

Forum: Aborting Abortions: How You Can Reduce Abortions in Your Community

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Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics, Volume 15, Number 2 (2018)

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We must work hard to ensure that abortions are “safe, legal and rare. And by rare I mean *rare*.”

—*Hilary Clinton* (2008)

The issue of abortion continues to divide the nation. It is estimated that about 19% of all pregnancies in the United States end in abortion. African American babies are disproportionately the victims of abortion, as are fetuses diagnosed with Down syndrome and other genetic disorders. In many countries where boys are valued more highly than girls, female fetuses are aborted at a much higher rate than male babies. Since the passage of *Roe v Wade* in 1973, it is estimated that over 60 million babies have been aborted in the United States. For many citizens in America, aborting a baby is a form of murder, and as such to be discouraged. While most persons, even pro-life advocates, agree that legal abortions should be an option for women who are the victims of rape or incest, or for whom pregnancy poses a serious medical issue, the numbers of abortions performed for these reasons is relatively small.

Efforts to make abortions much rarer, as Hillary Clinton desires, are not very effective. Individual states attempt to adopt laws which impose some restrictions on abortion, but these are often overturned by abortion-friendly federal judges, and when upheld have an unknown impact

on the numbers of abortions actually performed in a given state. Pro-Life protesters picket abortion clinics, churches hold prayer groups asking for divine intercession on the issue, pro-life editorials are sometimes published in local papers, but in generally any form of organized effective opposition to performing abortion is, well, rare. Occasionally illegal activities are undertaken, blocking abortion clinic doors, harassing women entering clinics, and so forth, but these too are rare, ineffective, and in many ways offensive.

The progressive/liberal element of our country like to discuss grassroots community organizing as a method to promote social change. Indeed former President Obama earned some of his street cred by working as a community organizer in Chicago. Perhaps Pro-Life activists can draw lessons from the community organizing tactics of the Pro-Choice movement, in order to reduce abortions. In his 1976 novel *The Moneychangers*, author Arthur Haley describes two novel tactics used to promote social change. In one scenario, the custodial staff at the local airport were striking for a raise in wages. To pressure the authorities to grant their wage increase demands, the striking janitors arranged for all the toilet stalls in the airport bathrooms to be occupied by a striker or sympathizer. The only toilets were pay toilets. So the colluding janitor put in his or her dime, sat down, and closed

and locked the door, where they remained for hours, until relieved by a fellow striker. Subsequently the airport administration was deluged by hordes of angry passengers urgently needing to use the toilet. The strikers were doing nothing illegal, and within a couple of days of this 'sit-down' strike the workers were granted their wage increase. In another subplot, a large bank withdrew its promised funding for a low-income community development project in their city, deciding instead to invest the promised money into a large corporations' business interests. When the news leaked out, there was community outcry from poor families on the waiting list to occupy the unbuilt low-rent apartments. The bank declared that they only had so much money to invest, the opportunity provided by the out-of-town multinational corporation was too profitable to turn down, and that they regretted having to scale back their investments in inner city redevelopment. After a few days, a large crowd of poor people were lined up to enter the bank's main office. When asked why they were there, some well-coached spokespersons declared they were all residents of the inner city, and since they heard the bank was low on money, they were there to open accounts and make a deposit. When the doors opened, the new depositors entered in an orderly manner and asked to open saving accounts. This involved sitting down with a bank officer (there were very few of these), asking the officer lots and lots of questions, and depositing the \$5.00 or so needed to open an account. Once their account was active, they then stood in line to transact business with a teller, withdraw 35 cents, or deposit another quarter, all legal activities. Obviously normal banking business was at a standstill. If a regular customer attempted to move to the head of the line, the protesters loudly told them, while grinning, to get to the end of the line! The bank managers were at a loss. No regular banking business was being transacted. Large depositors turned away in frustration, and customers seeking to make a withdrawal faced an all-day wait.

The protesters were organized, polite, obeying all laws, but nevertheless exerted tremendous pressure on the bank to restore their

plans to finance the urban development project. Several of the community organizers behind the protest met with the bank management and told them that these people were mostly residents on the waiting list for the unbuilt homes, and that they wanted to help the bank by making deposits, since the bank obviously needed the funds. When asked how long this community action plan would take place, the bankers were told indefinitely, and that in two days similar mass actions were planned at other branches of the bank. Within a short time the bank reversed its decision and restored the financing for the urban development initiative. The mass action immediately stopped, having achieved its goal.

What lessons can be learned from community organizing efforts like this, for the opponents of abortion. Well, the numbers of abortion clinics are fairly limited in most communities. There is only one in the entire state of Mississippi, for example. Each such clinic has a limited number of staff, nurses, medical doctors, assistants, clerks, and a finite capacity to assess new patients seeking an abortion. And these clinics can only schedule so many abortions a week. There are likely only a couple of operating rooms to perform these procedures, time slots to perform ultrasounds, and appointment times to be allocated to provide information and counseling to women seeking abortion.

Pro-Life churches and other civic groups could recruit young women from among the faith-based community and ask them to volunteer to appear at the local abortion clinic requesting counseling and a pregnancy test. To make an appointment, to show up, and engage in prolonged discussions with the staff. Some of these women volunteers could actually be pregnant, and upon learning of the positive results of their test, take this effort to the next level and, after very lengthy discussions, schedule an abortion. At the appointed time she could simply not show up, or she could appear (perhaps with a burly companion), get completely prepped for the procedure, and just before being taken to the operating room, say she changed their mind, verbally withdraw her informed consent, and refuse to proceed. The staff might get angry, but the

pseudo-patients would smile serenely, get dressed and leave.

What would be the consequences of such mass organized community action. Every counseling time slot occupied by a pseudo-patient represents one less opportunity for the abortion clinic staff to meet with someone seeking an abortion or to persuade the uncertain woman to abort her baby. Every time slot dedicated to performing an abortion on a patient who backs out at the last minute is one less abortion that clinic could perform that week, representing one baby potentially saved.

Any costs needed to make these appointments could make use of privately raised funds, perhaps donated by local churches, many of whom would be pleased to support such efforts at saving lives. It would not be proper to attempt to bill health insurance companies in service of this project. It is likely that the local abortion clinic keeps track through some public database of the numbers of abortions they perform weekly, monthly or annually. These statistics could be tracked by the community organizers to assess the effects of their efforts. This community organizing program, once disclosed, would likely be met with anger and threats by those invested in the abortion industry, But so long as no laws were being broken, and the pseudo-patient volunteers suitably coached about what to say, there is little effective way in which this plan could be deterred, as the abortion providers would be unable to initially detect the real patients from the fake ones. Given enough fake patients using up the time and resources of the abortion clinic, it may become obvious that a targeted particular clinic has become a money-losing operation and should be shut down by its sponsors since its ability to provide abortions was being, well, aborted. Any local Pro-Life group could sponsor at least one pseudo-patient, and some wealthier ones could sponsor many.

In the world of the internet, actions such as these are called a denial of service attack, where a website is flooded with spurious malicious messages or queries, causing it to crash. The Aborting Abortions plan described in this essay is not maliciously motivated. It is motivated by love.

The love of human life, or babies, of women, love to prevent the needless deaths of tens of thousands of African-American babies. As Mahatma Gandhi put it “[t]he essence of goodness is: to preserve life, promote life, help life to achieve its highest destiny. The essence of evil is: destroy life, harm life, and hamper the development of life... It seems to me as clear as daylight that abortion would be a crime.” Imagine a baby, newly conceived. Being carried by an unwed mother and the product of a broken home. Abandoned by his African father. The mother very poor. Such babies are not punishments. Nor are they doomed. One of them became President of the United States.

This essay does not advocate making abortion illegal. The plan should be undertaken with an air of quiet conviction, of respect and politeness, of following all rules and local and state laws, and not be undertaken lightly. There are serious consequences. For example, some women seeking an abortion do so because of a pregnancy caused by rape or incest, or have a legitimate medical condition that poses serious health risks. Such persons would be caught up in the Aborting Abortions plan, and perhaps be unable to access a service many people, even Pro-Life advocates, agree is necessary and justified in some circumstances. However, the sad reality is that many women seeking an abortion do so purely for methods of birth control, for convenience, being unwilling to bear the burden of nine months of pregnancy. For most Pro-Life advocates, aborting a fetus for the convenience of a mother is not a legitimate reason to have an abortion. Better, it is seen, for the mother to carry her baby to term, and if unable to care for the baby herself, give it up for adoption by other members of her or the father’s family, to the custody of the state or to a private agency.

The ready availability of low-cost and effective contraception to everyone renders most unwanted pregnancies as irresponsible. And the murder of an infant is not a price that should be paid for a parent’s carelessness. To be sure, sometimes responsible birth control methods fail. Pills do not work, intra-uterine devices get dislodged, and condoms can break. But the numbers of unwanted

pregnancies caused by such failures pales in significance to the numbers caused by simple irresponsibility. As President Obama famously noted, with respect to his own daughters, “But if they make a mistake, I don’t want them punished with a baby.” There is the liberal view, stark and unadorned. Quite simply, abortions are often a convenient means of avoiding the consequences of making a mistake. The Clintons were right—Every abortion is a tragedy. Some, those performed as a matter of convenience, are more tragic than others, because they are less justifiable. Obama was right—grassroots community organizing can be an effective approach to reducing abortions in your local community. How much money would a local church pay to halt one abortion through sponsoring a pseudo-patient?

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