

# LifeNotes

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## Life is Precious in Every Circumstance

Rape is a horrible and despicable crime. Women who have survived this crime need real support. During this emotional time, women who conceive as a result of an assault should know that there are alternatives to abortion. Right to Life of Michigan offers information and resources to help women during their pregnancy.

The following is a fact sheet on abortion in the cases of rape or incest. It contains statistics on abortions in cases of rape or incest, information about the effects of abortion, and how an unborn child is valuable regardless of the way in which he or she was conceived.

### ABORTION ADDS TO THE PAIN

A woman who becomes pregnant as a result of rape or incest faces a difficult situation. Through no fault of her own, she is placed in a situation that will affect her life in many different ways, both physically and emotionally.

Abortion has been sold as the best solution to this kind of crisis pregnancy. However, abortion isn't a good solution to any problem. Although a mother may feel a sense of relief immediately following an abortion, the emotional pain and physical risks that follow an abortion aren't worth the short-term relief.<sup>1,2</sup> Having an abortion after a rape doesn't erase the painful memory of a violent act. Abortion itself is a violent act that ends the life of an innocent child and adds more emotional damage to a woman who is already in pain.

Abortion advocates often argue that a child conceived in rape will constantly remind a woman of her attacker. Shauna Prewitt is a lawyer who advocates for changing custody laws to protect women who give birth following rape. She is a rape survivor, and her daughter was conceived as a result of the rape. She said,

"Senators and representatives would say that women who conceive in rape should be able to have access to abortions, because otherwise we're going to be forcing a raped woman to relive the trauma of her rape for the next nine months. They'll be forced to give birth to a rapist's child, an animal's child, a monster's child. That was my child, right? Not my rapist's child."

### THE VALUE OF EVERY HUMAN LIFE

When discussing a controversial and emotional issue, it's important to closely examine our values and the circumstances of the issue. As we examine pregnancies resulting from rape and incest, we must ask who are the victims and who are the perpetrators. The mother is the victim. The father is the perpetrator. The unborn child is an innocent bystander whose life was created through an illegal act. An unborn child's life shouldn't be taken because his or her father is a criminal. The only person who deserves punishment in this situation is the perpetrator, not an innocent person. Abortion sentences an unborn child to a punishment worse than the rapist—the person responsible for the crime.

Rape and incest are horrible acts that violate women. Abortion is a horrible act that violates an unborn child's right to life. Why does an unborn child have value? Because they are a member of the human race. All human beings have an inalienable right to life.

A person has no control over the circumstances regarding their conception, or who their parents are. Do adopted children have less value than biological children? Is a child born into nobility more valuable than a child born into poverty? Consider the many people conceived in rape, people from all walks of life. Can we say they are lesser

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human beings because of who their fathers were? No, we obviously can't. If an adult conceived in rape has the same intrinsic value as other adults, then children in the womb conceived in rape have as much value as other children in the womb.

Abortion doesn't erase a rape, it's an intrusive procedure that has been found to compound a woman's mental and

emotional pain from a rape or incest situation.<sup>3</sup> We should be concerned about what will help a woman through this difficult time. That help should treat the woman and child both as human beings, worthy of being valued and deserving care and respect.

### **COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS**

Due to the unfortunate political nature of the discussion of abortion in cases of rape and incest, frequently many poor assumptions are made about rape, incest and abortion.

The biggest mistaken assumption may be that all women pregnant following a rape choose abortion. In the only specific study on the issue, 50 percent of women pregnant following rape had abortions. The other half did not have abortions. Of that half, 32 percent kept their children, 6 percent placed their children for adoption, and unfortunately 12 percent suffered miscarriages.<sup>4</sup> As many as 12,500 pregnancies result from rape in the U.S. each year, according to estimates by the Rape,

Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN).<sup>5</sup> Using these estimates, about 4,000 women every year choose to raise their children conceived in rape. There are tens of thousands of fellow Americans conceived in rape, otherwise indistinguishable from other people.

Another common misconception is that many abortions are because of rape, incest, or health problems. Abortion advocates often justify abortion-on-demand using those reasons because a majority of Americans are uncomfortable with abortions done for social or economic reasons. According to the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute, less than one half of 1 percent of women cited being raped as their primary reason for having an abortion. Of the rest, more than 90 percent cited reasons like family size, economic situation, career plans, or maturity issues.<sup>6</sup>

### **WHO REALLY CARES ABOUT THE LIFE OF RAPE AND INCEST SURVIVORS?**

Focusing on the difficult situations of rape and incest allows pro-abortion advocates to escape from disclosing their extreme positions with regards to late-term dismemberment abortions, parental consent, and sex-selection abortions. Pro-abortion groups support abortions for any reason at any point in pregnancy. It really doesn't matter to these groups if the woman is a victim or not. As long as women are willing to pay for abortions—or taxpayers can be forced into paying for abortions—the abortion industry will offer abortion as a "solution."

Prolife people with boldness need to address abortion with regards to rape and incest. Rape and incest survivors need help from family and community members. These women need to know that there are pregnancy help centers across the country that can provide free help including food, clothing, and counseling. There are also 30 to 40 couples waiting to adopt every newborn,<sup>7</sup> and there are numerous non-profit adoption agencies who can help birth mothers find loving homes for their children.

Prolife organizations don't profit from rape survivors—they are happy to lovingly sacrifice their time and money to provide them life-affirming care. It is abortion advocates who should be ashamed, as they profit from survivors of rape and incest, and use their stories to justify taking the lives of millions of other innocent unborn children.

## VICTORY IN LIFE

Many women who have been raped have overcome the pain of their assault and given birth to children who have made a difference in this world.

Travon Clifton, from Michigan, was pro-choice. Travon had been raped as a pre-teen, and her perspective on the issue of abortion was based on what would happen if she became pregnant through rape. Following her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, Travon's mother sat her down to tearfully tell Travon that she was conceived in rape.

"It threw me into an immediate identity crisis," Travon said. "Here I was being a proponent for abortion, especially in cases of rape, and then I met myself. I had to grapple with the fact that while here I am, a human being, I have the right to live, and I just put a death sentence on myself and everybody else that's like me."



Travon at first couldn't understand why her mother didn't have an abortion. She came to understand that her mother didn't see her as the rapist's child, but as her daughter, an individual worthy of protection. Today, Travon is dedicated to sharing her personal journey and the good that has come from the precious gift of life.

## BRINGING THE TRUTH TO LIGHT

In cases of pregnancy resulting from incest, abortion is the worst option for the survivor. Abortion allows the perpetrator to discreetly dispose of the evidence of his crime. Abortion clinics have a financial incentive to not carefully screen patients who may be there because of force or other coercion. Many young women who have been survivors of incest see their pregnancy as an opportunity to escape the perpetrator. A visible pregnancy forces the perpetrator to face his illegal activities and gives the survivor a chance to reveal the

truth about the situation she is in. Abortion ends the child's life while hiding the act of incest, while birth saves the life of the child and can help to free the mother from an incestuous relationship.

## RIGHT TO LIFE OF MICHIGAN REFLECTIONS

Right to Life of Michigan is a nonpartisan, nonsectarian, nonprofit organization of diverse and caring people united to protect the precious gift of human life from fertilization to natural death. We work on the behalf of defenseless or vulnerable human beings, born and unborn, within our identified life issues of abortion, infanticide, euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Abortion is not the answer to a pregnancy which is the result of sexual assault. When a woman is raped and becomes pregnant, the woman and unborn child are the victims. Using abortion to end a crisis pregnancy does nothing to alleviate the rape. It merely allows society to forget about the rape and pretend that justice has been done, leaving the woman to deal with the emotions of the assault and abortion often alone.

In the case of incest, abortion actually protects the perpetrator of the crime by concealing the incestuous act. Incest represents a family situation where help is needed.

When the life of the mother is in danger, many times a doctor can treat both the mother and unborn child separately. Because of medical advances, it is rare that the child's life cannot also be saved. In those rare cases, the intent is not to kill the child but to try to save both lives if medically possible. Before the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decisions legalizing all abortions, the standard abortion law, including Michigan's, had an exception for the life of the mother.

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It is absolutely indisputable that the life within the womb is a unique human being. To say that this irreplaceable life can be deliberately destroyed for any reason denies the intrinsic humanity of the unborn.

For additional resources or pregnancy help, please visit the following websites:

**RTL.org** (Right to Life of Michigan)

**optionline.org** (OptionLine pregnancy help)

**afterabortion.org** (The Elliot Institute)

#### REFERENCES:

- <sup>1</sup> Catherine Barnard, *The Long-Term Psycho-social Effects of Abortion* (Portsmouth, NH: Institute For Pregnancy Loss, 1990).
- <sup>2</sup> R.C. Erikson, "Abortion Trauma: Application of a Conflict Model," *Pre and Perinatal Psychology Journal* 8, no. 1 (1993): 33.
- <sup>3</sup> Basile Uddo, "The Hard Cases: Rape, Incest, and Public Policy," in *The Zero People*, ed. J.L. Hensley (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1983), 113.
- <sup>4</sup> M.M. Holmes et al., "Rape-related pregnancy: estimates and descriptive characteristics from a national sample of women," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 175, no. 2 (1996): 320-325.
- <sup>5</sup> Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics" Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence>
- <sup>6</sup> Lawrence B. Finer et al., "Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 37, no. 3 (2005).
- <sup>7</sup> According to Alan Hazlett, president of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, *The Lansing State Journal*, January 24, 2001.

## Pregnant? Need Options?

You don't have to face pregnancy alone.

Call 800-579-6626 or text "HELPLINE" to 313131 for confidential unplanned pregnancy options, counseling and assistance, and adoption information.

