

## When does life begin?

Recent prosecution asks the big question

**E**ighteen-day old Kayla Fae Arandus is already having a struggle to stay alive, but the lives of many other unborn children could hang in the balance of a court decision for or against Kayla Fae's mother.

Deborah Arandus of Hastings is charged with abusing Kayla Fae in her womb by drinking alcohol.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union and Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, the case reflects a national trend of women being prosecuted for their actions while pregnant.

Lynn Paltrow, an attorney for the reproductive law center, said that at least 167 women in 26 states have been arrested on criminal charges because of their behavior during pregnancy. In every case but one, the charges were dismissed or the woman won.

Mrs. Arandus's representative, Arthur Toogood, said he felt the charges against her also should be dropped because he thought Nebraska child abuse laws refer only to a "minor child" not a fetus.

Maya Wiley, an ACLU attorney, said that alcoholism is a disease and the court was making it a crime.

"What you're really talking about is making a decision about who's fit to be a parent," Wiley said.

But it also seems like the great question of the last decade has resurfaced again — when does life begin?

Even the Supreme Court's upholding of *Roe vs. Wade* didn't answer this plaguing question.

If the charges against Mrs. Arandus are dismissed based on Toogood's arguments, the court will have decided that Kayla Fae wasn't assaulted because she wasn't really alive.

Well, no one can argue that she's alive now, barely.

If the courts continuing to set precedents that life does not begin until after birth, they will strike a staggering blow to the pro-life movement and thousands of unborn babies.

Jay J. Sullivan, the lawyer appointed to represent the interests of Kayla Fae, said he believed that once Mrs. Arandus had made the decision to carry the baby full term, she had no right to intentionally harm her through drinking.

"I don't care if the baby is in the crib or in the womb," Jay said, "an assault is an assault."

So, if an assault is an assault in or out of the womb, what is abortion?

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### EDITORIAL POLICY

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Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



## Labels are a problem in society

**L**abels are the tool of choice for the haphazard way in which people try to understand one another. You're born with a set of labels if you possess gender and skin, and you quickly assume those labels of your geographic location and household cashflow. I leaped into the melting pot equipped with "poor, white, farm, female." I quite recall having requested "cosmopolitan heiress to billions."

You may go on to collect various and sundry family tributes for especially profound childhood moments, like when you acquired a taste for dog chow, or practiced spontaneous nudity.

You will ultimately assemble a catalog of goodies from everyone else in the world by virtue of how you relate to their lives. Some good people fling their descriptives fast and loose, making for the occasional absurd consequence. I should know, I've been called a lot of things.

Feminist, for example. The males in my family parochialized the word "feminist," and in pre-pubesence, I was anointed a "wimmin's libber." By what motivation, I have no clue, unless it was the assertive way in which I objected to being ground into a pulp by my brother.

We had a discussion in my literature class regarding the traditional terms associated with the condition of feminism, i.e., "independence," "wage disparity," "male-bashing," etc.

Not within my glamorous lifetime have I planted my feet firmly and proclaimed to the world, "I AM A FEMINIST!" Like I have that kind of time.

I'm too busy, trying to make enough

money (wage disparity) to pay the rent (independence), or being momentarily distracted by some guy (male-bashing) who just called me a name because I failed to curtsy at his grunting reference to some part of my anatomy.

Labels can arise from that time in our lives described by cartoonist Matt Groening as "the deepest pit in hell," — adolescence — and attach themselves to us like stink on what your cat does. I was the wild, rebellious, party-animal type of "crazy" to the Wayne and Garth set of my developmental years, and the self-destructive, demented, dangerous type of "crazy" to the adults in the community who espoused marginal non-involvement with troubled youth.

There will always be that one small Midwestern town where I could show up in Elvis' limousine driven by Garth Brooks, married to Bob Kerrey, totting the Nobel Prize in literature, and doors would be locked, shutters fastened, and impressionable youth would be pulled from the streets. It's nice to know such places still exist.

Sometimes, in moments of great vision, we label ourselves. I've been known, during an occasional lapse of cognizance, to have used the term "optimist" in relationship to myself. Here's a tip.

"Crazy" is by far a more benevolent label than is "optimist." People think you're "crazy," and you have all the room in the world, not to mention total fashion freedom. The single minor complication accompanying "crazy" is possible personal intrusions by those who sport the more literal version of the label.

Optimism, however, seems to provoke everyone exposed to it. If you make the blunder of displaying some

degree of optimism, let's say, because you don't have to undergo that major surgery after all, transport yourself to the nearest lavatory stall and wipe that smile off of your face!

Ninety-eight percent of your peer group is having a crappy day, and if you have the nerve not to, they are going to mess with you. The safest, most assured way to maintain good feelings about life is to disguise your optimism by scowling constantly and complaining of joint pain. If you must smile, do so in the most vapid-looking way imaginable, so people might dismiss you as "crazy."

One of my professors recently tagged me with "abstract." I was mortified. I rushed home to my bathroom mirror, expecting to see a rectangular, one-eyed head with a Samsonite handle for a nose. To my somewhat modest relief, I looked as I always had.

Some friends delicately suggested that the good instructor was describing my thought process as something not widely understood. "Hmm," I replied. They may have a point.

Most everyone I encounter seems to understand things that I do not, like why we flush our toilets with drinking water. They appear to share the universal understanding of how a man can be given \$7 million for semi-accurately hurling a leather-bound sphere, while friends of mine are given \$5 an hour to handle infectious medical waste.

I'm not so sure which of us has the rectangular, one-eyed heads with Samsonite handles.

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