

A Feature

Commentary: "3 Bullets in the Doctor's Back"

By Daren Okafo

Editor's note: Daren Okafo is the host of the weekly CHSR program, "Nineteen Yards o' Cbitlins with Onions and Sardines on the Side". Mixing music with a conscience with various topical issues like Black Awareness, Daren's show, according to Programming Director Tristis Baird, is one of the station's most popular. Interested listeners can tune in on Thursday evenings between 11pm and 1 am and can phone in with their comments and opinions, by calling 453-4979. This piece was originally intended for publication in last week's feature on Abortion, however due to space limitations it appears here now. Enjoy:

I'm sitting here listening to a Fishbone song, namely "Ma & Pa, what the hell is wrong with ya." This painfully brings me back to those often tiresome and trouble filled years of my adolescent life. One of the statements my mother undoubtedly got sick of hearing was "Its my life, I can do what I want with it." This probably brings back some gladly forgotten memories for you. With this in mind, stretch your emotions back in time and try to remember the overwhelming feeling that others shouldn't control your life for you; because ultimately it is you who bears the responsibility for it. One chooses one's path in life according to one's own goals; what you want from your life.

Okay, I would probably be correct in assuming a great deal of confusion about this opening paragraph, considering this piece is about the abortion debate. So why did I open it like this? The choice of what to do with one's life is intimately attached to the abortion debate. Strangely enough though, it is as important to pro-lifers as it is for the pro-choice camp. Both sides of the debate routinely exercise their freedom of speech, through the media. The freedom to believe in what one sees as right and just, for whatever reasons, allows the Christian "far-right" to base their argument on the words of their deity. This is their right, as it is mine to believe in what God I see fit to believe in. We all accept these rights as part and parcel of living in a free and enlightened democratic society. Another facet of this democratic society is the right of the majority to exercise its will through the voting process - its how we get our government - Jean Chretien would not be Prime Minister if the majority did not think he was right for the job.

With all this granted, we need to examine some things that are often overlooked in a democratic society. Firstly, the majority, while expressing its ideas through a vote, is not always correct. Simply because a majority decides something does not mean that they are right. For instance, during the 1800s through to the mid 1900s the majority of people in the Southern United States believed that black people were subhuman and thus did not deserve basic human rights. They showed this in the way their "democratic" society was run. In this case, the majority opinion was simply not the fair and just opinion. A closer to home example would be one of 1940s pre-war Germany. The majority there said that the Jewish people's of the country were less than human. The government showed this in one of the most horrific and detestable human legacies in history. But who now would

agree with that majority? This situation leads us to probe the question of majority rule even further. The majority in a democratic society should, perhaps, decide the fate of the whole, when the question posed is to be answered as a whole, e.g. should we pay more taxes? But what about when the question is not on the level of the whole, but on the level of the one. Should one member of society be allowed to answer the question asked, when the only one who suffers the consequences is that individual person?

In Canada, divorce is accepted due to the fact that people feel it is the responsibility of the couple involved. If

not because God appears to you and proclaims himself. Your religion is a faith and is based on this fact. So with this behind your institution, how can you deny others the right to choose? After all, Your books also teach that all humans are equal. So what about dictating to women what they can and cannot do? When you do this, you identify women as being stupid. You are telling them that they are *not* moral, free thinking and full contributing members of society; which of course, they are.

In any struggle of opinions, there is a doorway left open for violence. We are all humans and as such, we like to be able to defend our

life. The fetus simply cannot survive outside of its nurturing environment; it is essentially borrowing life from the mother. As for the question of the soul, lightly touching on the debate, it is a pro-lifer's personal beliefs that state we have a soul from the moment of conception. It could be said that we each have a unique essence but it is one's own beliefs that state where this comes from and when this soul first begins to breathe in synchronicity with the living shell it inhabits. This argument brings the abortion debate to its lowest common denominator, I feel. It is an argument of beliefs, one side expressing theirs and the other side trying to swamp them. I state

killers. But, besides this all to familiar scenario, economics comes into it in another way. In this world, if you have money, you have power. Doctors to this day perform abortions for wealthy women under false diagnosis of miscarriage, infection, etc. All this, while those who cannot afford the luxuries of power end up "paralyzed... lying in puddles of urine slowly dying of tetanus after having unsterile instruments inserted into their wombs." Is abortion to be another service available only to the rich? Also does this help show that one's freedom of choice in today's society depends on one's ability to pay for that freedom? By refusing to respect the choice of certain individuals (i.e. a right to abortion) society forces those individuals underground. This leads to so called back alley abortion clinics. This is due to one simple fact, albeit one that I was reluctant to bring up, but exists nonetheless. Abortion has always been around and it will always be around. How can we continue to let women suffer for deciding to have abortions, when they will continue to think for themselves and think freely, regardless of what constraints other people put on them? Should a woman who already feels guilty about having to have an abortion for financial reasons be made to feel worse by others?

As this is written on the basis of one's freedom of choice, I say here these are only my opinions - but I base them on what I feel to be solid foundations. All of what is written here is not simply written based on women's rights, rights of doctors, etc. nor is it simply restrained within the scope of the pro choice issue; it is something bigger than that. It is about basic human rights; the right for every human to have a free will. The right to know that one belongs to one's self and no one has the right to own you and dictate your actions. But as said, this was my opinion and who really gives a shit?

After all is said, it has reached this point: to take away one's right to choose for themselves, is to take away something very fundamental to their freedom. It is one small step closer to controlling someone's life. And then the question has to be asked, do we need others to decide for us? All this brings us full circle back to the opening paragraph. That one overpowering feeling, as we break from being sheltered, protected children to free thinking adults - its my life... I can do with it what I choose. Not today I'm afraid. I guess someone says we haven't grown up yet.

Shooting people on their way to work is terrorism. Plain and simple. It's what the PLO did, it's what the IRA did, the UVF did, and now it's what the pro-lifers choose to do.

the Smiths next door get divorced, I may feel bad that their marriage didn't work out but it does not alter my life significantly. I think I can safely make the assumption that if divorce were outlawed in Canada there would be a major outcry. In the late 80s there was a divorce referendum held in the Republic of Ireland. As a result of that, divorce remains illegal in EIRE to this day. Now, scratch your head on that one for a minute. Surely its a choice that should be left up to the people it affects i.e. the couple involved. That's what most people here would say. Not in Ireland, the predominantly Catholic right wing majority in Ireland does not believe in divorce - so their beliefs spread to the rest of the population, Catholic or not.

All this brings us to the summit of my point here. If one wants to make a decision regarding one's life, who has the right to tell them otherwise? Are women so naive and stupid that they have to have it spoon fed to them what they can do with their own bodies; their private property? After all, that's what pro-choice is about. So here we are. We are talking about a woman's rights to abortion, if she so chooses. But not simply this, something far more important: one's right to choose. If you take your pro-life stance for religious reasons then you know exactly what I mean, right? Or do you know what your own books teach? If you're a Protestant, your title itself spells it out. Martin Luther split with the Catholic church for his beliefs that it didn't work right. He chose to leave it (as was his right). Hence your name, Protest-ant. But more fundamental than this, is what the bible itself tells us about humans. We are granted a free-will and the right to choose for ourselves. By its own words the church is thus a pro-choice institution.

You join the church because your free will tells you that it is right,

beliefs. But in a so-called enlightened society, shouldn't we be able to do this in an enlightened way? So why the fire bombing of clinics? Why the shooting of abortion doctors? If we take this picture and change the people involved we have Nazi Skinheads crucifying black people and firebombing synagogues. How can I say this? It is essentially the same.

People are being persecuted for their beliefs. Before this next statement let me say that in no way do I intend to trivialize the disgusting horror that was the holocaust of WWII. But in 1940s Germany, the Jewish people were killed due to their beliefs. Rabbis were shot en route to their homes in the evening. 2 years ago Dr. David Ginn, an abortion doctor was shot by Michael Griffin. He fired three bullets into the doctor's back. Because he believed differently, he shot the doctor. So how much or how little am I stretching the picture? Shooting people on their way to work is terrorism. Plain and simple. Its what the PLO did, its what the IRA did, the UVF did, and now its what the pro-lifers choose to do. Now I can see some of you saying that I've backed myself into a corner - the killing of doctors is wrong. If killing is wrong then how can I say that abortion should be allowed?

What makes abortion wrong for pro-lifers is the attachment of a living soul to the fetus. A question on the human soul would take us into metaphysics and a debate that has raged since the beginning of humankind. But we cannot deny the fact that what goes on in a woman's body is at the control of the woman, at least in this situation. Up to the allowable time for an abortion, the fetus cannot survive outside the mother. if you argue that abortion is taking a life then, note that at this stage of development, in all the relevant ways, it is the woman who is giving it

again, are we not all free to believe what we see as fair and just for ourselves?

Eventually the issue of economics comes into play. I feel though, that even now, this question is downplayed by everyone. Take this picture. A loving mother of three. She is unemployed, the children live basically from what Welfare gives the mother. The father is also unemployed living on unemployment benefits. The mother, who adores her children more than her own life, becomes pregnant again. On hearing this news, the father leaves one day, without any prior warning. As much as she hates the idea, the mother knows that one more child will force the family to live a third world type of existence. What should she do? Jeopardize the already compromised lives of her three children because the majority tells her that to do otherwise would be wrong? Please don't be so naive as to think this does not happen, and happen right here in Canada. Should these women be persecuted and called baby killers due to their devotion to their children?

Myself, I grew up in lower working class Dublin. I have seen this happen again and again because people are afraid of being labelled as

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