

Cultural Attitudes to Abortion in a Post-September 11 World

By Dorinda C. Bordlee, Esq.*

Lisa Beamer gave birth to her third child, Morgan, a girl, on January 9th. With the quiet but determined battle cry of "Let's roll," Morgan's late father, Todd Beamer, is believed to have helped overcome hijackers before United Airlines Flight 93 crashed near Pittsburgh on September 11, 2001. Morgan Beamer is only one of scores of children born after their fathers were killed on September 11th. Each reminds us of the humanity of the unborn child, the uniqueness of each human being, and the enduring legacy of parenting.

Though Morgan will not know her heroic father, her birth exemplifies the bittersweet circumstances common to the human condition – courage exercised in the face of fear, grief and pain softened by the joy of new life, greatness wrought through self-giving sacrifice.

Though directly and forever affected by the attacks of September 11th, Lisa Beamer isn't the only woman forced to rethink the relative importance of children and work and family. The emotional aftermath of the attacks have evoked a deep reconsideration of the preciousness of human life, of the importance of human relationships, and of the legacy we leave to our family and our nation. It has caused both men and women to question their career choices, to spend more time with children and family, and to ask what most contributes to human flourishing.

This week's 29th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court's 1973 abortion decision, prompts a related reexamination. The World Health Organization defines "health" as "complete social well-being." Has 29 years of abortion on demand – a total of 40 million abortions – improved women's "complete social well-being"? If not, are there practical social and cultural changes that might be adopted to dispel the myth that abortion helps women?

Many Americans may assume that legalized abortion has generally been good for women. But behind the thin facade of so-called "women's rights" is the disaster of damaged lives – both women's and men's. At the same time, *Roe* has promoted a climate in which an increasing number of men are ever more uncommitted to women and irresponsible toward the children they conceive. Isn't it ironic that it is *men* who benefit from this so-called "women's rights" issue, at the cost of millions of women who suffer the consequences physically, emotionally and spiritually?

Indeed, this failed social experiment has aggravated the very problems it promised to solve. To their detriment, women have relied on abortion over the past three decades, resulting in an increase in sexually transmitted disease, coarsened relationships with men, and heart-breaking infertility due to abortion-related complications.

And we have begun to see the mounting evidence of the link between abortion and breast cancer, the ABC link. Over the past 44 years – since 1957 – there have been at least 31 international studies of the ABC link. Eleven of 12 studies on American women report an increased risk of breast cancer after having an induced abortion – 11 of 12! Worldwide, 25 of the 31 existing ABC studies have shown an elevated risk.

In October 1996, an analysis published in the British Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health concluded that one induced abortion increases a woman's risk of developing breast cancer, on average, by 30 percent. With a patronizing attitude, abortion-rights groups discount or remain silent about these studies, claiming that women should not be scared by these scientific facts at the difficult time of deciding what to do about an unexpected pregnancy.

Women still die from legal abortion. A year ago, Phoenix abortionist John Biskind and his assistant were both convicted of manslaughter for killing a woman who bled to death in their clinic. Despite the fact that Lou Anne Herron was the second woman to die in one of Biskind's clinics, so-called "women's rights" groups filed a federal court challenge to the Arizona regulations that were passed to make sure it didn't happen again.

Abortion-rights proponents have also filed lawsuits seeking to strike down informed consent legislation that requires abortion providers to disclose the serious medical risks of abortion. There is cause for a serious reconsideration of whether those who advocate legalized abortion are sincerely interested in protecting women's rights, or whether they are more concerned with the interests of the multi-million dollar abortion industry.

As we enter a new millennium, we must realize that there is much that can be done socially, culturally, and legally to reduce abortion and to make positive alternatives readily available.

Project WIN (Women in Need) is a successful program initiated in 1995 by Governor Casey of Pennsylvania to provide much-needed funding to crisis pregnancy services. The program appropriates state funds to hands-on services and woman-to-woman counseling by professional social workers who offer hope for women facing a problem pregnancy. Advocates of human dignity in several states, including Louisiana, Florida and North Dakota, are seeking to model this program during the Spring 2002 legislative session.

We are witnessing the embryonic stages of a profound cultural renewal. Our renewed sensitivities shutter at the crassness of the September 11 response of Planned Parenthood of New York City: a limited-time offer of *free abortions* to Lisa Beamer and every other woman carrying the living reminders of their loved-ones lost in the attacks.

Twenty-nine years after *Roe*, and four short months since September 11, the slogan of "women's freedom" seems to have lost much of its appeal. As Americans stand united in our post-September 11 world, the time has come for women to stand united – with each other, our men and our children – in a way that makes us all worthy of the authentic freedom that our nation must now fight to defend.

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