

Bridging the Divide

by Jane Brennan

Is it possible to bridge the deep chasm that separates pro-abortion forces and pro-life people? Is there any way that these two sides, at war with each other for over 30 years since Roe V. Wade was handed down, can ever agree upon anything? Can they ever see eye to eye, compromise when they hold their beliefs so dearly and defend them with such passion? At first glance, it seems unlikely if not impossible.

On one side you have people, including radical feminists, who are only concerned with women's rights: the right of a woman to control her own fertility, the right of a woman to control her own body. They speak about women's oppression and of past ills where women were seen as "possessions" or "property". They feel the injustices of the past must be changed and the way to do this is for women to be free, free to make their own decisions unencumbered by the limits of patriarchy - real or perceived. This side only sees the "woman". Their rhetoric is appealing to many. They scream, yell, rant and rave all in the name of the "woman".

On the other side you have the pro-life movement. These people, mainly religious, recognize the sanctity of every human life. They believe in the right to life of every human being from the moment of conception. They recognize the humanity of the unborn child. They protest, march, agitate, and champion the baby in the womb. They can't understand how a woman can have her baby aborted once she knows she is in fact carrying a real human being in her womb. When hearing about a woman who aborted her baby they ask, "How could she do that?"; Everything they do is for the baby, with barely a glance at the woman (although I see signs of this changing). They scream, yell, rant and rave all in the name of the unborn baby.

How can we possibly ever bring these two sides together - one championing the woman and the other the baby? Who should win in this horrible debate? I personally believe there is something that can bridge this divide. Actually, it is someone who has the power to bring these two polar opposites together. That someone is the Post-Abortive Woman. The post-abortive woman is in a unique position. She can not only speak to both sides but more importantly, if they are true to their causes, both will listen to what she has to say.

The post-abortive woman has had an abortion -- maybe even several. She knows the pain, grief and suffering of having aborted her unborn

child. Even if pro-choice rhetoric sounds good on paper, she knows from real experience that abortion is not good for women. When she stands up and tells people -- people who believe that abortion is a woman's right -- that what she went through was tragic and hurtful, they will listen. When she courageously says, "My abortion did not help me. It did not free me, or give me more control of my life"; they will listen.

When the post-abortive woman talks about how she thought having an abortion was the answer to her problems and it would enable her to go on with her life but she found the opposite to be true, they will listen. When the post-abortive woman shares her battles with depression, suicidal thoughts, insomnia, anxiety or alcohol and drug abuse, they will listen. But the power of her message does not stop with those who passionately adhere to pro-choice values. When a post-abortive woman tells her story, when she relates the circumstances forcing her to make the choice to have her baby aborted, pro-life people should listen. When she talks about the boyfriend who coerced her into aborting her baby, or the lack of support from family, friends and others causing her to flee to the local women's clinic in desperation, they should listen. They should listen and not condemn the woman for doing what she did. They should offer mercy and forgiveness. They should help the woman heal from her terrible wound.

When both sides have heard these stories, stories of pain, tragedy and grief then maybe the divide will not seem as huge, the chasm not so wide. When both sides hear and understand the truth that abortion hurts women then maybe they can work together to find solutions that will help women and their babies. When both sides recognize that we as a society have not met the needs of women, that on all sides we have failed them, we will be able to focus our energies not on screaming at each other but on effectively challenging abortion. When people truly understand that abortion doesn't free women but in fact enslaves them, they will want to help women so they will never be faced with that horrible choice again. With the post-abortive woman, both sides of this debate have the opportunity to come together to work on strategies and programs that can help women in practical ways. When these two opposing sides focus on her as a common goal, the divide will be bridged, the gap will close, and abortion will end.

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