

opinion
READER

Readers take stand on abortion issues

Woman has right to end pregnancy

This is in response to "Readers debate Heckman's pro-choice view" (DN, Feb. 14). First, I want to clarify a fact that has failed to penetrate the ignorance of most of the pro-lifers: Pro-choice advocates are not pro-abortion!

We believe every woman has the right to control what goes on with her own body. We also believe all possible alternatives should be pursued before an abortion is considered. Most importantly, we believe that a woman has the right to choose to complete or terminate a pregnancy.

The key word to remember is "individual." It should be obvious that an individual's body belongs to only one person. Because every individual is unique, each person has his or her own conscious, morals and religious beliefs. Pro-lifers can't seem to grasp that fundamental fact. Instead, they seek to force their own conscious, morals and religion upon the remaining majority. They also seek to control the body of every woman, something no one has the right to do except the woman herself.

Kreps' letter exemplifies the scare tactics used by pro-lifers. The letter seemed to be lifted right out of one of those fundamentalist pamphlets on the subject. These tactics include false generalizations, irrelevant comparisons and keeping as far away from the real issue as possible. All the while, pro-choice groups and Planned Parenthood are educating the public about the consequences of, and alternatives to abortion.

A woman's body is her own business. Women are competent and intelligent enough to make rational decisions without the interference of pro-life groups.

Keith Richter
freshman
anthropology

When life begins is the real issue

I was glad to find that in the two guest opinions (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 13) that neither side resorted to too much rock-headed dogma (incoherent dogma anyway). However, they were still arguing, as is proven to happen in abortion arguments, two different points. Pro-life sees abortion as murder, pro-choice does not. The only real issue then should be when life begins.

First of all, let's examine some bits of morality that we can all agree upon: Murder of innocent people is appalling. It doesn't matter how you stand on abortion, capital punishment or Campus Rec, the senseless slaughter of an innocent human being arouses in us deep feelings of many kinds, but all of them point to the undesirability of the wanton destruction of a life. These feelings are magnified when the victim is a child. There are few things as repulsive as an innocent child who has been cut down before getting a chance to experience life fully. I dare say none would argue this with me who were of sound mind.

Now, let us assume for a moment that life does indeed begin at conception, that a fetus is in fact a human being, subject to the same legal and moral rights as one who breathes the atmosphere. If you accept this, there simply is no justification to kill this child.

It doesn't matter that it cannot sense pain or be self-aware, for we don't sentence handicapped individuals who are so hindered to the gas chamber.

It doesn't matter that abortions occur naturally, because diseases, floods, earthquakes and other such events that kill people all occur naturally. But that doesn't mean we have to succumb to them. We can't justify killing people because they might get cancer anyway, naturally. Nature kills, but it does not subscribe to our moral assertion that killing is wrong, thus we cannot justify killing for that

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reason. We cannot justify killing this child merely because we suspect it will grow up in an abusive, poverty-stricken or non-utilitarian fashion. If that were justification, we'd be burning the poor as fuel. We live in a mobile society and have no right to kill someone just because we think they may not enjoy the station to which they are born, for they may very well be capable of transcending their disadvantages.

We cannot justify killing it due to the argument that it is the woman's body to do with as she pleases, for the child's body is definitely not hers to do with as she pleases.

Finally we cannot continue to allow others to kill their own children just because we would seek a less safe method were it made illegal. Were that the case, we would have to provide mall space and police protection to crack dealers so that they could do their business safely. We cannot justify that something is right just because a lot of people do it or would do it anyway. That is why there have always been laws, and always lawbreakers.

Thus, if we assume that a fetus is a person, we cannot justify by any means killing that person.

Now then, what if the fetus is not a person? If such is the case, there is no justification for requiring that the woman who carries it do anything she doesn't want with it.

That then is the real argument. Is it or is it not a human being? If it is, we cannot harm it justifiably. If it is not, then abortion is nothing to be upset at. When then does life begin? I couldn't even begin to speculate on when that might be, but I find it more than a little disturbing that if it is indeed a human being, we have seen the decimation of millions of people. I know I don't quite feel qualified to make the choice, but I'm inclined to think that if it is conceived in a duck, laid by a duck, and hatches as a duck, it is probably a duck, so to speak.

Brent Knudsen
junior
piano performance

Responsibility has double standards

In pondering the abortion controversy, it staggers me that we can continue to use phrases like "the right to control one's own body" without its necessary adjunct: The responsibility to control one's own body, especially with regard to sexual behavior.

If a man has fathered a child out of wedlock, he may (quite properly) be subjected to civil litigation. If paternity can be positively established, this man may be legally required to provide for the child's financial support for 18 years. Society is willing to compel a man to bear the responsibility and consequences for what he has done with his body.

Strangely, the taking of innocent life is considered an acceptable alternative to holding women to the same standard of accountability. The fact remains that there are no rights without responsibilities. Where human life hangs in the balance, the moral responsibility is infinitely greater.

Paul Marxhausen
College of Engineering

Resentment towards 'anti-choice' label

From my perspective, Diana Johnson's pro-choice stance on abortion (DN, Feb. 13) certainly leaves something to be desired. But I am not writing to claim that her suggestion that "personhood" begins "only after 30 weeks" is a result of callous as well as shallow reasoning (though it is).

I also am not writing to show her insinuation that abortion is permissible because unwanted children will lead unhappy lives in general is a gross judgment that we simply don't have the right to make (but it is). And I am not going to rehash arguments which support my belief that human life begins at conception (though it does).

Rather, I am writing in response to Johnson's use of a piece of cheap rhetoric, that is, labeling those of us who believe that abortion should be outlawed (to whatever extent) as "anti-choice." I have come across this term several times since coming to the university and I resent this label.

In my pro-life stance, I sincerely believe that I favor the protection of an innocent human life. Probably much to Johnson's surprise, it is not my aim to go around oppressing women (especially ones caught in such difficult circumstances).

Johnson claims: "But the argument that every U.S. citizen has the right to regulate their own bodies and to have control over their individual choices should stand." Of course, this argument should stand. The problem is that some of us do not see abortion as an "individual choice," but rather as a choice that affects an innocent human in an obvious way. As we pro-lifers see it, just as a mother's decision to murder her 3-year-old is not an individual choice, neither is her decision to abort her unborn child.

And as the old cliché goes, your right to swing your fist stops where your neighbor's chin (or in this case, umbilical cord) starts.

Johnson need not grant my view that abortion ought to be made illegal. I only wish that she and others would realize the true motivation behind my beliefs. That motivation is to protect what I see as human life, not to limit the concept of individual freedom which the columnist (as well as myself) so cherish.

Obviously, the government becomes oppressive when it can regulate actions which are individuals' intensely personal concerns.

But when these concerns significantly affect other people they are no longer intensely personal. Most of us who feel that the fetus is a person, therefore, do not feel that the right to have an abortion should rest behind the sacred walls of privacy which the government must respect.

Women caught in the situation of unwanted pregnancy deserve our support and sympathy. Over their own bodies, they should have complete control; some of us (right or wrong) sincerely believe that the fetus is its own person with its own body (though it lives inside its mother's).

I don't wish to tell a woman what to do with her "own" body any more than I wish to tell her which career to pursue, which man to marry (if any), or which sexual preference to follow. Rather, I simply believe that the fetus should not be described as merely part of a woman's "own body." Whether or not people agree with this, they should see that my motivation is to protect life, not to limit freedom.

Johnson feels that because a fetus is not a person (before 30 weeks of pregnancy anyway), it is part of the mother's body over which she should have exclusive control. Her motivation is obviously to preserve individual freedom; she does not wish to thwart life. By the same token, my motivation is to protect life, not to thwart freedom.

For this reason, I am no more "anti-choice" than Johnson is "pro-death." Let's be fair in our name-calling.

Joe Luby
freshman
engineering

Abortion: Legalized, premeditated murder

How anyone can possibly support legalized murder is beyond me. That's all abortion is -- a euphemism for cold-blooded, premeditated murder.

Every single "fetus" has a God-given, let alone Constitutional, right to life. If this baby came about as a result of a woman's, or man's (note: I included men; don't attempt to label me as sexist), total irresponsibility in not using some form of protection, then these people should be ready to accept the consequences of their actions.

If the baby came about as the result of a rape, put it up for adoption. It could still become a productive member of society.

If doctors can determine that the baby is dead, at least remove it by a Caesarean section and give it a proper burial. In the most blunt terms, it was at one time a group of living cells, as we all are.

I am not legally permitted to go outside and rip somebody's limbs off with a suction machine, or to shoot someone's cells full of saline, so why should a woman be allowed to?

Andrew Meyer
freshman
pre-med

Column lauded for opposing abortion

After being at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for four years and reading various opinions on the issue of abortion, I cannot stand it anymore and must put all other commitments aside to write this.

I must begin by commending the pro-life guest opinion written in the Feb. 13 issue of the Daily Nebraskan. It was definitely one of the better arguments for pro-life that I've ever read.

With that, I can now honestly say that my stomach turns, and I become truly infuriated every time I read a pro-choice opinion. It should be called pro-legalized murder, because as harsh as it may seem, that is exactly what it is. What have these babies done to deserve death?

Pro-choice individuals argue that abortion isn't an issue of the baby being an inconvenience, but of parenthood being an inconvenience. What happened to adoption? No one ever said a mother welcomes a baby. Saying "I would be a poor parent," or "I'm not ready for parenthood" is an obvious excuse, one that is so blatantly obvious, it mystifies me to think people can't see this.

If one doesn't want to, can't afford to, isn't mature enough or isn't capable of being a parent, no one is blaming you. But give your baby up for adoption. Take a little responsibility for your actions, and don't murder what you and your lover/friend solely created.

Incidentally, overcrowding of orphanages, as an argument for pro-choice, is invalid, but of which the solutions are a whole different issue. I can only say that cities, such as New York City, are overcrowded too, but you don't see the government legalizing murder to decrease the population.

Secondly, I cannot understand this absurd idea that abortion is a woman's right to "regulate her own body." How about regulating your own sexuality? No, I am not saying the entire population should abstain from sexual activity. Now that is a personal choice each one has the right make for himself/herself. However, by making the choice to have sex, whether it be with or without birth control, one is making the choice to carry her baby through to birth should pregnancy occur.

Women, quit using the sorry excuse that we should have control over

our bodies -- we do have control -- regulated by our brain. I'm assuming we all have a brain, and we all have sexual capacity. If you're not mature enough to use the two together and realize that by having sex you are accepting the responsibility to possibly have to carry a child for nine months, then you shouldn't be having sex. Again, no one says you have to keep and raise the baby. The choice here is: For the "pleasure" of sex, will you go through the "discomfort" of pregnancy -- should you have to? I'd say that decision is a lot easier than the killing or not killing of your baby.

My opinion does not apply to those victims of rape or incest. These are crimes, not choices.

Debbie Yeshnowski
senior
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Abortion is tiring as a moral issue

That wasn't the first time you voiced your opinion against "pro choice," John Campbell. Did you mean it, really, that if someone provides "rational, philosophical reasoning" you'll "shut up?"

I'm getting so tired of all this pre-occupation with abortion as a "moral issue," when I believe it boils down to plain, old, dirty economics.

Will you please THINK? -- might it be that some superior groups wish to ensure a "next generation of peasants" to perform society's unpleasant tasks? (There is some doubt, you know, what with the AIDS plague, other health problems, and with abortion available).

Could it be that disallowing abortion is the most convenient way they've found to accomplish this, and all of the supposedly intelligent people screeching, "Right to life! are not more than their ignorant, uh... tools? I have noticed, if you have not, that people who can afford to travel to get abortions DO, when necessary, and only the lower classes are actually forced to reproduce. Is that really what you want?"

Do you think my suggestion appears ridiculous? Not in context, it doesn't. I've read of a time when the good people of America wanted more manpower for their scutwork jobs so bad that they paid slavers to go to Africa and kidnap some slaves. Have you forgotten that? Is it so difficult to consider forced reproduction when we KNOW what evil lurks in the hearts of men.

You and I both, John, wish to assure all babies of a "precious and sacred" life. The difference between us is, that I can see, I cannot -- and I am not ready to propel defenseless infants into this world with "already a bad start" such as poverty, unstable or incomplete families, or just plain being unwanted. Poverty is real. Didn't you see the building erected by Early Warning!? Don't you CARE?

Won't you, John, and you others so staunchly defending the "right to life" for babies, stop a moment and REALLY have a care for them? Or for the miserable children and the anguished adults they may grow to be?

Though I am honest enough to say that it'd be nice (for me) to have someone funding Social Security when I am old, I have to philosophically admit that no one: No pregnant woman, no unborn child, owes that to me and I won't ask it of them.

Think about it. This country could, instead, finally offer that much-discussed amnesty to Mexican nationals and get a labor force that way. It'll be one or the other, soon -- unless a third alternative arises. Everything I've mentioned you've already heard of in the media. It's all connected. Did I really have to become the matrix?

I hope this argument was rational enough for you.

Fran Thompson
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