

ABORTION IN THE CASE OF INCEST: IN WHOSE INTEREST?

Prepared by the Coalition for the Defence of Human Life

It is frequently presumed that abortion in the case of pregnancy resulting from incest is in the best interest of the pregnant girl or woman. However, there is no psychiatric evidence or even a theory to support the argument that abortion is **therapeutic** for the pregnant victim of incest.

Abortion in these circumstances rather serves to cover up the crime of the perpetrator.

Doris' story

Doris Kalasky's story illustrates the lengths one incestuous father was prepared to go to cover up his actions.

I am a victim of incest; one of the 'hard cases' for abortion. I was raped by my father when I was fifteen years old. It was not the first time, nor would it be the last. However, this time, I became pregnant.

One night, I became very sick and my parents took me to the hospital. (I believe now that they knew I was pregnant since they took me to a different hospital than normal.)

The emergency room doctor discovered that, along with a very bad case of the flu, I was 19 weeks pregnant.

My father flew into a rage, accusing me of all sorts of things, and demanding I have an abortion. The doctor informed me that I was pregnant and asked me what I wanted. In spite of the pain and guilt I felt, knowing who the father of the baby was, it was far better to have a baby than the alternative - to kill it. I refused to have an abortion.

My father flew into an uncontrollable rage and demanded that I consent to the abortion, or that the doctor do it with or without my permission. The doctor refused because of my wishes. My father demanded that an abortionist be found - regardless of the cost.

Within one hour, this man arrived at the hospital, talked with my parents and decided to do the abortion, without speaking to me. I refused and tried to get off the examining table. He then asked three nurses to hold me while he strapped me to the bed and injected me with a muscle relaxant to keep me from struggling while he prepared to kill my baby.

I continued to scream that I didn't want an abortion. He told me, "Shut up and quit that yelling!" Eventually, I was placed under general anaesthesia and my child

was brutally killed.

Your parents know what's best

I was told that an abortion would solve my problem, when it was never really the problem in the first place. I was told, 'Your parents know what's best,' when they obviously were only concerned about their own reputations. I was told, 'You made the right decision,' when I was never given a choice. More importantly, where was my baby's choice?

I grieve every day for my daughter. I have struggled to forget the abuse and the abortion. I can do neither. All I think of is, 'I should have done more, fought more, struggled more for the life of my child.'

My situation may not be common, but I know it's not unique either. The emotions and problems I've had to deal with as a result of my abortion are common. The trauma of the rape and abuse were only intensified by the abortion.

The guilt of knowing my baby is dead is something I will have to live with for the rest of my life. I was violated and betrayed over and over by my father, who God created to love and protect me. I was

humiliated, hurt, and yes, violated again by the abortionist.

Why do even pro-lifers talk about making exceptions for abortion in cases of rape and incest as if that is a way to have "compassion" for the mother? Why is this the only 'loving' response to the situation? I have talked with pro-lifers who consider my abortion acceptable, under the circumstances.

Further exploitation

I want to tell people, 'If you really want to be compassionate, give this mother the opportunity to choose life for her child. If you really love the mothers who have been victimized, don't let them be exploited again by someone who will make a profit from their dead child -- a memory that will haunt them for the rest of their lives.'

The mom needs love, support and understanding, not the pain of allowing herself to be violated again in order to kill her child. Regardless of the circumstances, regardless of the pain involved, that helpless, innocent child has no voice, no defence, and no chance, unless we offer real love and real compassion to the mother.

My abortion was over five years ago. God is still healing me, but it has been a difficult fight. I conclude with this thought 'He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.'

Incest victims rarely voluntarily agree to an abortion. The reasons are not hard to discover.

Conspiracy of silence

Firstly, the pregnancy can be seen as perhaps the only way to break out of the trap of abuse and silent cover-up that characterises the incestuous relationship.

The birth of a child will expose the sexual activity, whereas abortion perpetuates the "conspiracy of silence" by covering up the incest, or at least its results, and continues the pathological family pattern of denying reality.

Secondly, the pregnant incest victim can see the child that she is carrying as offering her the opportunity to establish a genuine, loving relationship – in contrast to the exploitative relationship in which she has been trapped.

Many abortion providers and family planning counsellors fail to identify incest victims because they are so intent on

'solving' the problem of pregnancy with the quick fix of abortion.

Mary Jean's story

Mary Jean Doe recounts her experience with a planned parenthood clinic in the United States.

I am a victim of child sexual abuse – both incest and the family friend variety.

Just before I was 13 years old, I was sexually abused by an older brother, and by a college-age friend of the family. I was never assaulted by the two together but each knew of the other's involvement – the older brother gave me "tips" for sexual acts on the family friend.

About 3 or 4 months after the abuse began, I was late for a period.

I told my brother this, and he informed me that I 'should have made that guy wear a rubber, you idiot'. I did not know what a 'rubber' was, or where it was worn, or why. All I knew was that if you did not have periods, you were pregnant, you were in trouble.

Looking for help

I turned to my Sunday

School teacher for help. When I told her I thought I might be pregnant (at 12 years old) she didn't even blink.

She gave me a big hug and said I should go to Planned Parenthood for a 'rabbit test', that I should get one of my older brothers to take me and not tell my parents. She never asked who the male partner was, or why I was sexually active at my age.

So my older brother took me to Planned Parenthood.

I had never been to a doctor without my mother, and I had never had a gynecological exam. The whole visit was terrifying. No one explained anything. I was examined, gave urine and blood samples, and shown a chart of an egg going around a big circle marked by days of the month. I was asked questions like 'frequency of intercourse?' and 'method of birth control preferred?' I did not know what intercourse meant so I just said 'a lot', and I had no idea what birth control methods existed.

No one asked who my 'partner' was, no one expressed any dismay, concern, or even interest that a 12-year-old girl needed a pregnancy test.

Controlling my own body

I heard a lot about 'being responsible' and 'taking control of my body'. Someone gave me a handful of condoms on the way out, and made a joke about it being an assortment - red, blue, and yellow. The yellow ones were called Tingleers. I stuffed them in my purse, and threw them away later.

My older brother maintained a strong silence throughout the entire time - no one asked him a single question.

Two days later I received a phone call telling me the test was positive, and to come in the following Saturday morning with a sanitary napkin and a friend who could drive. The caller never used the word 'pregnant' or 'abortion'. I did not keep that appointment; my period started that evening.

The sexual abuse ended a couple of months later, as the family friend moved away, and my older brother began to abuse two younger neighbourhood children instead.

It was not until 3 years later that I discovered, in a high school biology class, that you cannot get

pregnant from oral sexual contact. I also found out what intercourse was, and that I'd never had it.

What kind of person am I?

I remember the feeling of horror that came over me as I realized I had been scheduled for an abortion. I remember trying to figure out who would have paid the bill (it must have been my brother), and wondering why I was such a horrible person that those people thought I should have an abortion.

Obviously, the worst thing that could ever happen to anyone must have happened to me, so what kind of person did that make me? Bad enough to have to kill a baby, according to what I'd just learned in my biology class. I thank God that my period started when it did.

Over the years, I have found that my story is very common, and that my experience with Planned Parenthood was not an aberration. The sexual attitude often championed by Planned Parenthood is a serious factor in preventing the discovery of sexual abuse of young people.

Divulging the truth

Had anyone shown even the

least bit of disapproval or concern, I would have divulged the truth and begged for help.

Everyone around me seemed to accept as normal that a 12 year old girl could and should be sexually active (so long as she is responsible - remember the 'rubber rainbow'!)

And remember, too, who took me to Planned Parenthood - an older brother with an urgent interest in my being aborted!

Abortion on demand, no questions asked, makes it easier for incest and child abuse to continue. Abortion for incest victims sounds compassionate, but in practice it is simply another violent and deceptive tool in the hand of the abuser.

Abortion clinics and doctors who refer for abortion who neglect to interview minors for signs of sexual assault or incest are contributing to the young girl's victimization.

They are robbing the victim of her child while concealing a crime, protecting a perpetrator and handing the victim back to her abuser.

For those victims of incest who also become victims of

abortion, the result can be devastating.

Edith's story

Twenty-five years after her abortion at the age of 12, Edith Young, a victim of incest impregnated by her stepfather writes:

"Throughout the years I have been depressed, suicidal, furious, outraged, lonely and have felt a sense of loss. The abortion which was to be 'in my best interest' just has not been.

As far as I can tell, it only saved their reputations, solved their problems and allowed their lives to go merrily on. My daughter, how I miss her so. I miss her regardless of the reason for her conception."

Abortion of a pregnancy later in life can also prove extremely destructive for those women who have survived incest.

Judith's story

Judith Evans recounts her story:

When I became pregnant for the fifth time in seven years, my doctor asked me if I really thought I should "continue the pregnancy".

Abortion had never occurred to me until he

*suggested it. I'm a former foster child. Conceived illegitimately, my father was forced to marry my mother because of me. My childhood was brutal. I was abandoned by my father when I was two-and-a-half. Then when he reappeared in my life again at the age of eight, it became worse, **I survived incest, starvation, and beatings. I clung to life. But the two abortions I had nearly destroyed me.***

It's your decision

My husband said. 'It's your decision. Do what you want,' and left for work. Naively, I began looking for women who had abortions. I wanted to know what to expect. But I couldn't find anyone who would admit to having had one. I asked my doctor and he said, "it only takes a few minutes and it's over."

Having already had four babies. I am now appalled at how ignorant I was about fetal development. My doctor said the baby, at six-and-a-half weeks was 'just a blob', and I believed him. Afterwards, before I even got home, I began to cry. It didn't help.

I continued to cry after I got home. I cried on my knees beside my bed. When finally I stopped crying on the outside, I kept crying on the inside. I felt so dirty and

alone.

Frozen inside

Something deep inside of me froze, I think, I dreamed a lot about snow and ice, as well as about babies. I felt cheated, betrayed, and manipulated. I went to counseling and the psychologist said 'Forgive yourself', and 'Let yourself go on.' She didn't say how.

Two years later, I was pregnant again - on purpose!

But still, I wanted to die, or at least go crazy so I could escape the torment, the nightmares about babies, the self-disgust and the degradation I felt.

This time I waited until the baby was 12 weeks along before I murdered him. I made the doctor tell me about the baby, just as I had made the man who did the first abortion.

The first one was a girl. She died January 15th. The second was a boy, March 29th. I learned to dread every January and March.

I wasn't told...

I wasn't told that having an abortion would create an unbelievable self-hatred that would consume me, and lead to distrust,

suspicion, and the utter inability to care about myself or others - including my four children.

I wasn't told that hearing babies cry would trigger such anger that I wouldn't be able to be around babies at all.

I wasn't told that it would become impossible to look at my own eyes in a mirror. Or that my confidence would be so shaken that I would become unable to make important life decisions. My self-hatred kept me from pursuing my goal of becoming a registered nurse. I didn't think I deserved success.

I wasn't told that I would come to hate all those who advised me to have my abortions, because they were my accomplices in the murders of my babies.

I wasn't told that having an abortion with my husband's consent would end up causing me to hate the father of my children, or that I would be unable to sustain ANY satisfying, lasting, fulfilling relationships.

I wasn't told that I could become suicidal in the Fall of every year, when both of my babies should have been born.

I wasn't told that on the birthdays of my living children, I would remember the two for whom I would never make a birthday cake, or that on Mother's Day I would remember the two who would never send me a card, or that every Christmas I would remember the two for whom there would never be any presents.

No quick fix

My abortions were supposed to be a 'quick-fix' for my problems, but they didn't tell me there would be no 'quick-fix' for my regrets.

I had gone to my pastor before both abortions. He said the babies were 'just blobs' too, so when I went afterwards and asked why I felt so dirty, he said. 'God forgives.' I asked God to forgive me, and my pastor said He did. But I didn't feel forgiven. I still felt unclean and undeserving.

I went to a psychiatric hospital and they gave me shock treatments. It didn't help. The nightmares continued.

I became a workaholic. Work didn't help. I became a compulsive eater. Food didn't help.

I became an anorexic as a

form of self-punishment. That came close to killing me. I had two strokes.

I tried alcohol. It only helped temporarily. The torment would still be there when I woke up. That effort to escape the pain only lasted two months.

I honestly believe that the only thing that is going to help, is to find out that someone decided against abortion because God worked in them through my story. Maybe I'm wrong though.

One thing I have learned - God's forgiveness doesn't depend on whether I 'feel' forgiven. And it certainly doesn't depend on whether I deserve forgiveness. It is based on His Grace, and that awes me! Regardless of what my head says, God's Word says in 1 John 1:9 that if I confess my sins, He will forgive me. I have, and He does not lie.

Medical rape

For women who have undergone sexual assault there is a strong experiential association between abortion and the assault regardless of whether or not the pregnancy being aborted is a result of the sexual assault.

Some such women describe

abortion as a degrading and brutal form of medical rape. It is not hard to understand why.

Abortion involves a painful invasion of a woman's sexual organs by a masked stranger. Once on the operating table, with her feet up in stirrups, she loses control over her body. Even if she cries out for the abortionist to stop, she will usually be told that it is too late. In sexual rape a woman is robbed of her purity; in the medical rape of abortion she is robbed of her maternity.

Julie's story

Julie's story highlights the devastation this 'double rape' caused in her life and that of her sister.

The 'choice' of abortion and all its lawful trappings have negatively affected my life, and even more so, that of my sister.

Abortion was initially mentioned by my private ob/gyn. She was very persuasive in convincing me that this procedure was, indeed, my best option in the present situation.

I was led to agree with her in spite of the fact that there was not even a mention of any other alternative. This was my 'counseling'

regarding my abortion decision. The arrangements were made for the following Saturday and I was given a pre-op relaxant drug to take before my arrival. Once in the office, I paid, signed the release forms and was taken in to begin the procedure. When I was stripped and set up in the stirrups, the doctor came in, but it was not my regular care giver.

When I tried to say something and inquire about the changes, the nurse reassured me that everything was OK and not to worry. Once all was complete, I left quietly.

Hours afterwards, I began to experience a great deal of pain and increased bleeding. I did not know the name of the man who had performed the abortion on me, so I could not call to talk to him about my condition.

I did not call my regular doctor for advice either. In fact, I've never spoken to her since. I was so humiliated and angry at the deception she had pulled on me. I saw her as uncaring and oblivious to my feelings at a very vulnerable and emotional time in my life.

Eight years later, I became pregnant again. I did not tell my attending physician

about my abortion because I was too embarrassed to mention it.

Later into the pregnancy, however, it was discovered that I was Rh negative and it would become necessary for me to receive an injection of Rhogam after delivery to protect any future babies from antibodies that might build up in my system as a result of the mixing of the baby's blood with my own.

No record

This information set me to wondering whether this could have happened during the abortion and was my present baby threatened with this complication. I called the old office and asked about the records on the abortion and the particular details in which I was interested.

After pulling my chart, I was told that there was no mention of my having had an abortion and was I sure I'd had it there. On top of this insult, I was told not to worry about the Rh negative thing because there wasn't that big a chance that it could be a problem.

The emotional trauma of the abortion began to manifest itself in several ways during this second

pregnancy.

Searching for the lost baby

*Then, after the births of each of my living children, I experienced nightmares where I was frantically searching the bed for the 'lost' baby. My fear was not for my new baby because I knew that one was safe. It was for the Other One that I was searching, the one I shall never find. **The one that I was never told that I might miss someday.***

Victims of incest

My sister and I had been victims of incest. My sister had been being sexually assaulted by my brothers for a number of years when she got her first abortion at the age of sixteen.

Had she been questioned by anyone as to how a minor like herself had come to be pregnant in the first place, perhaps she could have been saved from any further abuse within the family. This is indeed what should have happened in any agency that claims to be concerned about preventing child abuse. As it turned out, she was given the abortion without my parents consent or knowledge and then returned to the same environment.

Years later, after having

given birth to three children, having had many years of psychotherapy and antidepressant drugs, she became pregnant in a crisis situation.

She was advised by friends, self-appointed do-gooders, to abort the baby to take care of herself. This caused her a great deal of distress and anxiety. The decision was very difficult for her and in her weakened state, she succumbed to their arguments and scheduled the abortion. She was crying when she entered the clinic, she cried throughout the procedure and was sobbing as she left. No one there asked her any questions that might upset her any more. But, of course, had anyone asked her, they might have recognized that she was not emotionally strong enough to stand the abortion. Had they inquired about her health history, they may have seen her as the high risk patient that she was. None of this took place. One week later, she took her life with a gunshot to the chest, striking her heart. Her three children are growing up with their mum because no one wanted to ask questions.

Lee and Julie's story

These sad stories contrast with the positive story of

Lee Ezell and her daughter Julie Makimaa. In 1962, Lee Ezell was raped as a virgin teenager in inner city Philadelphia by a passing salesman. Lee was the child of alcoholic parents and had been told that she was an 'unwanted child'. Abortion was not readily available and Lee delivered a baby girl at full term.

She became what I referred to as 'the missing piece' of my life, as I never held her or saw her; she was adopted at birth. How could I have known she'd be the only child I would give birth to?

Some years later Lee received a telephone call and a voice announced 'Hello, you've never met me, but I am your daughter. I've been searching for you to let you know you are a grandmother.'

Lee was able to meet with her daughter Julie Makimaa and her husband. He thanked Lee tearfully 'Thanks for not aborting Julie; I don't know what my life would be like without her and our children.'

Lee comments 'Abortion is too permanent an answer for a temporary problem. Abortion is not an answer. It is an additional problem to be reckoned with later.'

Julie is naturally sympathetic to the suffering her mother endured at the hands of that rapist. However, she is also rightfully proud of her mother's courage and generosity. **Julie proclaims "It doesn't matter how I began. What matters is who I will become."**

This is a slogan that we would all do well to live by.

*Sources used for this article include: David Reardon, *Aborted Women Silent No More*, Loyola, 1987; Elliot Institute (PO Box 9079, Springfield, IL 62791 USA), *Post Abortion Review* - various issues; *Los Angeles Times* (February 26, 1992); *The Rescuer* (Jan 1996), Philadelphia*

Post-abortion counselling and support is available from Women Hurt By Abortion (08) 9313 1784