Life Matters Journal

Fall 2011
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This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars, that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, half-way attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called "Left" or "Right", and instead embrace a consistent life ethic toward *all* victims of violence.

We are Life Matters Journal, and we're here to defang the viper that is legalized homicide.

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cover art: "We Begin and We End by Nature's Hand" by Sara Tang

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Life Matters Journal is a new publication dedicated to opening a forum for discourse on all issues related to human life and dignity. It will be published quarterly in an online format, with the option to buy a hardcopy subscription for $12/issue, or $48/year. Send correspondence to *lifemattersjournal@gmail.com*, and visit http://lifemattersjournal.blogspot.com to read the web copy of the journal.

Aimee Bedoy, *Executive Editor*

Aimee is a 22-year-old graduate of Carnegie Mellon University with a B.A. in Ethics, History, and Public Policy. She was the President of the Life Matters Club (formerly known as the Respect Life Club) at CMU for 2 years and helped usher in the Consistent Life Ethic as the primary dialogue within the movement on campus. She founded the journal in August of 2011 and seeks to unify the movement for all human life across boundaries of religion, politics, and lifestyle.

Who's Who of Life Matters Journal (Part 1)

Nicholas Neal, *Managing Editor*

Nicholas is a 20-year-old student at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where he studies cinema and political science. He was raised as a pro-lifer, but it was after diving deeper into pro-life philosophy that he discovered the consistent life ethic and saw the connections between different acts of homicide that both political parties support. Nicholas embraced consistency, even writing and encouraging his governor to abolish the death penalty, while simultaneously getting involved in anti-abortion activism on campus. Today he is dedicated to creating a culture of life and peace.

DISCLAIMER:

The views presented in the journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the consistent life ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.

What is the Consistent Life Ethic?

by Nicholas Neal

We often hear partisan pundits criticize their opponents for the opponents' inconsistencies about killing people. We hear that pro-life advocates do not respect the sanctity of life in war zones. We hear that peace advocates are not so peaceful when it comes to unborn children. What is the answer to this inconsistency? The simple answer is being consistent. This ideological position is known as the consistent life ethic.

The foundation for this ethic is the idea of Natural Rights: the notion that our rights come from our humanity and not the whims of a government or even a majority of the people. Since we were school children, we were taught to recite the three main natural rights listed in the Declaration of Independence: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It may not be a coincidence that the "right to life" is the first right mentioned. This is because all other rights depend on it. Rights to free speech, free thought, free religion, or free enterprise are all useless to those who are dead. The right to life also differs from other rights in that, if it is violated, the violation cannot be remedied. If you violate someone's right to liberty by capturing, imprisoning, or enslaving them, they can always be set free. If you violate someone's right to property by theft or arson, they can always be compensated. If you violate someone's right to life, however by killing them, nothing that can be done to restore the life you have taken. For these reasons, the human right to life is the most important and most sacred right.

In order to respect the human right to life, we must either reject or at least severely limit legalized homicide. Many people recognize this principle and apply it in different areas. The pro-life movement respects human life by opposing the legalized homicide of unborn children. The anti-war movement respects human life by opposing the legalized homicide of both people in different countries and those in the military. The anti-euthanasia movement respects human life by opposing the legalized homicide of the elderly. The anti-death penalty movement respects human life by opposing the legalized homicide of death row inmates. The consistent life ethic is a recognition of the common theme in all of these positions and all these movements.

Now, some say that the consistent life ethic is too broad, that it links issues that shouldn't be linked. For example, a common criticism by pro-lifers of the consistent life ethic position on capital punishment is that abortion kills the innocent while capital punishment kills the guilty, and thus opposing one and supporting

the other is not inconsistent. There are however, three similarities that link the four main acts of legalized homicide (abortion, unjust war, capital punishment, and euthanasia.) These similarities are reason enough to unite opposition to all these forms of homicide in a single moral vision:

1. They are all threats to innocent life.

This is obvious in the case of euthanasia and abortion. We often forget, however, that the death penalty and war also kill innocent people. Since 1973, there have been 138 exonerations of death row inmates. Thanks to new DNA evidence, there have been cases where people have been discovered to be innocent after they have been executed. Because the death penalty is carried out by flawed human beings, execution of the innocentwill always be a possibility. War has also killed the innocent. A blatant example of this would be the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in which children no less innocent than Anne Frank were incinerated in their sleep. We also know that there have been, to date, at least 100,000 civilian casualties from our war in Iraq, in addition to the half a million children who died as a result of the sanctions we placed on them in the 1990s. Some may argue that these innocent deaths were accidental rather than intentional and therefore are still not comparable to abortion. Nevertheless, we know for certain that starting these wars creates conditions in which innocent human life is directly threatened. While the targeting of innocents is not always intentional, the creation of situations in which innocent life is severely, and directly threatened—namely, starting a war--is intentional.

2. These are all acts of aggressive violence.

By aggressive, I mean that they are initiations of violence rather than defensive uses of violence. Now, some would point to war in general and say that it can be used defensively. I am talking about unjust wars, however. It is one thing to repel an invading army. It is another thing altogether to attack another country that has not attacked you on the basis of a suspicion that it might attack you in the future or in order to spread democracy and respect for human rights—despite the fact that our wars kill the very foreigners that our government claims to want to save. Preemptive wars, as well as economic sanctions that always punish a country's populace rather than its leader are acts of aggression, not defense. Others might even claim that elective abortion is an act of defense, in the sense that a child physically attached to his or her mother is committing an act of aggression if the mother does not want to continue the attachment. The problem with this argument, however, is that the child was placed into the mother's womb because of external forces and natural characteristics that are totally beyond the child's control. To say that unborn children are aggressors is like saying that kidnapping victims are guilty of breaking and entering into the places where they are being held captive. Killing another human being for a primary characteristic is aggression, not defense. The death penalty is also an act of aggression. When murderers are detained in prison, they are no longer a threat to society and thus killing them is not an act of defense but rather an act of aggression. The Euthanasia of Terry Schaivo was an act of aggression, it was done to her, even though she had not requested it in her will. The bottom line is that when we give flawed human beings the power to kill non-defensively it will always be abused.

3. These acts of homicide have non-lethal alternatives.

For abortion, the alternative is adoption.

For war, the alternative is diplomacy—as well as refusing to fund dictators through foreign aid. For capital punishment, the alternative is life imprisonment. For euthanasia, the alternative is the continuation of life support. A viable alternative to an undesirable action makes said action unnecessary. Thus when we have non-lethal alternatives to lethal actions, said lethal actions are unnecessary. I would go even further and say that an unnecessary homicide is an immoral homicide.

Finally, a great reason to embrace consistency is the need for credibility. If anything has hurt pro-lifer's credibility, it is the marriage of pro-life and pro-war ideology. When we as pro-lifers try to convince people that all human life is sacred but then take a step back and say "well, except in the cases of war and capital punishment" our larger message is compromised and the sanctity of life suddenly becomes morally relative rather than morally absolute—and I thought pro-lifers were against moral relativism. Peace activists also lose credibility when they fail to question whether dismembering a child in the womb is really "giving peace a chance." The fact that legalized abortion in America has killed more human beings than all of our wars combined is a glaring example of the hypocrisy of the marriage of pro-peace and pro-abortion views. Why not end the almost four-decade war on fetuses?

When we open our eyes to the consistent ethic of life, then we also see how there is quite literally a "deadly" consistency in the opposite direction. We are today a nation in which prenatal infanticide is legalized, where the death penalty is still the law, where preemptive war is acceptable foreign policy, and where legalized euthanasia is a possibility. If anything, our country is heading toward a "consistent death ethic" rather than a consistent life ethic. We need a coalition of both pro-life activists and pro-peace activists to call for a society in which the human right to live is truly affirmed. The activists involved in these issues have more in common than they think, mainly the goal of defanging the viper that is legalized homicide, and they would be far more effective if, rather than staying separate for the sake of political orthodoxy, they worked together in support of a consistent ethic of life.

Why we exist - and a call for support

by Aimee Bedoy

Dear friend for life,

Today I am releasing the first issue in a plan to bridge the various divides that separate the members of many brilliant groups that uphold the dignity of human life. I would like to introduce you to a new idea that has gained support amongst many youth and has a foundling organization of which to be envious: the Life Matters Journal will be a publication for our generation, that will cross the boundaries that have been drawn over the years and bring together all for life. To introduce myself a short bit, I am Aimee Bedoy, the former president of Carnegie Mellon Life Matters (formerly Respect Life Club), and a recent graduate of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I am 22 years old, with a B.A. in Ethics, History & Public Policy, and I am an advocate of the right to life for all human beings.

We at Life Matters Journal believe that the right to life is primary and foundational for any other liberty to be granted; indeed we cannot act on our liberties if we do not first live! We therefore hold dear to our hearts the causes against abortion, unjust war, euthanasia, capital punishment, embryonic stem cell research, torture, domestic abuse, and human trafficking. We know that this is indeed a broad range of issues, but we firmly believe that they are all intertwined, and, like Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Many things have kept our groups separate, at times we have opposed one another or brought about unnecessary division in a movement that needs unity more than anything else. To bring about justice for all, and the respect for all human life that we endeavor to promulgate within our world, we must stand together regardless of creed or political background. Even in my own pro-life group on campus we have had members who are Agnostic, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish; we have had members who are liberal, conservative, libertarian, and independent. However, there is an unsettling trend that I notice in my work with students and young people alike: at conferences, talks, and debates, one religion or political view is nearly always brought to the forefront in such a way that it alienated those within our groups who do not follow the same religious path or political persuasion. We cannot let a pride of religion or political party or lack thereof be the downfall of this movement: while we struggle against each other and alienate the youth of our nation, more die in our nation and around the world. We have a responsibility to our fellow man to stand up for human dignity,

regardless of what we believe.

The youth are a more secular generation than that of their parents, and the way we interact with our young people on these issues must acknowledge this fact. We cannot change hearts and minds if we continue to speak to that which they do not relate; while religious arguments may have a place in a sermon or amongst a given ministry group, the campus culture of today is largely secular and we must equip our young people to respond to it. To make a bigger impact on our campuses and around our world for life, we must be willing to have these conversations on the value of human life without the use of religious arguments. To individuals who prescribe to no specific spirituality, or one to which a specific religious argument does not pertain, we must be willing to discuss life matters from a secular perspective.

Politics aside, we must realize that the most important issue of our day is the neglect of the dignity of human life. Those on all sides of the political spectrum should be able to put down their arms and join together on these issues. We must create a space for these issues to be discussed, for opinions to be delineated for the cause of life without the fetters of political parties or the leash of any one particular religion.

That being said, we at Life Matters Journal are a non-partisan, secular group dedicated to the cause of life. We are starting a journal to ignite discussion on our campuses and in our communities. In order to reach out to our peers, we cannot stand on religious arguments alone, and we cannot choose a political side. The consistent life ethic is not for any one group or for any one position.

Will you join us and support our efforts to create effective arguments and have more potent discussions? Will you contribute your ideas, your time, and your resources?

I entreat you to consider the value of our work, and become a partner for all life with us.

Please check out our brand new Facebook page here:
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Life-Matters-Journal/255776494446827?ref=ts

And if you are interested in writing for our journal on any of the issues in our Consistent Life Ethic, please respond in a separate message to lifemattersjournal@gmail.com.

Thank you so much for your time and your interest in the cause of life,

Aimee Bedoy
Executive Editor

CURRENT EVENTS AND CONSISTENT LIFE

THE REBELS STORMING TRIPOLI

by Nicholas Neal & Aimee Bedoy

On Tuesday august 23rd, the rebel forces in Libya stormed Gadhafi's capital of Tripoli, thus declaring victory over the tyrannical leader who had once imposed unjust and inhumane purification laws against his own people. After 42 years in power as an autocratic dictator in Libya, Muammar Gadhafi has been removed from power by rebels within his own borders. Gadhafi is currently out of power and in hiding from NATO forces, but in an effort to kill Gadhafi and damage his chances of resuming power, NATO has (perhaps accidentally) bombed civilian neighborhoods and caused many collateral deaths in the cause.

When the Obama administration had intervened in Libya via Tomahawk missiles and no-fly zones, our nation tangled itself up in the liberation fight in which the Libyan rebels have since shown a fierce fervor and an adept skill. The fact of the matter is that our nation's intervention in Libya was not only unconstitutional but also caused the deaths of the very civilians that we were supposedly trying to save. How can we be so careless, and what good does it do to cause so much collateral damage just to take down one dictator and his regime?

Gadhafi's rule has been justly overthrown by those who have a responsibility to hold their leaders accountable. The United States has once again involved itself in the civil conflict of another nation without a proper declaration of war, through NATO and by Obama's accord. If anything the overthrow of Gadhafi should weaken our case for continuing to be involved there, and we have no right to continue to build up our own view of proper government or ideology within a state who is not our own. Indeed, while we perhaps have a responsibility to peoples of other nations to join them against tyranny if they so request it, our job is not to police the foundation of government systems or to be the culprit of the deaths of so many civilians.

Our ethic both admonishes us to support the overthrow of unjust tyranny in the face of so many violations against the rights of humanity, but there must be a certain care for the dignity of all. But we must not be careless in our battles, and perhaps we should ask ourselves if we too often jump into battle when the rebels act more prudently and justly in the face of tyranny.

A Terse Nonpartisan Assessment of our Political prospects

by Julia Smucker

It's that time of year again – or has been, since sometime last year. The mud is flying left and right as a motley crew of politicians competes for our nation's volatile confidence. And who are they trying to appeal to? For a myriad of confounding reasons, our national political discourse has become so polemicized that most prominent candidates, as well as many commentators, seem able to do little more than preach to particular choirs within their own parties. Of course, the challenge of transcending polemics is by no means a new dilemma for any voter with a consistent ethic of life in mind. To elect the least inconsistently life-affirming among candidates will probably never be a straightforward task. What follows here, then, is not so much intended as a voting guide for the consistent life ethicist, nor even an amateur political analysis, as it is an unabashedly subjective evaluation of our current presidential prospects in an attempt to open the conversation in some new direction.

Observing the emerging field of Republican candidates, even an avowed Independent has to wonder what strange power the tea party influences have had in swaying the Republican Party in such a direction that the most prominent players have become those making the most consistently outrageous statements – taking poorly supported shots at health care reform, Social Security, and the EPA, to name a few recent examples. Even fresher on everybody's mind is the disturbing round of applause earned by Rick Perry in the Sept. 7 Republican debate for his reference to the high number of executions that have taken place in Texas under his leadership. Perry and Michele Bachmann, both among the more popular Republican candidates, are cartoonishly hyperpartisan and, more unsettlingly, have demonstrated very little concern for the vulnerable. Even in the case of abortion, which is generally an exception to this trend, the manner in which they have presented their stance has more often than not been so outlandish and caricatured that it ends up harming the pro-life message, raising doubts as to whether they are really speaking out of concern for vulnerable lives or simply making a knee-jerk appeal to where they think their ideological base is. After all, should not a compassion for life in utero naturally expand to the same compassion for the poor and the sick?

A few other candidates such as John Huntsman and Ron Paul, though more distant in the running, are proof that a more balanced approach has not altogether disappeared from the Republican Party. Paul may indeed be the closest thing to a consistent life candidate that we have seen from either party in a long time, making admirable connections between a pro-life and pro-peace position, which is anomalous to both parties even when these remain constrained to their narrower definitions as merely antiabortion and antiwar. Even left-leaning political comedian Jon Stewart has come to Paul's defense, suggesting that his ability to draw these connections has largely contributed to his alienation from his own party. All that being said, his extreme antiregulatory stance driven by a libertarian ideology is cause for concern, especially when this plays out as antagonism toward any government intervention in crisis situations. A sink-or-swim attitude toward those affected by disaster is ultimately not very pro-life. Still, it remains to his credit that he is not content to simply toe the party line, but has garnered critique from both the left and the right for being "too centrist."

The same "accusation" of centrism has also been levied at President Obama, whose nuanced and conciliatory approach is more sorely needed than ever. With the obvious exception of his uncritical support of abortion, his stated positions on major life issues have tended toward the more life-affirming. Unfortunately, his track record on many of these issues in practice, including the drawn-out entanglement in two undeclared wars and the failure to close Guantanamo Bay, has disappointingly not turned out to be a clear improvement over that of his predecessor George W. Bush. However, it is at least one remaining point in his favor that he is still attempting to be conciliatory, which is so against the grain of the current political atmosphere that it's little wonder he hasn't lived up to the superhuman expectations that were put on him when he entered into office. Given the polemically charged climate that he has to deal with, his hard-won success at passing health care reform is all the more remarkable, and the recent reprioritization of deportations is an additional step in the direction of a more consistent affirmation of human dignity.

If indeed universal human dignity is at the root of the consistent life ethic, then the practice of such an ethic should apply as much to the civility of our discourse as to the positions we take on policy issues. Those of us who are concerned about voting from a consistent life perspective are highly unlikely to find an ideal candidate for any major office in the foreseeable future. Yet as we weigh our options, perhaps we may begin to affect the climate of public discourse by setting an example of mutual respect, even as we continue to hold our elected officials accountable to the promotion of peace, the protection of all life, and the upholding of the common good.

The Abolition of Capital Punishment In Illinois

by Nicholas Neal

The abolition of the death penalty in Illinois began when Governor George Ryan placed a moratorium on capital punishment in the state in 2000, after seeing an alarming number of death row inmates being exonerated. Eleven years later, the Illinois General assembly passed a bill officially abolishing capital punishment in Illinois. It was then up to Pat Quinn to sign it. Now, although Governor Quinn is a Democrat, he had previously spoken in favor of capital punishment and his wish for it simply to be reformed rather than abolished. When the bill came to his desk, he did not immediately sign or veto it, but rather announced that he would be weighing the views of both sides on this issue.

Along with obvious capital punishment opponents such as the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, Amnesty International, and the ACLU, religious and pro-life groups also called for abolition. These groups included the Catholic Conference of Illinois and my college pro-life group "Saluki Respect Life." I remember the president of our group giving us letters that had been composed by the local Newman center, encouraging Quinn to abolish capital punishment. In addition to these letters, we sent Quinn an email in Saluki Respect Life's name recommending abolition.

The New York Times reported that Quinn's evaluation of this issue had involved a variety of activities, from examining cases of exonerations because of DNA evidence to discussing the abolition question at the dinner table. When he finally decided to change his position and abolish capital punishment, however, Quinn cited one influence by name, the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, the former archbishop of Chicago (Quinn was even photographed holding Bernardin's famous book The Gift of Peace after signing the death penalty abolition bill into law). Although not the first to come up with the concept, Cardinal Bernardin was one of the first to use the phrase "Consistent Life Ethic." He linked issues such as abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, and nuclear war under a unified moral vision known as the "seamless garment."

I am definitely proud of my state for doing this, as was John-Paul Deddens of the Illinois Students for Life. The death penalty has not yet been fully abolished in Illinois, however. Yes, the death penalty that is carried out in prisons has been ended, but the other death penalty--the one that is carried out in abortion clinics all around my state, against young human beings whose only crime is existing inconveniently--has yet to be abolished.

FAMILY PLANNING FREEDOM IS PRO-LIFE

by Mary Krane Derr

The right to access the full range of voluntary family planning methods is often neglected or actively undermined in the name of prolife, especially but not exclusively in the United States. Yet there are nine good reasons-at least- why fostering this right is essential to respect in practical deed for all human lives, already born and unborn.

1. Family Planning Freedom Prevents Millions of Human Deaths Every Year.

> Voluntary access to modern methods of family planning annually prevents 112.3 million induced abortions, 21.94 million miscarriages, 1.17 million newborn deaths, and 230,000 maternal deaths worldwide. Pretty staggering numbers, aren't they? (Guttmacher Institute & UNFPA 2009).

2. Lack of Birth Control Is a Documented Cause of Abortion and Resulting Maternal and Prenatal Deaths.

> Globally, approximately 215 million women- mostly in the Two Thirds World- desire but cannot access modern methods of voluntary family planning. If 100 million of these women have access by 2015, 54 million abortions will be prevented. Simply by making family planning accessible to this gravely unserved population, 90 percent of all global maternal deaths from abortion can be averted, along with the accompanying prenatal deaths (Cleland et al. 2006; Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition; UNFPA Fact Sheet).

3. Family Planning Freedom Measurably Reduces Abortion Rates.

> The world's highest abortion rates are in Vietnam & Cuba, where family planning access is extremely limited. The world's lowest abortion rates are in Netherlands & Belgium, where access is excellent. Over the 1990s, the once-astronomical abortion rates in formerly Soviet-dominated nations dropped between 25% and 50%, thanks to dramatically better contraceptive quality & access. In Bangladesh, a boost in family planning services had a very similar effect.
>
> There is only one known kind of exception to "contraception reduces abortion": when the desire/need for smaller families outstrips the availability of family planning. The solution to this problem is a planned scaleup of services that stays ahead of growing

demand. In other words, the solution is more contraception, not less (Family Health International).

4. Contraceptives Truly Prevent Rather Than Take Lives.

The majority of family planning methods unquestionably work by preventing conception. These include male sterilization, female sterilization, female condoms, male condoms, diaphragms, cervical caps, spermicides, natural family planning/fertility awareness methods (NFP/FAM), abstinence, and sexual practices other than penis-vagina intercourse.

On the other hand, hormonal contraceptives, including emergency contraceptives and intrauterine devices (IUDs) are all often dismissed as abortifacient because they supposedly work by hindering implantation of already conceived embryos. Some of these methods may alter the endometrium or uterine lining, but this does not necessarily mean that these changes in the endometrium or any other effects disrupt implantation.

Although we have not yet been able to examine each and every available hormonal contraceptive or IUD, All Our Lives' scrutiny of peer-reviewed scientific literature calls these suppositions about abortifacient actions into question.

- Combined estrogen-progestin and progestin-only methods (such as "the pill," various Injectables, implants, patches and rings): These all highly effectively both hinder ovulation and thicken cervical mucus, so that sperm cannot pass through. There is no evidence to date that any of these methods hinder implantation (World Health Organization 2006).

- Emergency contraceptives: Levonorgestrel-only or Plan B type ECs definitely interfere with ovulation and possibly also hinder sperm function and transport. According to direct experimental evidence, they have no mechanism for interfering with implantation. Yet Plan B-type ECs can help victims of sexual assault and contraceptive sabotage prevent unintended pregnancies and abortions. (International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics/FIGO and the International consortium on Emergency Contraception 2011).

- IUDs: According to current medical consensus, there is no experimental evidence that either Paragard type (Copper T) or Mirena-type (levonorgestrel-releasing) IUDs interfere with implantation. There is plenty of direct experimental evidence that they have such high effectiveness rates because they damage sperm and thicken the cervical mucus, thus hindering sperm transport. Mirena-type IUDs may also promote secretion of glycodelin A, a substance that hinders sperm-egg binding, during the fertile phase when it is not otherwise present. (Bednarek and Jensen 2009; Hatcher et al. 2008).

5. Contraception Can Be & Is Practiced Without a "Contraceptive Mentality."

One argument against contraception is that it promotes a "contraceptive mentality." In other words, women who use "artificial" birth control will abort any children they conceive if their contraception does not work as intended. This claim does not explain a substantial number of pregnancy outcomes.

For example, each year in the US, about half- just over 3 million- pregnancies are unintended. About ~1.55 million of these unplanned pregnancies happen to contraceptive users,

whether through inconsistent or incorrect use, or method failure despite correct and consistent use. About 60% of these contraceptive users do not have abortions. And how much higher would that 60% figure be if people who respect unborn lives also respected the lives, needs, and freedoms of contraceptive users? (Spiedel, Harper and Shields 2008)

6. Some Contraceptives Help Prevent HIV/ AIDS.

In countries as different from one another as Uganda, Thailand and the Netherlands, certain contraceptives have prevented millions of new infections, including infections of pregnant women and their unborn babies, human beings who might have otherwise faced pressures towards abortion or faced great illness and premature death from HIV/AIDS itself. These methods are latex and polyurethane male condoms, female condoms, and dual protection strategies (for example, male condom plus combined oral contraceptives; abstinence from penis-vagina sex plus oral sex with dams or anal sex with condoms) (UNAIDS).

7. Most Abortion Opponents Favor Contraception.

The US has perhaps the world's most polarized abortion debate. Many sectors of the organized prolife movement contribute to this situation through their professed "neutrality" or outright active hostility towards contraception. At the same time, polling data shows that 80 percent of self-identified prolifers support women's right of access to contraception, and 77 percent support Title X, the public program affording low-income women access to family planning (National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association).

8. Family Planning Freedom Is a Recognized Universal Human Right, and One That Encompasses All Prevention Methods.

Since 1968, the right to freedom in pregnancy prevention and spacing has been affirmed by over 35 crucial documents of the universal human rights movement. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the forced population control challenging Cairo International Conference on Population & Development (1994).

These human rights documents make it very clear that the universal human right of family planning freedom includes protection against coercion to use or not use certain method(s). In other words, this right protects both people with religious beliefs that restrict them to certain methods, like abstinence or natural family planning, as much as it protects people whose beliefs encompass the full range of conception prevention techniques. (International Conference on Family Planning).

9. Family Planning Freedom Upholds the Sexual/ Reproductive and Life Rights of People With Disabilities.

Restricting family planning to abstinence and "natural" methods is broadly discriminatory, but it falls particularly hard on people and especially female human beings with disabilities. Some women have disabilities that make pregnancy risky, even life-threatening, for themselves and any children they might conceive. They themselves should be the ones to decide whether or not to take on those risks, through the prevention methods of their choice. It is a matter of their sexual/reproductive rights and even their right to life.

Natural family planning/fertility awareness is ineffective & medically inadvisable for women with some medical conditions or on certain medications (such as some antibiotic, antiseizure, & psychiatric drugs) that disrupt timing of ovulation, cervical secretions, and/or body temperature. At the same time, enforced lifelong abstinence as the only other possible "choice" perpetuates stereotypes of people with disabilities as asexual or possessed of monstrous, rapacious sexuality that needs to be forcibly curbed. This is-the very same prejudice that leads to sterilization abuse & pressures to abort against people with disabilities (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities; Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers).

Mary Krane Derr is the Co-Founder of All Our Lives, a pro-life organization dedicated to reproductive peace and ending abortion by ending its causes.

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JUST WAR, JUST PEACE, OR WHAT?

by Bill Samuel

What should our attitude – as individuals, social movements and nations – be toward war? When, if ever, is war justifiable either as to our own participation or as a decision of a nation or social movement? How do we get to a meaningful peace? These questions have been discussed and debated for millennia, and may be even more vital in this day of advanced weaponry. They have been discussed by people from many different religious traditions, and from none. I will present some background and perspectives on the subject, primarily reflecting the ways Christians have grappled with these questions.

For the first three centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians were largely agreed that a follower of Jesus Christ could not be involved in the killing of other human beings.[1] For example, early church leader Tertullian (155-230 A.D.) said, "Under no circumstances should a true Christian draw the sword." Other prominent early church leaders such as Origen, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement, and Athanasius similarly held that a Christian could not be part of killing people.

In this period, the primary concern of the Christian community was the faithfulness of the believer. They were much less concerned with addressing how the state should act. The emphasis was on being a faith community which exemplified the way of life to which they were called by Christ, not on directly influencing the political sphere. The early Christian emphasis on believers not engaging in war was strongly reflected later in the testimony of the Historic Peace Churches (Quakers, Mennonites and Brethren).

With the conversion of Emperor Constantine, there was no longer the separation of the Christian community from the state which had existed in earlier days. Constantine was a great general, and the change in political status of the church resulted in church leaders revisiting the question of war and peace, this time with greater concern for the legitimacy of state actions.

Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Acquinas and others in the early decades of Constantinian Christianity developed a view of war called the Just War Theory (JWT), which became the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. The JWT assumes war may be justified under certain circumstances, and is concerned with the criteria to be used to determine whether a war is just.

In its November 1993 statement, The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace[2], the

States Conference of Catholic Bishops, outlines two sets of JWT criteria. The first set is about when lethal force may be justified:

- Just Cause: force may be used only to correct a grave, public evil, i.e., aggression or massive violation of the basic rights of whole populations;

- Comparative Justice: while there may be rights and wrongs on all sides of a conflict, to override the presumption against the use of force the injustice suffered by one party must significantly outweigh that suffered by the other;

- Legitimate Authority: only duly constituted public authorities may use deadly force or wage war;

- Right Intention: force may be used only in a truly just cause and solely for that purpose;

- Probability of Success: arms may not be used in a futile cause or in a case where disproportionate measures are required to achieve success;

- Proportionality: the overall destruction expected from the use of force must be outweighed by the good to be achieved;

- Last Resort: force may be used only after all peaceful alternatives have been seriously tried and exhausted.

The second set is the moral standards for the conduct of armed conflict:

- Noncombatant Immunity: civilians may not be the object of direct attack, and military personnel must take due care to avoid and minimize indirect harm to civilians;

- Proportionality: in the conduct of hostilities, efforts must be made to attain military objectives with no more force than is militarily necessary and to avoid disproportionate collateral damage to civilian life and property;

- Right Intention: even in the midst of conflict, the aim of political and military leaders must be peace with justice, so that acts of vengeance and indiscriminate violence, whether by individuals, military units or governments, are forbidden.

Within the Catholic Church as well as the rest of the Christian community, there has been increasing discussion about whether the JWT needs to be revisited. Most notably, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who has since become Pope Benedict XVI) said in a press conference about the Iraq War on May 2, 2003, "given the new weapons that make possible destructions that go beyond the combatant groups, today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war'."

In my opinion, JWT has been a failure. Although widely accepted in theory, it seems to have done little to forestall wars or to impact how they are conducted. Instead, the idea that wars can be justified has been used as a cover to justify wars of leaders' own choosing. Generally those who conduct wars claim their wars are just, even though they don't really meet the JWT criteria. And there will usually be religious leaders who will bless each war their nation conducts, like the five evangelical leaders who blessed the Iraq War – which any honest analysis would show fell far short of JWT criteria – in a letter to then President Bush. [3] And, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger recognized, modern warfare with its ability to kill remotely usually results in a large majority of casualties being civilians rather than combatants.

In recent years, there has been increasing discussion of the concept of just peace. This has

not jelled into a codified theory which churches or other groups have adopted. In fact, there are some very different tendencies among those who have written or spoken of the concept, which I will address here as two different streams, although the reality of the dialogue on this concept is more complex than that.

One stream seems to be basically a refinement of JWT, or even a broader attempt to justify contemporary wars. In a May 2003 editorial for the Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs at Ashland University[4], John Moser suggests a just peace theory based on the concept of war not being so horrible due to technological advances, including non-lethal weapons. President Obama, in his Nobel Peace Prize speech[5], spoke of a just peace based on respect for human rights. The President acknowledged that "this concept of 'just war' was rarely observed." However, he said, "the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace." The President has gone on to lead the nation in conducting three simultaneous wars abroad, and using Special Forces in 120 countries. Some might wonder if the President's approach is really a contemporary version of the "Pax Romana" of Jesus' time where the theory was that peace is something a dominant imperial power imposes by force on the world.

The other stream seems to be concerned with uniting the ancient Christian abhorrence of war with a sensitivity to the social conditions which foster peace. One inspiration for this is the Riverside Church speech given by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.[6] In it, he spoke of "the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism," thus tying together peace and social justice issues.

Just Peace Theory in this stream has been developed by Christian ethicists such as Dr. Glen Harold Stassen[7] and Dr. Valerie Elverton Dixon[8]. Dr. Dixon unambiguously writes, "there such thing as a just war."[9] She maintains that "our security is found, not in the power of the military, but in the power of a better idea, in the power of a better vision of what it means to be human."[10] She elaborates, "A just peace is only possible through the presence of justice."[11]

The holistic vision of Jesus, Dr. King, Dr. Stassen and Dr. Dixon seems to me to be what the world needs. It reflects the fact that the means does condition the ends. You don't get peace by waging war. You don't get justice by acting unjustly. While the President and conventional wisdom may deride this vision as too idealistic and impractical, I believe it is in fact the only practical way to achieve a far better world.

One way of addressing the question of the practicality of eschewing war is the theory of the creativity of the foreclosed option.[12] When you foreclose one option, it inspires human creativity to explore other options that one might never have even dreamed about without the one option being foreclosed. Violent "solutions" seem quick and easy. We are used to using them. We tend to ignore the long-term negative impacts they have. If we foreclose the use of violence, we may be forced to draw upon our creativity to find other alternatives. While they may be harder to envision and perhaps even implement, they may not have the negative side effects that violent approaches have.

The wave of predominantly nonviolent topplings of oppressive regimes we have seen in my lifetime are a good example. The initiators of these efforts often did not come from a basis of religious or ideological commitment to nonviolence. However, seeing the regime's massive ability to use violence, they have determined that violent overthrow was impractical. Thus they have often adopted a nonviolent discipline which results in massive sympathy for them when the regime uses violence against them. Examples can be seen in other areas such as foreclosing abortion and foreclosing the

eating of meat. Having worked in the environmental area, I am keenly aware in the history of environmental regulation that industries which argued that the regulations would impose insurmountable burdens found that instead they unleashed the creativity of their scientists and engineers, and that the costs of compliance were often far less than anticipated and in some cases companies actually achieved savings through more efficient, more environmentally responsible processes.

What we need is more people pursuing the opportunity for a better world which can be realized by adopting a holistic just peace ethic and unleashing human creativity by foreclosing options where the means are inconsistent with the ends sought.

Bill Samuel has been involved in the peace movement since his childhood in the 1950's. As a teenager in the 1960's, he became involved in the civil rights movement, with his first arrest or "baptism by fire" (as a pastor called it) at age 16 in an open housing sit-in. In the 1970's, he began to be involved also in the pro-life movement. He currently serves as President of Consistent Life (http://www.consistent-life.org/), an international network for peace, justice and life.

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JUSTICE IN THE FACE OF UNKNOWING

by Aimee Bedoy & Steven Oetjen

A quandary of major proportions faces our nation in this day and age. It could be a matter of life and death for countless persons – we cannot truly be sure. This paper seeks to examine abortion through the lens of Constitutional law, science, and justice, and lastly to apply these faculties to the Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act recently passed in Nebraska. In brief, our recommendation is always to stand for justice and ultimately the natural rights of all persons.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Constitution, Justice, Personhood and Abortion Law

Abortion & Present Constitutional Law

As law currently stands within the United States, the ability to procure an abortion is a constitutional right, which should not be impeded by an "undue burden." In Planned Parenthood v. Casey, the Supreme Court disseminated a decision which stated as law that "the right of the woman to choose to have an abortion before viability and to obtain it without undue interference from the State"[1] is a result of Roe's "essential holding" of the right to abortion. According to this statement, provided that new State laws which may place restrictions on the abortion procedure did not provide an "undue interference from the State," they would be constitutional.

The existing allocation of constitutional rights according to judicial decisions regards the woman's right to choose abortion as "central to personal dignity and autonomy", and views it as a matter of "the highest privacy and the most personal nature."[2] However, the Supreme Court also claimed in Akron v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health, Inc. that "the State possesses compellinginterests in the protection of potential human life . . . throughout pregnancy."[3] Constitutionally, we are asked to draw the line between the value of potential human life and the value of a woman's so-called right to choose to terminate her pregnancy.

The Constitution & Societal Pressures and Mores

The Court in Roe v. Wade made a claim to ignorance as regards fetal life, and weighed historical belief against the not entirely fully formed beliefs of various modern groups.[4] In this case, our Constitution was interpreted to be a relative compass defined by popular voice, and utilitarian meter based on assigned cultural value. This is not the foundation of the U.S. Constitution -- contrariwise, it is to represent a moral, objective justice that may be unpopular (i.e. banning slavery through the 13th Amendment), but claims truth and righteousness as federal

mandate. Yet in the cases of Roe v. Wadeand PP v. Casey, the decisions of the courts could not claim to be "grounded truly in principle, not as compromises with social and political pressures having, as such, no bearing on the principled choices that the Court is obliged to make."[5] The laws that states can use to restrict abortion may not place an "undue burden"[6] on women – however, there is no measure for what consists of an "undue burden" and this policy may deem void those laws which may significantly decrease the amount of abortions, for any reason. These decisions were based on contemporary and societal persuasion, and were given the power of law that easily condone and encourage abortion.

If truth and morality are claimed as part of the Constitutional mandate, what may have been voted on state by state has become a matter of national importance through Roe v. Wade. Though states may attack the Roe decision and the right to abortion little by little through State impositions, "Roe's mandate for abortion on demand... rendered compromise impossible for the future, and required the entire issue to be resolved uniformly, at the national level."[7] States may be allowed to add restrictions through political law, but given that the right to abortion was made federally and not locally, the debate has become one of absolutes. But the only real absolute truth in the matter is that which is outlined in the Constitution: the responsibility of the federal government is to protect the life, liberty, and property of all persons. If the government is to protect these rights of persons, there must be a definition of personhood.

Constitutional Law & Personhood

In reality, according to the U.S. Constitution, "personhood" has yet to be defined according to any specific factors. Citizenship is granted to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States," but no State shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law (emphasis added)."[8] Citizen and person seem to be two different ideas. Though many rights are afforded and protected by the U.S. Government to all persons based on the Constitution, personhood is not defined by age, place, gender, or race; neither is it articulated by development, dependency, sexual orientation, creed, nor size.

In order to more clearly delineate who is afforded all of the rights granted to persons, and therefore have a totally just Constitutional law on abortion, we as a nation must define personhood. Some specific interpretation must be done that would define this concept according to a great number of categories. This process must be undertaken at a national level; if different states define personhood differently, we may very well be violating the rights of true persons while defining them as "others" in an attempt to negate their personhood. This would be a great injustice.

Justice & Abortion Law

Justice can be divided into natural rights and positive rights. Natural rights are those which are due to persons by their very nature, such as life and liberty. Positive rights are those which are granted to individuals based on agreement or consent. A legislature can formulate positive rights by agreement, and these have their place so long as they do not violate natural rights. Thus, different states can justly make different laws as long as none of the laws allow the violation of natural rights.

Regarding abortion, the positive right guaranteed by the Constitution is the right to privacy. Different laws can exist justly in different states as long as they protect this right to privacy without violating any natural rights. States are free to regulate privacy in abortion in different ways, as is fitting for different regions. If a state law preserves the positive right of privacy in such a way that it fails to protect a natural right, however, it is unjust. The agreement of a legislature cannot make such a law truly just.

The justice of an action considers not only the relation to its agent, but also to others affected. The justice of abortion laws is not only dependent on the privacy of the woman involved in the abortion, but also on the natural rights of other persons. Harm against any other person's natural rights is an injustice that a positive right cannot justly supersede.

Personhood as a Binary Condition

Personhood is a binary condition: either you are a person or you are not a person. While no claim is being made here to know whether the unborn are truly persons, if justice, personhood, and Constitutional law are to be viewed through another lens, consider the case of historical slavery laws in our own country.

According to the Constitution as it was first written, the unjust policy both allowing slavery and acknowledging slaves as "three fifths" of a person degraded the worth of particular human beings based on their enslaved status and likely based on the color of their skin. It allowed for slavery, prevented them from voting, and denied them any rights to autonomy or property. In Scott v. Sanford, members of the African race "were not numbered among its 'people or citizens.'"[9] This we eventually and painfully discovered to be unjust and accordingly outlawed slavery and assumed to protect the rights of all persons.

However, the law is not what made these individuals persons: they were persons before they were granted freedom and rights. Though the law allowed for a devastating degradation of the African race because they were not popularly viewed as persons, whether or not a being is popularly viewed as a person is not truly indicative of whether or not it is a person. Further we see that we must be careful when proclaiming personhood, so that we may never again perpetrate such an evil against justice as was done in the case of slavery.

Science, Ethical Frameworks & Abortion Policy

Science as Objective Information

In our modern day world dominated by scientific reasoning and advanced technology, so often our society views science as an objective meter for what is or can be reasonably theorized to be. While it is true that advancing science increasingly shows us the scientific truth of situations, the results of the evidence presented are always viewed through the eyes of politics or our existing ethical frameworks. Thus, though science is often thought to be an infallible entity, it is constantly changing, and is consistently influenced by external forces.

Science Within an Ethical Framework

Our ethics are preconceptualizations of norms and practical applications. These frameworks are determined and set and we make moral decisions based on the complex systems we create for ourselves. Science can only inform these frameworks, it cannot define them.

The problem with relative ethical frameworks then lies in the fact that manifold different moralities are held within the United States, and our justice system tells us that outlining one particular system of morality (based on religion, claims to truth, etc.) would be wrong – we must allow for liberty in all cases except where one person's liberty infringes upon the life, liberty, or property of another. This question again leads us back to the idea of personhood: if our morality cannot define personhood due to the pluarlity of belief, can science dictate it for us?

Science & Personhood

Due to the fact that science can only inform ethics and cannot define it, we cannot use science to define personhood. Only a set of ethics can delineate how science will be used to create policy. The personhood of a being is not a scientific question. Science can only answer the queries we place before it, like, "personhood is defined by a heart-

-beat, when does a heartbeat start?", or "personhood is defined by brainwaves, when do brainwaves start?", or perhaps "personhood is defined by humanity, when does the being become human?" As you can see, science can answer these questions, but our morality is not defined by the scientific evidence placed before us; rather, it is based entirely on the morals which we already base our lives on.[10]

EVALUATION & APPLICATION

Nebraska Law Background

The new Nebraska Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act was passed in April 2010. This law, passed by a unicameral legislature in a very conservative Nebraska, was created to "[restrict] abortion after twenty weeks declaring that the state has a compelling interest in the life of a pain-capable unborn child at and after twenty weeks."[11] The law also has a disclaimer for the safety of the life of the mother, stating that abortion after 20 weeks gestation would be permissible if she "has a condition which so complicates her medical condition as to necessitate the abortion of her pregnancy to avert death or to avert serious risk of substantial or irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function or…it is necessary to preserve the life of an unborn child."[12]

Nebraska Law, Prior Abortion Law, & Science

The Issue of Maternal Health

In Roe v. Wade, it was determined that prior laws against abortion had by and large been devoted to the health of the mother, since there had been no societal consensus on the ethical issue of the beginning of human personhood. Roe v. Wade was decided on the trimester system on the basis of maternal health, such that "a State may regulate the abortion procedure to the extent that the regulation reasonably relates to the preservation and protection of maternal health."

The Nebraska ban on abortion after 20 weeks could be seen as legitimate according to Roe if only it were to protect the mother's life and if abortion were more dangerous for her. This is not the basis of the Nebraska law, but according to Planned Parenthood v. Casey, "Even in the earliest stages of pregnancy, the State may enact rules and regulations designed to encourage her to know that there are philosophic and social arguments of great weight that can be brought to bear in favor of continuing the pregnancy to full term."[13] Thus, within this framework based solely on maternal health, the Nebraska Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act is not based on lawful grounds because most emphasis is placed on the health and well-being of the fetus.

One issue that has been largely ignored by legislators in regards to abortion law is that of poor maternal psychological health due to abortion. Granted, not all women suffer from psychological harms after abortion, but according to studies done in the British Medical Journal, from their study cohort, the suicide rate associated with abortion was 6 times greater than for live birth, and the rate of mental health claims was 17 percent higher for post-abortive women compared to women who had carried their pregnancies to term.[14] Protecting maternal health does not only lie in maternal mortality in childbirth, but also in the effects of abortion and childbirth. This aspect has heretofore been put by the wayside in regards to legislation – Nebraska has taken this aspect into account perhaps only peripherally, allowing only for abortion after 20 weeks for physical health and not psychological health. Perhaps this is the realization of the research that carrying the pregnancy to term will have less psychological harm than a later-term abortion.

The Issue of Fetal Health

Fetal health was not of true concern to the court during Roe v. Wade – personhood could not be defined and thus whether it was life or potential life was up for debate and should be decided on an

individual basis: thus allowing for free choice for women to abort their fetuses if they saw fit. The Nebraska Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act brings into focus that which our society often views as deplorable: causing another being, especially one that is human, pain.

The science that supports this particular case is clarified by Dr. Kanwaljeet Anand of the University of Arkansas Medical Center, who through his recent research has clarified that the human brain does not need a cerebral cortex to process pain, has stated that when the cortical subplate is present, pain can be felt.[15] This subplate begins forming as early as 17 weeks, and pain can be felt as early as 20 weeks gestation[16]. The framework that society has deemed worthy, that of causing pain, is substantiated by thorough and unbiased research in neurobiology. However, we do not know if this framework matters at all according to constitutional law. If the health of the fetus did not matter in Roe, we may be constitutionally compelled to continue to offer abortion services after 20 weeks if the unborn human being is indeed not a person.

Nebraska Law & Constitutional Law

Though, according to Roe v. Wade and PP v. Casey, the State has a compelling interest in the life or potential life in the womb of the mother, the Nebraska Law may place an "undue burden" on the right to abortion in restricting it after 20 weeks within that particular state.

Though "the very notion that the State has a substantial interest in potential life leads to the conclusion that not all regulations must be deemed unwarranted,"[17] and "undue burden" placed in the regulation of abortion rights would be deemed unconstitutional. The definition of an "undue burden" is "a state regulation has the purpose or effect of placing a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion of a nonviable fetus."[18] However, this statement implies a different measure from Roe – viability has become the important factor instead of purely the safety implications for maternal health. The shift from mother's safety to that of the fetus is a compelling switch in rhetoric, and leads us to the conclusion that legislating for the safety of the fetus may be allowable.

As it remains, however, the Nebraska law does place restrictions on abortion that are almost entirely focused on the health of the fetus, and therefore may be deemed unconstitutional unless the fetus is deemed a person, and is therefore worthy of protection. However, the constitutionality of the existing laws does not make them just for our society.

Nebraska Law & Justice

If we intend, as a nation, to stand for justice for the rights of all persons, we cannot do so if we do not first define who persons are. According to the Nebraska law, those human beings who can feel pain are worthy of protection. This is a greater protection afforded to these human beings than in prior laws, but justice asks us according to no particular framework, "who is a person?" Though the law protects human beings after 20 weeks gestation, we cannot know whether this being is a person or not. Using our best judgment and not using ignorance as an excuse, we as a nation are compelled to protect human development from the beginning since we cannot know whether personhood is existent from conception, quickening, pain-capability, birth, or even later. We are not capable of knowing.

But because we do not know does not give us the right to terminate the life of a being for whom we cannot determine personhood status. The act of injustice that would be present to hurt a human person, much less to kill a human person is one which we must do everything to protect against. The Nebraska law makes great strides against the claim to ignorance that Roe utilized to create the right to abortion: but it is not complete.

Ignorance provides a veil of inculpability for those perpetrators of injustice to hide behind, but it does not change the fact that "an unjust law is no law at all."[19] And if we cannot know, we must, for justice's sake, err on the side of caution.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Nebraska legislation be supported if introduced in a similar manner in any state. This legislation serves to protect humans who are reasonably thought to be persons based on the concept of pain. The role of science in the issue is in informing the pre-existing ethical frameworks on abortion; while according to our judicial system no particular ethical framework can be made law of the land based on its claim to truth. Scientific observations confirm that a fetus feels pain 20 weeks after conception and that the beginning of a human being's development is at the moment of conception. Scientific observations, however, make no claim for the exact moment human personhood begins, only that it could reasonably begin as soon as conception. To deprive a person from life without due process is unjust and unconstitutional[20]. The exact moment that personhood begins for a human fetus is not known, but ignorance does not excuse injustice. Therefore, the life of a human should be protected by law if there is a reasonable possibility of personhood. The Nebraska law protects human lives where there is a reasonable possibility that they are persons, and so is more apt than less stringent restrictions. As a legislator and a representative of the State, you must be willing to protect potential human life in the case when you cannot know whether any being is truly a person – to uphold justice in the face of unknowing.

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Sonnet – At 40 Weeks

by Lilianna Serbicki

Swollen, a dream on its way to fruition;
Nothing romantic. Lense (soft-focus) gone.
Real fruit bruises; a real fruit stays the motion
We make ourselves. Our unkempt pieces drawn

Into alignment; some beings are too real
To smudge with soft words. Some beings delight
In waking up the small pith in the chest
With beating limbs. It is a sudden sleight

Of soul, not hand; the itch will soon persuade
Myself to love my stippled skin far more
Than when it held just me. I am arrayed
In bright humanity – naked and sore,
A simple breath moves, joyous in its leisure,
Fearless and proud of every fleshly measure.

Mother to Child

by Olivia Meldrum

While I am mistress of my mind,
You will sleep safely every hour.
No morning will you wake to find
My warmth turned cold, or sweetness sour.

A fragile burden do I bear
(O precious visitor; flesh brand-new) -
I forget my face and clothes and hair
In pain and consciousness of you.

My little one, your mama hurts.
She shakes at every strange man's gaze.
You've joined the Dance - this you deserve;
But our dance, dear, limps through a maze.

I am not mistress of my heart:
It is a top spun by His hand.
He knits your limbs; He tears me apart.
I wonder at our Maker's plan.

If you could choose - if you could know -
Perhaps you'd free me; your own life take.
But you and I are not our own.
Such choices are not ours to make.

I shall be mistress of my mind
So long as air still fills my lungs.
This voice is feeble, but it is mine:
It will see that your song is sung.

Forsaken fruit, I'll hold your hand
(Though my night be long; my sunrise far).
When I can't remember who I am,
You'll remind me, child, of what you are.

Ten Years Later

by Aimee Bedoy

I am writing this ten years to the day that those towers fell. And ten years later, I want us to discuss what we have learned from September 11, 2001, and where we as a nation must continue to grow.

I am speaking as someone who grew up in this culture, immersed in it wholly from the time I was 12 years old. Perhaps I am not the wisest, or the most sage member of society to speak on these points, but this is what I have learned from my childhood to the present.

At first, the attacks on Semptember 11 provoked intense fear in everyone. We didn't know what was going on, what was next, or what would come. We were determined to find out the cause, the reasoning, the spirit of the event. Was it an accident? Was it war being declared upon our nation? Was it an extremist group attempting to take down our beliefs? There were so many questions, and disbelief struck us as the first respone. Nationwide, we doubted that such hate could exist -- we wondered how we as a nation could merit such a devastating blow.

If you might remember, as a commercial or PSA once told us shortly after the attacks, "they tried to change us... they did." And on each house was an American flag. We prided ourselves on our resilience, on the heroism of so many first-responders, on the founding tenets of our national identity. And we bonded together, as a nation, to stand up in defense of those liberties we find so vital. How beautiful -- the love that each showed his neighbor, and the compassion towards our fellow man.

But -- it was only towards our fellow American. We declared a "war on terror" and fear spread through the nation like a viral disease. Not explicit fear, perhaps, but the subtle prejudice against any practicing Muslim, the hate that brewed in the veins of so many against the idea of a Middle-Eastern terrorist. Our compassion was selective in that we saw all people who might even remotely be of the Islamic faith or heritage as a possible terrorist -- this includes both our citizens in the United States, in addition to the far-off citizens of Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, and Palestine. We held them up as "the enemy," despite the fact that our pain and suffering did not lie in the hands of the everyday citizen of these countries, but in the responsibility of a terrorist group.

And we learned that Al-Qaida was responsible for the attacks: not a nation, not a congress or a president or a public minister of any sort. We took the fight to the soil of many different nations to seek out Osama bin Laden and his cohort -- we attacked the houses, farms, and

businesses of civilians in Afghanistan, and many other nations in the Middle East in search of first, Al-Qaida, but later entangling ourselves to try to find the Taliban as well. Like Bin Laden, we were aiming for their 'icons of military and economic power', and didn't mean to attack women and children; but how much better can we be, when we have caused similar collateral damage? How can we free a nation if we kill them first? We brought our misguided justice and preemptive defense to the everyday man in these countries and we caused so much pain -- both physical and emotional. The fear that was brought upon us as a nation by a religious extremist group that has no national name or boundary, we as a nation through our military brought to the people of the Middle East.

And what justice have we brought about? What recumpence have we brought to those whose husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, children, siblings or friends died in the struggle against the terrorist attacks on our nation on 9/11? We cannot bring them back, and killing extremists or civilians will not bring them back for another minute, day, week. How many lives have been lost of our own military? How many civilian lives have been sacrificed in the name of "collateral damage" against a constantly mutating religious sect that has no home?

A war on terror is even more vague than a war on drugs: indeed, can we even claim to be fighting terror when instead terror has been planted in the hearts of our youth at such a young age? Terror is inculturated, it is an idea that we have little control over. Indeed, we can fight terrorism within our own borders by strict guidelines, border and national security and document requirements. We can fight terror by promoting peace on our soil and teaching our children the truth and beauty of our fellow man. When we see our fellow man as intrinsically valuable, we are much less likely to want to inflict harm upon them. Terrorism cannot exist if we teach love and a respect for human dignity. But war-mongering, exclusive compassion, prejudice and a desire for vengeance do nothing to stop terrorism.

When Osama bin Laden was assassinated, I wept for a soul so twisted that he wished for the death of our nation, of our people, and our spirit. But even more than that, I wept because our national society wished for his death and celebrated his demise. And now, after the high of knowing that he is gone, not a one whom I know who had lost a friend or family member can say that his death makes up for the loss of their loved one, or that they feel fulfillment in knowing his assassination was successful. Because instead of taking out him alone, we took down many men, women, and children who did not deserve to be caught up in the crossfire merely based upon their race, religion or location. We let our men and women go into battle against the nebulous idea of "terror", without a specific declaration or a hardline objective. We bred fear into the hearts of our children and vengeance into the hearts of our people by profiling and prejudice, and by hate and by anger.

So what have I learned from September 11, 2001? I have learned that peace is our responsibility, and we cannot expect fulfillment from revenge. I have learned that defense does not mean so-called preemptive war. I have learned that "othering" the enemy is the most effective way to bring about prejudice, hate, and justification for collateral damage. I have learned that even the most warped minds are still human, and deserving of the dignity each of us merits in our humanity. In ten years I can't say that we have come very far in terms of respect for the human person, and we have done little to achieve more peace, despite the fact that we claim to be fighting terror for the sake of our fellow man.