LOST ALMOST ALL ITS MEANING FOR MOST AMERICANS.

A *Time* magazine cover story on AIDS appeals to the audience by saying, "This is a story about AIDS in Africa. Look at the pictures. Read the words. And then try not to care."



NOTICE THE FORMULA:

Look at the pictures. Listen to the story. Respond.

A THE WORD "ABORTION" HAS LOST ITS MEANING BECAUSE WE THINK AND LEARN VISUALLY, WITH PICTURES AND IMAGES.

1. We are visual learners.
2. Pictures influence us by stirring our emotions, and this profoundly affects how we resolve moral issues.
3. Graphic images have been a standard means of moral education.
 - a. *When you think of the Nazi holocaust, what images come to mind?*
 - b. *Why was the Vietnam anti-war protest so successful? We saw video footage of the war on our televisions every night.*

STUDENT INTERACTIVE



What are some of the images that come to mind for people when you mention the word "abortion"? Hint: What are the most frequent images used for news coverage of the abortion question? (1 minute)

Four horizontal lines for student response.



N O T E S

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

- 4. When the average person hears the word “abortion”, what image do you think comes to mind?
 - a. *Graphic images of pro-life protests*
 - b. *Graphic images of murdered abortion doctors or abortion-clinic violence*
- 5. Clearly, the word “abortion” does not mean the same thing to us as it does to many of our listeners.
 - a. *The word “abortion” makes pro-lifers think of killed babies.*
 - b. *The word “abortion” makes the general public think of radical pro-life advocates using destructive means to make their point.*



For the most part, the images have been working against us.

There’s another reason the word “abortion” has lost all it’s meaning to most Americans . . .

B SECOND, THE WORD “ABORTION” HAS LOST ITS MEANING BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE MOVED BY STORIES MORE THAN FACTS.

- 1. Pro-abortionists often use stories to support their cause.
 - a. *President Clinton defended his veto of the partial-birth abortion ban with stories, not facts, using three women who told how the procedure benefited them.*
 - 1) He did not give moral justification.
 - 2) He did not give scientific evidence to refute the fact that most partial-birth abortions are performed on perfectly healthy mothers carrying perfectly healthy babies.
 - 3) He only gave stories. Instead of offering stories to **support** his case, he offered stories **in place** of a case.
 - 4) In short, he changed the subject from the infants that were being killed to the mothers that he thought deserved our sympathy.
 - b. *An American Medical News article (3/3/97) shows that pro-abortionists understand the importance of stories to rally their cause. Katherine Kohlbert, consultant for the National Abortion Federation, urged members not to let pro-lifers sidetrack them with discussions on the specifics (i.e., facts) of the partial-birth procedure, but instead to tell stories of individual women:*

I urge incredible restraint here, to focus your message and stick to it, because otherwise we’ll get creamed. If the debate is whether the fetus feels pain, we lose. If the debate in the public arena is what’s the effect of anesthesia, we’ll lose. If the debate is whether or not women ought to be entitled to late abortion, we’ll probably lose. But if the debate is on the circumstances of individual women . . . then I think we can win these fights.²



N O T E S

Lined area for taking notes.

STUDENT INTERACTIVE



Think for a moment about the feelings you have about the use of graphic pictures of aborted children. Are they positive or negative? Next, regardless of how you feel, think of what may be some good reasons for using graphic visuals. Discuss your feelings and ideas with your partner. (5 minutes)

Lined area for student interaction and discussion.

GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

- d. A Newsweek article (1/26/98) reported, “Pro-choicers complained the [partial-birth] issue sensationalized the debate because 90% of abortions take place at 12 weeks or earlier. But Cynthia Gorney, author of *Articles of Faith*, a new book about the abortion wars, says that serious damage was done to the pro-abortion side: ‘With partial-birth, the right-to-life movement succeeded for the first time in forcing the country to really look at one awful abortion procedure.’”¹¹
- e. In a 1998 article in *George Magazine*, Naomi Wolf states, “The brutal imagery, along with the admission by pro-choice leaders that they had not been candid about how routinely the [partial-birth abortion] procedure was performed, instigated pro-choice audiences’ reevaluation of where they stood.” As a result, “the ground has shifted in the abortion wars.”¹²



N O T E S

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2. In other words, a pro-life strategy that combines graphic imagery with hard-hitting facts and arguments can win in the court of public opinion.

B GRAPHIC VISUAL TOOLS EVEN AFFECT PRO-ABORTION ADVOCATES.

1. In the *New York Times Magazine*, a pro-abortion journalist describes seeing a partial-birth abortion procedure:

It happened quickly. The back of the fetus’s skull was punctured. There was a tiny spurt of blood into the stainless steel waste can that sat on the floor beneath. A curette was inserted, a hose was attached and the deep rumble of the suction machinery near me kicked on. Into a clear plastic jar at my feet there appeared instantaneously about a half inch of pinkish fluid marked by tiny whitish-gray globules.

On some animal level, deep in my own brain stem, I knew what it was and leapt back in fear. . . . The procedure is profoundly upsetting. The image of that limp suspended fetus has not left me. By the time I traveled back home – two days later – I had trouble holding my eight-month-old daughter. That fetus appeared in my dreams.¹³

2. Abortion ceased to be an abstraction for pro-abortion author Verlyn Klinkenborg when he saw the remains of a ten-week-old preborn child – a severed hand and foot – in a medical tray. He recorded his candid impressions in his article “Violent Certainties” in *Harpers Magazine* (1/95):

I felt a profound and unmistakable kinship with the foot and hand in the tray, a kinship so strong it was like the rolling of the sea under my feet. I felt deeply unsettled . . . by the act of recognition. I was surprised by my own sadness, by the sense of loss that I felt. Strangely, I couldn’t tell what I was sad for, but I suspect that I was sad for myself, pathetic as that sounds, as though I was looking at a homuncular version of myself scattered in that basin. . . . To look from the hand in the tray to the hand holding the tray was the work of an immeasurably small moment, and to imagine the one growing into the other took no longer.¹⁴

At the same time, the author’s ability to sympathize with the abortion patient’s own story diminished radically:

I found it so much easier to be moved by the sight of the disembodied hand the size of a question mark gleaming under fluorescent lights, than it was to be moved by the woman from whom it had come, who was without work, without money, without education, without birth control. . . . In that tiny, naked hand there was the imputation of innocence.¹⁵

This is why . . .

C GRAPHIC VISUAL TOOLS TERRIFY ABORTION ADVOCATES.

1. Graphic visual aids like the short video *Harder Truth* force our opponents to discuss abortion against the backdrop of the true images in the video. It forces them to defend killing babies – which is the one thing they don’t want to do.

2. As abortion advocate Katherine Kohlbert stated earlier, if the debate is on what happens to the fetus, her side will “get creamed.” (See page 5)



N O T E S

- 3. Pro-abortion columnist Naomi Wolf wrote, “When someone holds up a model of a six-month-old fetus and a pair of surgical scissors, we say, ‘choice,’ and we lose.”¹⁶

① GRAPHIC VISUAL TOOLS ARE OUR MOST POWERFUL TRUTH TACTIC.

- 1. The word “abortion” has lost almost all it’s meaning to most Americans. They imagine a benign procedure that does little more than remove a tissue mass from the mother’s body.
- 2. Graphic images restore meaning to the word “abortion” like nothing else can, if they’re used appropriately. People may forget what you say, but they seldom forget what they see.

IV. OBJECTIONS FROM THE OPPOSITION: “THIS IS JUST EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION.”



AMBASSADOR SKILLS

When someone charges, “That’s manipulative,” ask them to describe precisely what they mean. In what way is showing pictures of aborted children manipulative rather than educational? Get them to specify what their objection is, and it will often become obvious that their objection is just self-serving rhetoric. You might also ask, “Did you see Schindler’s List or Saving Private Ryan? Any objections there?”

Ⓐ WE HAVE THREE RESPONSES TO THE “EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION” OBJECTION.

- 1. First, graphic visual tools are used to teach about other moral issues. It’s a standard and honorable technique in moral education.
 - a. *The history of the Nazi holocaust, for example, is taught with disturbing images.*

GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

- 1) Pictures of mutilated bodies stacked like cordwood are indispensable material because they best communicate the horror that raged in the death camps.
- 2) A copy of *Schindler’s List* was donated to every public and private high school in America. Movie theaters provided free screenings of the film during school hours to over 2 million students in 40 states.
 - a) *Educators reasoned that students could not possibly engage in an intellectually honest discussion of the Holocaust unless they first saw it.*¹⁷
 - b) *When a conservative congressman protested exposing young children to the film’s graphic content, 40 of his colleagues in the House of*



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N O T E S

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Representatives signed a letter expressing outrage at his comments. “While it’s true that Schindler’s List depicts nudity and graphic violence,” the letter states, “we believe that these scenes are critical to the film’s accurate portrayal of the dehumanizing horrors of the Holocaust. As noted TV critic Howard Rosenberg wrote in the Los Angeles Times, ‘Although almost too horrid to watch, these segments are absolutely essential.’”⁸

3) General Dwight Eisenhower didn’t grasp the full horror of the Nazi death camps until a Jewish aide badgered him to visit Ohrdruf. He recounted his experiences there by saying, “The things I saw beggar description . . . the visual evidence and verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were overpowering.”¹⁹ He ordered aids to ensure that as many GIs as possible saw the camps: “We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for. Now, at least, he will know what he is fighting against.”²⁰



- b. Graphic images are also used to educate about ethnic cleansing, terrorism, and embassy bombings, and are used for anti-smoking and animal rights campaigns. Therefore, censoring abortion images is inconsistent and intellectually dishonest.*
 - c. Graphic images provide good education, especially on these types of issues.*
2. Second, graphic visual tools are emotional because they tell the truth, and the truth is upsetting.
- a. The important question is, “Are the pictures true?” not, “Are the pictures emotional?” If they’re true, they ought to be admitted as evidence.*

AMBASSADOR SKILLS

Ask, “Why do you think these pictures upset people?” The question helps people realize that these pictures offend because they depict something deeply offensive happening to a defenseless human child. The reaction itself proves that our point is legitimate.

- b. The images should be admitted for discussion if we are to have a balanced discussion of the issue, as pro-abortion columnist Naomi Wolf (New Republic) states:
The pro-choice movement often treats with contempt the pro-lifers’ practice of holding up to our faces their disturbing graphics. . . .
How can we charge that it is vile and repulsive for pro-lifers to brandish vile and repulsive images if the images are real? To insist that the truth is in poor taste is the very height of hypocrisy. Besides, if these images are often the facts of the matter, and if we then claim that it is offensive for pro-choice women to be confronted by them, then we are making the judgment that*



N O T E S

Lined area for taking notes.

women are too inherently weak to face a truth about which they have to make a grave decision. This view of women is unworthy of feminism.²¹

c. The images help us see the truth of the matter, and that truth helps us reach the bottom of the horrifying issue. Gregg Cunningham of the Center for Bioethical Reform sums it up this way: “If something is so horrifying we can’t stand to look at it, perhaps we shouldn’t be tolerating it.”²²

3. Third, graphic visual tools are used to support our argument, not replace it.

GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

- a. We should **avoid** false appeals to emotion that replace good reasons.
- b. We should **allow** images that support good reasons.
- c. We should remind objectors that education allows for open-minded consideration of all the facts – including those that are repugnant.
- d. We should show images that move people to understand the truth of our argument.

- 1) The goal is not to manipulate people emotionally.
- 2) The goal is to convey the truth better than words ever could.

B HERE IS A SUMMARY OF OUR RESPONSE TO THE “EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION” OBJECTION.

- 1. Graphic visuals are a standard means to good education with other moral issues (such as the Holocaust, the Civil Rights movement, and other issues).
- 2. Graphic visuals are not manipulative if the images clarify truth rather than distort it.
- 3. Graphic visuals are used to support our argument, not replace it.



N O T E S

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GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF A RESPONSE TO THE "EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION" OBJECTION USED BY GREGG CUNNINGHAM, THE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTER FOR BIOETHICAL REFORM (CBR).

CBR sponsors GAP, the Genocide Awareness Project, which displays large photos of Holocaust victims, lynched African-Americans, and aborted children – with great effect and also great controversy – on campuses around the country.²³

To: "Alicia McGee"
Date: March 27, 2001
Subject: Genocide Awareness Project

Dear Ms. McGee,

Thank you for taking the time to share your response to our Genocide Awareness Project. We obviously disagree with your point of view.

Successful social reformers have always used horrifying pictures to dramatize injustice in this country and the culture never likes these "tactics." People tend to be offended by shocking pictures which depict atrocities in which they themselves have been complicit. Many other people tend to be offended by such pictures because they have been complacent in the face of injustice they know they should condemn, but they lack the courage or integrity to do so.

Racists in Selma, Alabama, wanted Martin Luther King to take his sickening pictures of black people being brutalized and display them only in black churches – where no one who didn't want to see them would have to look – instead of broadcasting them on television every night. But the First Amendment protected his right to expose injustice in public and it protects ours, too. Many students who pass by our display choose to look away and we respect that right. We don't run along side passersby and get in their faces with hand-held pictures.

What is most sad about your letter is that you seem more upset at us for showing these babies than you are at the doctors who killed them. Those doctors aren't bothering you, but we are. That is a sure sign of a selfish culture – people ignoring brutality so long as they don't have to see it. Yours is a classic "shoot the messenger" response. . . .

As long as abortion remains invisible, people will continue to ignore it and trivialize it. . . . When people stop killing these children, we will stop showing them.

Regards,
Gregg Cunningham
Center for Bioethical Reform



N O T E S

V. *L* EARN HOW TO USE GRAPHIC VISUAL AIDS.

A PRO-LIFE ADVOCATES OFTEN MAKE ONE OF TWO MISTAKES WHEN USING GRAPHIC VISUAL AIDS.

1. They use them poorly, by springing them on an unsuspecting audience with no warning.
2. They don’t use them at all.

B THERE IS A THIRD ALTERNATIVE: USE GRAPHIC VISUAL AIDS WISELY.

1. Warn listeners that the video contains graphic abortion pictures.
2. Advise them to look away or leave the room if they do not want to watch.
3. Tell them that the purpose is not to condemn anyone, but to clarify moral confusion.
4. When talking to a Christian audience, mention that our Lord is eager to forgive the sin of abortion and that this may be a good opportunity for confession and repentance.

SAMPLE WARNING:

To open our discussion of the question “What is the unborn?” I want to show a short videotape. Be advised that this seven-minute clip contains graphic pictures of abortion procedures. I’m alerting you in advance so no one feels coerced into watching. As a further courtesy, we have removed all narration from the film so that by simply looking away you can avoid its contents entirely. My purpose is not to condemn anyone, but to clarify confusion surrounding this moral issue.

I realize that some may object to these pictures on the grounds that they are emotionally manipulative. But the question is not, “Are the pictures emotional?” They are. The real question is, “Are the pictures true?” If so, they ought to be admitted as evidence. We should avoid empty appeals to emotion offered in place of good reasons. If, however, the pictures support the reasons and don’t obscure them, they serve a vital purpose. Truth is the issue here.

GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

5. Other films, such as the pro-life production *Silent Scream*, the commercial film *Nine Months*, and the Nova series on fetal development, are also helpful to show that abortion kills a defenseless human being.



N O T E S

Lined area for taking notes.

VI. VIEWING THE FILM *HARDER TRUTH*.

A I WANT TO PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE.

1. This video contains graphic abortion pictures.
2. Please feel free to look away if you do not wish to watch. You can leave the room or turn your head.
3. The purpose is not to condemn anyone, but to clarify confusion. This, I think, can best be done visually.
4. This short video (seven minutes) will be especially difficult for any of you who have actually had an abortion. Remember that our Lord is eager to forgive the sin of abortion. This may be a good time to take it to Him.

GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

B THE MATERIAL FOR THIS FILM CAME FROM TWO SOURCES.

1. Some of the pictures were taken of body parts in dumpsters behind an abortion clinic.
2. Some of the footage was taken in a foreign country where the physicians were willing to let the procedures be filmed.
3. The fetuses shown next to coins are in their eleventh week of gestation (first trimester).



BROKEN HEARTS, CHANGED BEHAVIOR

While no one visiting a pro-life crisis pregnancy center (CPC) should be coerced into watching graphic videos like Harder Truth, CPCs should still make them available to abortion-minded clients willing to watch. Unfortunately, some CPCs have a policy forbidding the use of abortion videos in counseling sessions. As unpleasant as it seems, though, breaking people’s hearts is often an indispensable step in changing their minds. Pictures change the way people feel and facts change the way they think. Both are vital in changing behavior. Stand to Reason has letters on file from CPC directors who have effectively used videos like Harder Truth in counseling situations. (Copies can be sent upon request.)



N O T E S

VII. *W*HAT MAIN POINTS DID WE COVER IN THIS SESSION?

A WE ESTABLISHED THE STRUCTURE OF OUR APPROACH TO MAKING ABORTION UNTHINKABLE.

TASK #1 We must *restore meaning* to the word abortion.

TASK #2 We must *simplify the abortion issue* for those who think it's complex.

TASK #3 We must *offer a sound, reasonable, coherent argument*.

TASK #4 We must *answer the objections* of pro-abortion rhetoric.

B WE TALKED ABOUT THE THREE REASONS WHY THE WORD "ABORTION" HAS LOST ITS MEANING FOR MOST AMERICANS.

1. First, we think and learn visually, with pictures and images.
2. Second, people are moved primarily by stories, not facts or arguments.
3. Third, we often want difficult problems to just go away.

C WE TALKED ABOUT MOVING THE DEBATE FROM THE ABSTRACT TO THE CONCRETE.

1. We can show that abortion kills babies.
2. We can visually awaken moral sensibilities with the careful use of powerful but truthful images that show people what abortion is.

D WE TALKED ABOUT HOW TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES THAT GRAPHIC IMAGES ARE MANIPULATIVE, AND HOW TO USE GRAPHIC VISUALS SENSITIVELY AND EFFECTIVELY.

1. When responding to the "emotional manipulation" objection . . .
 - a. Tell them that graphic visual aids are an effective and acceptable form of moral education.
 - b. Tell them that graphic visual aids are not manipulative if they clarify the truth rather than distort it.
 - c. Tell them that graphic visual aids are used to support our argument, not replace it.
2. To use graphic visuals sensitively and effectively . . .
 - a. Warn your listeners.
 - b. Advise them to look away if they don't want to watch.
 - c. Tell them that your purpose is not to condemn anyone.
 - d. When talking to a Christian audience, mention that our Lord is eager to forgive.

And don't forget . . .

- Restore meaning to the word abortion.
- Simplify the abortion issue.
- Offer a good argument.
- Answer the objections.



N O T E S

SELF-ASSESSMENT WITH ANSWERS

1. What are the four essential tasks in making abortion unthinkable?
 - We must restore meaning to the word abortion. We must simplify the abortion issue. We must offer a good argument. We must answer the objections of pro-abortion rhetoric.
2. What are three reasons the word abortion has lost its meaning for most Americans?
 - We think and learn visually. We respond more to stories than to facts. We want difficult problems to just go away.
3. How do we restore meaning to the word abortion?
 - Move the debate from the abstract to the concrete. Use images and stories to show that abortion actually kills babies.
4. What three points could you use to answer the objection that graphic visuals are simply emotional manipulation?
 - This technique is used all the time with other moral issues (e.g., the Holocaust, the Civil Rights movement, etc.). It's not manipulative if the images clarify truth rather than distort it. We also give an argument to support the visuals.
5. What two mistakes are often made with graphic visuals?
 - They are used poorly, with no warning given. They are not used at all.
6. What four things must we remember to do when using graphic visual aids?
 - Warn our listeners. Invite them to look away. Assure them your purpose is not to condemn. Mention the forgiveness available through Christ.

GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

1. This week, keep an eye out for dramatic images in print meant to influence your ideas on a topic. Cut them out and bring them to class.
2. Find a friend sympathetic to the pro-life view. Explain that you're taking a course that uses the video *Harder Truth*. Ask him what he thinks of the tactic, and then ask if you can give him your reasons for using graphic images. In your own words, describe the importance of restoring meaning to the word "abortion." Then give the three reasons that this tactic is not manipulative.
3. Read chapter 1 in *Precious Unborn Human Persons* by Gregory Koukl ("Only One Question," 9 pages) in preparation for the next session.
4. Review the self-assessment exercise above so you will be able to answer all the questions without the prompts. At the beginning of the next class, you will be given an exercise to demonstrate your mastery of these questions. Be prepared.
5. Skim over the next lesson in this workbook before the next class to prepare yourself for the session. This simple preview will help you understand the material when you cover it in the next session.



N O T E S

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The lynching of African-Americans by the KKK. Jewish genocide under the Third Reich. Abortion in America. Do these three have anything in common?

THE AMERICAN HOLOCAUST

by Gregory Koukl

Early this fall, the University of Kansas was rocked by a controversy that made headlines in the national press. Two pro-life groups – the Center for Bioethical Reform and the Heartland Life Network – had posted a “pictorial essay” at a prominent crossroads on campus.

Three seven-by-fourteen-foot billboard panels made the point. The first panel, a concentration camp photo of human bodies stacked like cordwood, read “Religious Choice.” The second, a photo of a lynched African-American, was captioned “Racial Choice.” The third photo – undeniably the most controversial – depicted well-defined forms of a severed arm and foot, the remnants of a first-trimester abortion, next to the American dime for perspective. Underneath the picture were the words “Reproductive Choice.”

The comparison made between abortion and other forms of genocide – the lynching of African-Americans and the systematic ethnic cleansing of Jews by Nazis in Europe – was more than many could take.

Though neither sponsoring group is an activist group in the classic sense – their principle goal is public education – their presence on campus stimulated a fury that resulted in two unprovoked assaults recorded in the press. One Catholic seminary student was punched in the mouth by an African-American student. In another incident, the 17-year-old daughter of the president of Heartland Life Network was nearly run down while carrying one of the panels through the parking lot. She was pulled to safety at the last moment, but when the sign slipped from her grasp, the speeding car ran it over.

AN AMERICAN HOLOCAUST?

The Jews were most offended by the depiction, and the comparison made between abortion and the Jewish Holocaust was the topic of conversation on many mainstream talk shows, even on the West Coast. Calling the 1.4 million abortions per year – most often carried out during the first trimester – a holocaust was considered an offense to the memory of the 6 million Jews that perished at the hands of the Third Reich. Such “extremism” even alienated some moderates who, though not strictly pro-life, are deeply concerned with the morality of abortion.

In a general appeal to moral intuition, Dennis Prager, a radio talk-show host in Los Angeles, argued for the self-evidence of the faulty comparison between the destruction of first-trimester fetuses and the murder of the Jews. Mothers don’t grieve over the death of a miscarried fetus the same way they’d grieve over the death of a child, Prager argued. Therefore, an abortion, especially one executed early in the pregnancy, should not be equated with homicide.



N O T E S

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Further, would Jews consider it a holocaust if 6 million Jewish fetuses were aborted? Many recoil at such a thought. The comparison of abortion with the Holocaust was considered an insult to the memory of those who suffered under the Third Reich.

TWO THOUGHTS

I want to pass two thoughts on to you. The first is my own, and the second was volunteered by a caller to my radio program.

First, the illustration posed an appeal to an intuition – an intuition that tells us the Jewish Holocaust under the Nazis is obviously more heinous, especially to the Jews, than the same number of abortions would be.

This appeal begs the question. The fact that abortion doesn't seem as bad as concentration camps and gas chambers is misleading because its force depends on a tacit denial that the unborn are bona fide human beings. If they are, then who would say that taking the life of the same number of youngsters (in this case very young) is not the moral equivalent of taking the lives of the same number of adolescents and adults? In fact, we're generally more shocked by the taking of young life than old, though we would hold that both are equally valuable in their humanity.

My caller argued that there does seem to be a sense in which we could decry the tragedy of the abortion holocaust, yet say that the Nazi Holocaust was a greater evil. Both are holocausts and unspeakably evil, purely on the merit of the number of human lives sacrificed. However, in the case of the Jewish Holocaust, the evil is compounded by the circumstances under which it was done.

Aborted human beings die relatively quickly and, by comparison, with little or no mental anguish. (This is certainly not always true, but that's another issue.) Jews, on the other hand, were treated like animals – terrorized, persecuted, raped, beaten, and eventually murdered. The second crime is truly worse than the first, not because the unborn were not human beings, but because of the barbaric conditions under which the Nazis exterminated undesirables.

An illustration may be helpful here. What if 1 million day-old children were vaporized in an instant through some high-tech weapon of mass destruction? Would that qualify as a holocaust? It would, but the circumstances would be different. They would not have suffered the same brutalities that the Holocaust Jews did. Furthermore, there would be no orphans left behind, no important posts in society left vacant, and no long-term relationships destroyed.

Clearly, not all holocausts are equal. The numerous examples of ethnic cleansings in this century are made more egregious by the additional suffering, loss, and assault on human dignity they entail. Still, I suspect most would consider the destruction of 1 million day-old infants a moral catastrophe, a holocaust of significant magnitude simply because valuable human beings were wantonly destroyed.



N O T E S

TWO TYPES OF VALUE

Appealing to the grief one feels at the loss of a fetus versus the loss of a child, a spouse, or a friend misses a very important distinction. There are two ways that a thing can be valuable.

To value something simply means to acknowledge its worth. Any particular thing can be valued – considered worthwhile – for one of two reasons. First, a thing can be valuable to me, such as the computer I use, my particular friendships, the fishing rods in my boat locker, my clothes, or my fondness for Puccini arias. These and a host of other things reflect my personal, subjective values that other people may not share. This value is called *instrumental value*.

Sometimes, though, we don’t value the things we ought to value. What some have called the “crisis of values” in this country reflects not the absence of all values, but the inability to value the right things. We don’t value things that have genuine worth in themselves – honesty, personal responsibility, or other human beings, for example. This second sense of value that recognizes a thing’s worth in itself is called *intrinsic value*.

Often things share both kinds of value. I may weep over the drive-by shooting of a friend because I have lost a dear companion, but also because of the wanton sacrifice of a human life valuable in itself. However, the feeling of grief over something lost does not, by itself, capture these distinctions. Therefore, grief is not a useful guide to determine if something lost was innately and intrinsically worthwhile. I might grieve the passing of a family pet, but not shed a tear over hundreds murdered in Kosovo. My grief merely signals a thing’s value to me, not its intrinsic worth. Indeed, most don’t feel grief over the Jewish Holocaust, though they recognize its intrinsic moral tragedy.

A mother may not mourn a miscarriage the way she mourns a lost child. Jews may not feel the same sense of loss over 6 million abortions as they do over the death of 6 million other Jews. But this sense of loss (or lack of it) by itself tells us nothing about the innate worth of either. Our grief signals that something valuable has been lost, but it does not show whether the thing was valuable only to us or was valuable in itself. That distinction must be determined a different way.

THE REAL ISSUE

This brings us to the most important question in the entire debate: What is the unborn? You must answer that question before you can answer how we should treat the fetus, what protections we ought to give it, and how far we should go to protect it.

Until we answer that question, we can’t make any judgment about the morality of abortion or the moral consequences of any protest against it. If it’s possible that an unborn child is as fully human in his or her essential nature as you and I, then he or she deserves the same legal protections – and legal sanctions against abuse – that you and I enjoy.

That’s the hard truth, and that’s why deep thinking ought to be applied to this question. Unfortunately, this vital issue is almost never discussed in the public square at large.



N O T E S

CALIFORNIA HOMICIDE STATUTES

Ironically, the California homicide statutes offer us some insight here. Some observers denounce the use of the word “murder” to describe the destruction of a fetus. Yet this language is completely consistent with California law.

Under the category “Crimes against the Person,” 187, murder is defined this way: “Murder is the unlawful killing of a human being, or a fetus, with malice aforethought.” After the definition, we find among the exceptions that “this section shall not apply to any person who commits an act which results in the death of a fetus if any of the following apply: The act complied with the Therapeutic Abortion Act. . . . The act was solicited, aided, abetted, or consented to by the mother of the fetus.”

This exception in the California statute leads, of course, to a very troubling concern. The foundational moral concept underlying all homicide statutes is that human beings have innate value. Destroying a human being is the most serious of crimes. We condone it only in extreme circumstances, such as self-defense in the face of lethal attack, capital punishment, and war. Even then there remains a sense that killing is deeply tragic because of the intrinsic worth of the human whose life is taken.

Here’s the problem. The only difference between legal abortion and punishable homicide in the state of California is the consent of the mother. How does the mere consent of the mother change the innate value of the unborn human inside her? However one answers this question, abortion remains legal in California. But this can’t hide a second fact: Apart from the stipulated exceptions, killing the unborn is still considered homicide. It’s murder. Those who do so are prosecuted.

On the fundamental issue, then – that unborn human beings have innate value – pro-life campaigners are not extreme, but in concert with the law’s general assessment of the sanctity of the life of the unborn. Pro-lifers are not inconsistent; the law is.

ETHNIC CLEANSING IN THE WOMB

There’s another problem. Disqualifying the unborn’s claim to life because of some physical characteristic, such as its primitive level of development or a congenital defect, is precisely what ethnic cleansing is about. Ethnic cleansing appalls us for one simple reason: Valuable human beings are eradicated on the basis of some physical “inadequacy.” The person is condemned for his ethnicity; his skin, hair, or eye color, shape of face, or blood ancestry are considered different from the accepted norm.

Most often, abortion happens for the same reason. Though the fetus is a human being – a fact established by science – she does not have the physical characteristics or attributes that qualify her for protection. She’s unwanted and in the way, so she’s eliminated.

If it’s wrong in the first case, it’s wrong in the second case. The rationales are identical. The motive is the same. And in both cases, the result is the death of a valuable human being.



N O T E S

PICTURE THIS

Whether it's a wise tactic to compare the victims of racial or Nazi injustice with the injustice of abortion is a debatable matter. It may not be the best way to win people over, and tactical considerations are important. However, we live in a culture that thinks and learns visually. This profoundly affects how people resolve moral issues. The word “abortion” has lost its meaning in the prevailing atmosphere of choice and personal autonomy. Sometimes we must visually awaken moral sensibilities to move the debate from the abstract to the concrete – from choice to the death of the child.

Photographs can do that. The question is not, Are the pictures emotional? They are. The real question is, Are the pictures accurate? Are the pictures true?

The photos on the first two panels used on the billboard at the University of Kansas are not new. You can find them in history books, where they serve to inspire the conscience of young students to oppose injustice. Those photos tell a true story. But so does the photo on the third panel. The tiny limbs are unmistakable. They belong to a very small human being. Do these photos have anything in common? I think they do.

When others complain that the signs are extreme, point out that displaying the picture is not what's most offensive. What ought to offend us most is what the picture captures: the destruction of an intrinsically valuable human life.



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N O T E S

ENDNOTES

- 1 A picture of a child sucking his thumb in the womb can be found at <http://www.abortioninfo.net>. A picture of inter-uterine surgery with a child holding the surgeon’s finger can be found at <http://www.pagerealm.com/handhope/bighand.gif>.
- 2 “Abortion Rights Leader Urges End to Half Truths,” *American Medical News*, 3 March 1998.
- 3 Jack Hitt, “Who Will Do Abortions Here?” *New York Times Magazine*, 18 January 1998.
- 4 Command Research poll (commissioned by Life Issues, Cincinnati, OH), February 1992.
- 5 “Medical Discrimination against Children with Disabilities,” *A Report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights*, September 1989, 106. See also Stephen Wall, *et al*, “Death in the Intensive Care Nursery: Physician Practice of Withdrawing and Withholding Life Support,” *Pediatrics* (January 1997): 64 – 70. The article notes that 23 percent of the deaths attributed to the withdrawing or withholding of treatment from newborns was based solely on “quality of life” considerations. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Pediatric Association has issued instructions allowing euthanasia for babies who are *not* terminally ill, but simply facing chronic sickness or mental retardation. The new rules let doctors decide whether treatment is in “the best interest of the patient,” said Dr. Peter Sauer, co-author of the instructions. (Cited in “Death on Trial,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 25 April 1994, 36.)
- 6 Cited in *The Los Angeles Times*, 4 June 1997. For an excellent overview of the moral issues involved, see Paul Wilkes, “The Case Against Doctor-Assisted Suicide,” *New York Times Magazine*, 21 July 1996, and J. P. Moreland and Norman Geisler, *The Life and Death Debate* (Westport: Praeger, 1990), 63 – 102.
- 7 These partial-birth abortion drawings can be located at <http://www.priestsforlife.org/partialbirth.html#showit>.
- 8 *USA Today*, CNN/Gallup Poll, 1997. Cited in Ruth Padawer, “Partial-Birth Battle Changing Public Views,” *USA Today*, 17 November 1997.
- 9 Call 1-800-2-REASON to order the video.
- 10 “Trenton Is Turning from Its Longtime Support of Abortion Rights,” *New York Times*, 22 February 1998.
- 11 “Arguing at a Fever Pitch,” *Newsweek*, 26 January 1998, 67.
- 12 Naomi Wolf, “The Dead Baby Boom,” *George Magazine*, 27 January 1998.
- 13 Jack Hitt, “Who Will Do Abortions Here?,” *New York Times Magazine*, 18 January 1999.
- 14 Verlyn Klinkenborg, “Violent Certainties,” *Harpers Magazine*, January 1995, 46 – 7.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 47.



N O T E S

16 Naomi Wolf, “Pro-Choice and Pro-Life,” *New York Times*, 3 April 1997.

17 John Davies, “Moving Pictures,” *Times Education Supplement*, 16 September 1994, A-24. See also *Social Education* (October 1995): 365 – 66.

18 Letter (dated 3 March 1997) sent to NBC and Ford Motor officials after the film aired on television.

19 Scott Miller, “Denial of the Holocaust,” *Social Education* (October, 1995): 344, and *U.S. News & World Report*, 3 April 1995.

20 *U.S. News & World Report*, 3 April 1995.

21 Naomi Wolf, “Our Bodies, Our Souls,” *New Republic*, 16 October 1996.

22 Gregg Cunningham is the executive director of the Center for Bioethical Reform. The Center can be reached at 1-800-959-9775.

23 Visit www.abortionno.org for more information on GAP and CBR.

24 Some pro-life advocates insist that the use of graphic visual aids will only offend people who might otherwise consider our view, but we have yet to hear anyone present good evidence to support this assertion. In fact, when confronted with direct evidence (like that noted above) that graphic visuals change public opinion *for the better*, these pro-life advocates resort to story-telling: “Well, I know people who were offended by your video *Harder Truth*.” Besides ignoring the evidence, this new assertion misses the point.

The issue is not, Will some people be offended by a showing of *Harder Truth*? (a few might be), but, Does the number of people offended by the video exceed those motivated to change because of it? In light of the evidence, why any friend of the pro-life cause would want to strip us of our most powerful weapon is beyond our ability to comprehend.

