



Abortion in America: The Beginning of the End

Ten recent signs of hope that we are winning the battle

By John Stemberger, President, Florida Family Policy Council, June 21, 2011



There is an endless supply of bad news facing American culture. However, we can remain optimistic about some good news-- we continue to gain significant ground in the battle against abortion. As a movement, we are advancing the cause of life and winning people on the issue so quickly and on so many fronts, it is hard to keep track. Despite President Obama's recent appointments to the U.S. Supreme Court and the challenge they present to the hope of ever seeing the *Roe v. Wade* decision reversed in our lifetime, abortions have continued to gradually decline since the 1980's. In the past 20 years, abortions have dropped from 1.6 million to about 1.3 million per year. That's a drop of 19 percent. Below are just ten of many recent developments of the last decade that should give us great hope that we may very well be witnessing the beginning of the end of abortion in America.

- 1) **Polls Show Americans, and Especially Young People, are more Pro-life Than Ever-** For the first time in many years, the majority of Americans are pro-life. With each new poll, there is growing evidence that we are building a cultural consensus and winning hearts and minds for the idea that we should protect the unborn by banning or restricting abortion in most instances. In May of 2011, a Gallup poll found that 61 percent of Americans want all or most abortions to be illegal and believe that abortion is "morally wrong." This equates to 61 percent of Americans who believe that abortions should be either legal under no circumstances or legal only under a few circumstances. While one could argue that the data shows that many people have mixed feelings and want to identify with both sides, that conflict in and of itself is progress since even people who identify themselves as pro-choice continue to wrestle with and make concessions regarding the greatest moral and social issue of our day.

The only thing more encouraging than the poll numbers themselves is the fact that the young people are more pro-life than ever! This is exciting because if we can capture the imagination and convictions of a single generation, then we are well on our way to gradually moving the pro-life position to a morally preferred position in both secular and institutional circles. One example of this progress is **Students for Life**, a national organization that is growing by leaps and bounds and which has become a major force in the pro-life movement as evidenced by its presence on hundreds of university and college campuses around the country.

- 2) **Technology Shines Truth Into The Womb-** One of the many reasons for the increase in public opinion against abortion is that technology has revealed with stunning visual clarity "what that really is that is in the womb" and it is not merely a "blob of flesh". Pro-life leader and attorney **Ken Connor** has often said,

“It’s not a duck or a Buick-- it is a baby!” In 2004, **Focus on the Family** began distributing ultrasound machines for the **Option Ultrasound Program** which has provided 80 percent of the funding for ultrasound machines to pregnancy medical clinics. Focus estimates that over 90,000 babies have been saved since the program’s inception. In 2010, National Geographic started distributing an amazing video called the “*Biology of Prenatal Development*”. This award-winning documentary uses state-of-the-art technology to present real-time footage of human development from fertilization to birth inside the womb and is designed to be used in schools as an educational tool. The advent of the internet has also made readily available to women information about abortion including its risks and complications. Hundreds of videos and websites provide women with instant information to make a much more informed “choice” than was previously available.

- 3) **Both Politicians and Public Policy-makers Are More Pro-life Than Ever-** I was recently in Tampa with **Phyllis Schlafly** of Eagle Forum and **Connie Mackey** of FRC Action PAC to help them scout out facilities in which to hold the large pro-life caucus meeting held during the Republican National Convention. Phyllis has been leading the fight to keep the pro-life plank in the GOP platform since the 1964 Goldwater campaign. Her experiences in recent history made it clear to me that since 2008, the GOP has virtually conceded that the pro-life position is a critical and non-negotiable part of the Republican platform. In fact, the leadership of the Republican Party now clearly understands that the GOP cannot win without being pro-life.

It is also apparent that Republican consultants now regularly advise candidates to say that they are pro-life for strictly pragmatic reasons. “Pro-choice” Republicans are apparently also “losing” Republicans in closed primaries in most political districts in America. The challenge in 2011 is not to find pro-life Republicans, but to figure out which ones really mean it. The millions of Americans who view abortion as a *morally disqualifying issue* prove that being pro-life is not just good policy, but is also good politics. As Ronald Reagan once said, “It is not necessary for them to see the light-- but merely to feel the heat.”

In April of 2011, **Michael New** wrote in *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*, a peer-reviewed publication aimed at state policymakers, that a review of abortion data from 1985 through 2005 provides "solid evidence" that laws restricting, but not outlawing abortion, "have an impact on the childbearing decisions of women." Additionally, in just the past 90 days, state legislators around the country have enacted unprecedented pro-life legislation on the heels of the election upsets that occurred in November of 2010. For example, the Florida legislature has passed only four pro-life bills in the past 15 years, but has approved *five major pieces* of pro-life legislation in the 2011 Legislative Session alone.

- 4) **Blacks and Latinos are Beginning to Lead the Movement-** My good friend **John Ensor** has said that “abortion will end in America when Blacks and Latinos are not just involved-- but are *leading* the pro-life movement.” He is right. And this “third wave” of the pro-life movement is gradually starting to appear and grow. Babies of all ethnicities are being aborted at grossly disproportionate rates. Although Black and Latino women make up only 25% of the population, they account for 59% of all abortions. In 2004, Planned Parenthood closed 20% of all their clinics nationwide but still performed about 25% more abortions. They did this by closing clinics in rural and sparsely populated areas and focusing instead on inner cities with higher concentrations of Black-American and Latino women. Roughly 94% of abortions clinics are located in cities. I recently debated a Planned Parenthood leader at the FAMU College of Law in Orlando on this question chosen by the predominantly minority law school students: “Is Abortion Black Genocide?” Just the fact that the students from this prominent Black-American College chose this title for the debate actually says quite a bit about the progress that we are making in increasing awareness of the sanctity of life.

Every year in January during the anniversary of *Roe v Wade*, I go to the local Planned Parenthood clinic sidewalks with my children and others to pray and to peacefully draw attention to the great atrocity that takes place at these facilities. This year, I was amazed to find that there were about 200 people gathered,

and that almost half of them were people of color. I saw Blacks, Latinos, and mixed races. In addition, about half of those present were *younger people* under the age of 35. Furthermore, the minorities present led the prayers, the public speaking and the songs. When I saw this I first began to wonder, could we be witnessing the beginning of the end?

- 5) **Hollywood and its Movies are more Pro-Life than Ever-** In the last five to seven years, almost every major motion picture that has directly touched upon the issue of abortion or that has portrayed pregnant mothers has been pro-life. This development is simply remarkable. The movies *Bella*, *Juno*, *Knocked Up*, *Waitress*, *Children of Men*, *Look Who's Talking*, and *August Rush* all portray mothers (and sometimes fathers) who made critical pro-life decisions. I could not even recommend all of these movies, but even the raunchy ones got it right on this issue. Fully animated children's movies like *Finding Nemo* and *Horton Hears-a-Who* also present storylines that respect and honor life. **Jason Jones**, one of the producers of the movie *Bella*, told me that he knows politically liberal, secular Hollywood producers who are strongly pro-life. We are talking about *Hollywood movie producers!* One *openly gay* movie producer, who stands in opposition to abortion, reportedly stated, "If I could raise enough money, we could end abortion in America-- through movies." This is serious progress toward reaching our goal of developing a cultural consensus.
- 6) **The Resurgence of Side Walk Counseling and other Pro-Life Activism-** This observation may just be isolated to my regional observations in Florida, but it appears that more and more pro-life supporters have become comfortable with the idea of physically going to abortion clinics. By attending to the sidewalks in front of these clinics, pro-lifers are able to peacefully counsel, pray, provide assistance, hold signs, preach and plead with mothers to abstain from killing their babies. Sidewalk counselors are truly the front line of the pro-life movement; and their courage and commitment is truly admirable. The depiction of pictures and videos outside of clinics is a more controversial, but some would argue effective tactic that displays the actual practice and product of an abortion by showing the dismembered and destroyed unborn child that results. **Greg Cunningham's** group, the **Center for Bioethical Reform**, carefully and intentionally uses this strategy. CBR presents its **Genocide Awareness Project (GAP)** on college campuses all around the country after requesting the legal assistance of our organization to demonstrate its legal right to be there. The GAP is a traveling photo mural exhibit which displays graphic forms of genocide in world history and places them in a historical context with abortion. The photos include the remains of dead bodies from the Cambodian Killing Fields, Jewish Holocaust victims, and African Americans killed in racist lynchings. The GAP has been to colleges and universities all over the country and has made a lasting impression upon the tens of thousands of students who have viewed it and experienced its sobering impact.
- 7) **The Crisis Pregnancy Center Movement Begins Planning Strategically** – In my view, Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPC) and the people who run them are modern day heroes. The work they do is simply amazing. *Time* magazine did a cover story in 2007 entitled: "The Abortion Campaign You Never Hear About: Crisis Pregnancy Centers are working to win over one woman at a time." However, CPC's have historically popped up organically without serious thought about how many others were around it or the locations of nearby abortion clinics. In other words, the CPC movement has never thought about itself globally or strategically-- until recently. **Heartbeat International** under the leadership of **Peggy Hartshorn** and **John Ensor** has pioneered a strategic study and a plan to counter the systematic placement of Planned Parenthood's abortion clinics in inner cities... Over the last 7 years, Ensor has lived for extended periods of time in Boston, Miami, Los Angeles and then to Pittsburg to plant sustainable CPC's in those cities that are plagued with the highest concentrations of abortion clinics in the county. This inner city CPC planting strategy reaches more women and allows Black and Latino churches to take local ownership in and leadership for the sustained support of the ministry.
- 8) **Planned Parenthood's Fraud Has Been Exposed and is Being Stripped of Public Funding** – 2010 and 2011 were without question the worst years in Planned Parenthood's (PP) recent public relations history.

Lila Rose, an unassuming but striking college student has rocked their world with a series of undercover sting operations that has exposed the largest abortion provider's rampant fraud, corruption, and criminal conduct. Her student lead organization **Live Action**, and its undercover investigations have repeatedly caught PP clinic personnel lying, covering up child sexual abuse, and aiding those involved in child sex trafficking. The stunning video that documents the findings of these historic student-led investigations have helped to fuel the fire that led to the defunding of PP by several states which stripped them of taxpayer dollars to pay for abortions. PP receives approximately 363 million dollars from state and federal public funding. Recently, Congress tried but failed to ban the funding. As of June 2011, the states of Kansas, Indiana and North Carolina have all cut state funding directed to PP. In 2012, Florida will also have a state constitutional amendment on the ballot which will give voters the opportunity to ban the public funding of abortions.

- 9) **Post-Abortive Women have become an Increasingly Powerful Voice** - The generations of women who grew up under *Roe* and who were lied to and told that abortion was a safe and simple procedure have become emboldened and are no longer silent about their difficult experiences. **Silent No More**, **Operation Outcry** and **A Cry without a Voice** are three very different national organizations that all collect the voices, stories and testimonies of women who have had abortions and who want to speak and write about their experiences of pain and regret. Relational and existential evidence of the dangers and risks associated with abortion is a powerful tool to spread awareness and concern for the issue of life. These brave women share their deeply personal testimonies about the mental, physical and spiritual pain and complications that have resulted from the abortions they underwent.
- 10) **Abortion doctors are being disciplined, leaving the industry and not replacing themselves**- All across the country, abortionists are being reprimanded for their violations of local, state and federal laws. Some have even had their licenses revoked. Some are being punished by medical boards and others have just walked away from the sickening practice or have been converted and are now pro-life advocates. There are approximately 40 percent fewer abortion doctors than 20 years ago, and fewer men and women are willing to consider entering the industry. The bottom line is that each year, fewer abortions are performed and fewer individuals are becoming abortionists in our nation.

The skeptic may argue that many of my observations are anecdotal and unscientific. However, it seems clear that these developments are relatively recent, unique, and are all occurring at an unprecedented rate. I was recently in Washington, D.C. speaking on this topic before a group of national leaders. After speaking, I sat next to **Dr. Jack Willke**, one of the founders of the pro-life movement in America and asked him if he agreed with my observations nationally or whether they are confined to Florida. He quickly agreed that amazing things are happening in the pro-life movement not just in Florida, but around the country. The entire abortion industry is on the ropes and is being hit hard from multiple sides. Now is not the time to rest but rather to double up our efforts and to work harder than ever while we have a providential window and extraordinary momentum.



My final prayer is that we will look back upon abortion in America with the same shame, outrage and sadness that we now look upon the barbaric practice of slavery. While we continue to labor diligently to reach that goal, we can be encouraged by the fact that we are making significant progress and may just be witnessing “the beginning of the end...” of abortion in America.

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