



Abortion--- By the Numbers

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This column might seem like a contest entry to be the least favorite interpretation of abortion statistics since 2001, when a Yale research team published their theory correlating the legalization of abortion with the reduction in crime that started in the 1990s. My unpopular message is that “anti-choice” writers use the 44-year total of documented abortions to purposely shock readers by creating an imaginary, subjective description of the unborn, always skewing it to be positive. It’s as if the more angelic the portrayal, the more demonic the women aborting them will appear to be.

The number of abortions in the US since 1973 is assumed to be 60 million, equal to about the same number worldwide, every year. That figure is often used to suggest that we are missing 60 million citizens---born fully formed, healthy and “meant to make a better world,” to quote one syndicated columnist. These millions are unfailingly described as “innocent lives,” even though that’s a glaring contradiction of the Calvinist theology of Original Sin, which deems them to be as guilty as the rest of us. And the Catholic Church, believing that only a living baptism “erases original sin,” even refused to allow the unborn into Heaven---sending them to “Limbo” for eternity---until 2007.

But when talking about the souls lost due to Roe vs. Wade, at least we should do it realistically, using statistics that are not based on the hopeful hypothetical or hopelessly sentimental. If that sounds harsh, it is not nearly as cruel as the lack of empathy expressed for parents who are faced with agonizing decisions during abnormal pregnancies in a second or third trimester.

We don’t know the reason for every abortion in the past 44 years---98.8% of which were done in the first trimester---but we know that those pregnancies, allowed to continue, would certainly not have resulted in 60 million living people today. Of all fertilizations, other than the 20% that are aborted, an estimated 15% result in fetal death at some point, either as miscarriages, “molar” pregnancies, or stillborns with severe abnormalities. And when chromosomal defects are related to incest, 40% of the time they are severe enough to cause fetal mortality soon after birth.

Looking at the quality of our American lives, those surviving millions would undoubtedly have added to fatality counts---using just 2017 alone, as an example---in categories such as suicide (47,000) and gun violence (40,000). Some would already have died from illnesses that are preventable with vaccines. Also in 2017, there were 1,720 infants who died from abuse and neglect.

As is true in our general population, 20% would have diagnosable mental disorders, and 10% would have severe disabilities. And of those who might have been born, half of them would be female; one in four of them would make the choice to terminate a pregnancy if she wanted, or needed to, for personal, medical, or economic factors.

THE BYSTANDER —★—

Meanwhile, the US has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the developed world: every year at least 700 mothers die during or after childbirth, leaving their surviving newborn motherless, along with any other children she may already have borne.

We should be just as, or more, concerned about the hundreds of species we have driven to extinction, eroding our planet into a dead zone, all because we feel free to exterminate---yes, “**abort**” ---those chains of creation that made life possible in the first place. We should grieve the fetal demise of those conceived now, from higher rates of defects due to the drugs we ingest, the cigarettes we smoke, the water we have polluted, the plastics we use, and the pesticides we consume.

We should continue to be outraged over the 58,220 casualties of the Vietnam War, many of them taken while still in their teens. And we also killed---with bombs, with Agent Orange, and by massacre--- tens and tens of thousands of Vietnamese civilians “**on-demand**” of our dishonest and immoral military and political leaders.

Why anyone would value those who weren't born more than those whose lives were, and will surely be in the future, stolen by a hostile world that can “**terminate**” them before they can even finish living them; I don't understand.

We have the power to choose life; we should prioritize choosing a better life for those who are here today, so they can live on an earth they can still populate tomorrow.