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Abortion: A Calamity of the Greatest Magnitude

In the few seconds it took me to come up here to speak, on average about # unborn children were killed somewhere in the world. About two more suffer that same cruel fate with every passing second. I'm not sure it's possible for anybody to truly understand the depth of such a massacre. Every time a clock ticks, a unique life, one that could have had as much adventure, joy, and fulfillment as any of our own here today, is extinguished.

Make no mistake: what is happening over once per second around the world, or about three times a minute in the U.S. alone, is murder. No matter what your worldview, background, or creed is, that is the truth that anybody can derive from an honest examination of scientific and ethical facts - such as: From the very moment of conception, a new human is created. His or her DNA is distinct from that of his or her parents, and he or she fulfills all of the scientific biological requirements for life. At a fundamental level, it is simply inherently wrong to kill an innocent member of our own species, but many try to claim that an unborn child should not be afforded this right due to a lack of what they call "personhood."

What this objection fails to consider is that the main offense of the act of murder is the removal of one's future, the obliteration of experiences that a person could have very well wanted to live out. That's why the act of killing another person, even if that act is done painlessly and when the victim is temporarily unconscious, is inarguably wrong.

When one realizes this, one must also accept that the future of an unborn child has real and objective value, just like anyone else's. Hard-to-pin-down concepts like current "personhood" are totally irrelevant. Some may reply to this saying that an unborn child's future is merely theoretical, that because a fetus may only potentially become an adult one day, it has no value - but a fetus *will* become an adult, barring outside intervention or rare accidents. In that sense, an unborn child's future is only as theoretical as our own; nobody can truly guarantee that they will even live to see the sun rise tomorrow morning. Anyone's future is, by definition, only hypothetical.

Attempts to address this truth by citing a woman's bodily autonomy utterly fail to account for the fact that the only reason an unborn child exists is, in 99% of cases, due to a willful act on the part of the parents. Sex is an act that has natural consequences, and trying to lessen the probability of those consequences occurring doesn't excuse you if they still do.

When one speaks with someone who was nearly aborted, or survived an unsuccessful abortion, the argument that an unborn child is worthless seems patently absurd. If I may momentarily speak a bit more personally, my own mother is one such person. Her mother, my grandmother, was going to abort her due to financial concerns, but - thank God - she changed her

mind at the last minute and backed out from her appointment. Had that last minute change of mind not occurred, my mother would never have been able to fully live. I would not be here to deliver this speech. For my mother and those like her, the idea that one could have been aborted is not a mere thought experiment which one can ponder academically without any sense of urgency or emotion. It's real, and it's terrifying. It is so easy for each of us to recognize that our own futures have value. Why then is it so hard to accept that the same is true for the unborn?

The sad answer is: it is inconvenient for many to admit that. A survey conducted by the Alan Guttmacher Institute (a pro-choice organization) in 2004 showed that over 75% of abortions were conducted because the mother felt she wasn't ready for a baby, had enough children already, or feared that having a child would be a financially risky decision. I do not mean to downplay the difficulty that mothers who seek an abortion face, but at the same time I cannot accept these as valid reasons to end a life. You cannot kill somebody simply because you feel that his or her existence impedes upon your happiness. It seems harsh, I know, to label these reasons for getting an abortion as being mere "convenience," but that terminology is not inaccurate. Those who get abortions for these reasons are prioritizing their own quality of life over the actual lives of their unborn children, and this cannot continue if we have any desire at all to be a morally upright society.

Those who support abortion claim that banning it would lead to a dystopian future in which women have no choice but to seek illegal abortions. I have a far more optimistic vision of the future. Through human love and support, and a real push to put in the hard work needed to solve this problem, not only can we save countless children from a cruel death in their mothers' wombs, but we can also work to help the lives of impoverished mothers who might turn to abortion when they feel that they have no other options. As long as we stand together and never cease arguing, discussing, and opposing abortion, we can defeat this moral abomination both in its practice and at its source. We *must*, for this is the most important moral issue of our lifetimes. Failure is not an option. Thank you.