

# A B O R T I O N

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## NOT Even When the Pregnancy Is the Result of a Rape?



“Opponents of abortion rights walk a fine line when they condone any abortion. Based on their own definition, they are guilty of being accessories to ‘murder’ in certain circumstances by accepting rape and incest exceptions.”<sup>1</sup>

This quote from the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (now the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice) shows that even they recognize the inconsistency of making exceptions to the pro-life position!

Human life begins at conception. Pro-life people take this fact seriously, and understand it to mean—as it does mean—that the person living inside the womb is as real as you or I. Therefore, the preborn child must be treated equally, and be given the same protection you and I enjoy under our Constitution.

### **What About Rape?**

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It is wrong to discriminate against people who have been born because of the manner in which they came into the world, and it is also wrong to discriminate against preborn people by attempting to justify abortion in cases where the mother has been raped. Sadly, sometimes people who otherwise believe that the preborn child deserves the right to life fail to see a preborn child conceived through rape as fully human. An authentic pro-life position rejects abortion in any circumstances!

### **A Closer Look**

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Why do some people believe abortion can be justified in the case of rape? Some people believe in

good faith that when rape results in pregnancy, abortion can remove the painful evidence of that rape. But will it?

Will abortion erase the memory of the rape or heal the emotional and physical pain of the assault? Will abortion, in effect, erase the rape of a woman? Hardly. Rape is an act of violence inflicted upon a woman. She is an innocent victim, and this knowledge may someday help her come to terms with the rape and rebuild her life. Abortion, on the other hand, is an act of violence that a mother inflicts on her own child. Through abortion, the mother becomes the aggressor, and this knowledge may haunt her long after she has dealt with the rape.

Abortion only re-victimizes women who have been raped. Anyone who thinks abortion is justified for rape victims should consider the following:

This new human being, who is uniquely the mother’s child, may well be the only good—the only healing—that will come to this woman from her rape experience. The woman deserves affirmation, love and time to recover from the assault. Her baby is not a monster, and telling a woman that her best option is to get rid of her baby as soon as possible may only reinforce in her mind the idea that she is dirty, or a monster, herself.

In any pregnancy, the preborn child stimulates hormones in the mother’s body to nurture the baby. These hormones often cause wide mood swings, which are especially influential to the mother who has been traumatized by rape and is aghast at the thought of being pregnant. The bonding between the mother and child that often occurs in pregnancy

hasn't yet made the child seem "real" to the mother, real though the child is, and abortion seems to be a quick fix.

Counselors who work with rape victims are familiar with the emotional trauma many women undergo as a result of rape. A woman often believes "that she is somehow tainted, dirty, and dehumanized" and knows "that many will see her either as pitiful and helpless or as disgusting and defiled."<sup>2</sup> It has been reported that women who have had abortions often deal with exactly the same psychological symptoms as the rape victim: depression, guilt, low self-esteem, uncontrollable sadness and withdrawal.

The "quick fix" abortion "solution" is condescending and can only serve to reaffirm the sense of helplessness and vulnerability. "Attitudes projected by others and not the pregnancy itself pose the central problem to the pregnant victim."<sup>3</sup> When the trauma of rape is compounded by the trauma of abortion, it is hardly possible that abortion will lessen the emotional impact of the assault.

Many people mistakenly believe that pregnancy resulting from rape is very common. For a number of reasons, however, only a small number of women become pregnant as a result of sexual assault. Why? Many factors affect female fertility. Not only does age affect it, but so does a woman's natural cycle, which renders her able to conceive only approximately 4-6 days out of the month, and severe emotional trauma, which may prevent ovulation.<sup>4</sup> Factors affecting male fertility include sexual dysfunction, and drug and alcohol use. It is estimated that, on average, only 0.49 percent—or one half of one percent—of women who are raped become pregnant as a result.<sup>5</sup>

It is a cruel irony that while a father cannot receive the death penalty for the crime of rape, his preborn child conceived in that rape can be executed without trial, jury or judge. Moreover, justice to the mother will not be achieved by sending her to the local abortion clinic to solve her problem. A mother's real needs must be met. Providing life-affirming medical,

financial and emotional care meets these needs, and pro-life groups around the country—more than 2,900 crisis pregnancy centers, and groups like Life After Assault League—are doing this work.

## **The Point: No Exceptions**

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Pro-lifers are hypocrites if they condemn the murder of a preborn child in one circumstance but allow it in another. Think for a moment about your circle of friends. Can you tell just by looking at them how they were conceived? If one had been conceived in rape, would you treat him or her differently? Of course not. Regardless of how a life begins, each person is as valuable as the next. It is no different with preborn children's lives. They are valuable because they are human beings.

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1. Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, "Words of Choice" booklet, 1991, Washington, DC, p. 24.
  2. Sandra Mahkorn, M.D., and William Dolan, M.D., "Sexual Assault and Pregnancy," in *New Perspectives on Human Abortion*, Thomas Hilgers, M.D., et al, eds., Aletheia Books, Frederick, MD, 1981, p. 182.
  3. Sandra Mahkorn, "Pregnancy and Sexual Assault," in *The Psychological Aspects of Abortion*, David Mall and Walter F. Watts, M.D., eds., University Publications of America, Inc., 1979, pp. 65-69.
  4. R.B. Everett and G.K. Jemerson, "The Rape Victim." *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 50, 1977, p. 88.
  5. Brian Clowes, Ph.D., *Pro-Life Activists' Encyclopedia*, 1993, pp. 79-4, fig. 79-1.

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