

## *The United States of Alabama*

Published in the *Martinsburg Journal*, July 21, 2019

The irony in the intense debate over abortion, the one that just won't and can't end, is that an essential truth has been abandoned on the wayside. The truth is that most women *want* to have children. In fact, women pursue reproduction far more than men do, intuitively sensing that the creation of life is their birthright, giving meaning to their own lives. They are often devastated if infertility, or their Biological Clock, prevents them from bearing a child.

So why do we keep getting the impression from anti-abortionists that women are offing their offspring by the tens of millions, jumping with glee off the ladder of reproduction, reveling in their freedom from parenting responsibility and chuckling at the prospect of being able to continue their promiscuity without the messy, risky consequence of pregnancy?

Women want to have children, regardless of the pain and peril, and they are built to have them, even when the odds are against a successful outcome. What they also want, need and deserve, is control over the process, which at times puts their interests and health into conflict with the life of the one for which they would otherwise sacrifice everything in order to create.

The question then becomes: who has the standing to make these decisions? The would-be mother? The physician, or the government, the "life-panels," or the criminal justice system, the father, or the next-door neighbor? Or in Alabama---the convicted sex offender who fathered your child but can still legally sue for custody?

A minority of voters, who likely include your next-door neighbor, may now have a chance to criminalize your right to terminate a pregnancy. For many of them, there is no compromise for any reason. Restrictions on why, when, or who pays the fee, mean nothing; once the sperm enters the egg, there is no going back. Those are the people who will be making the choice for you. That they will be the master of your fate is more important to them than your fate.

So decisions will be made in your stead, and the rule of strangers will be your rule of law. Control of the myriad medical events that can go wrong, from conception to gestation to delivery, is transferred from the individual and deeded to the state. The sacred breeding ground that is the human womb, the rightful province of the mother, is now state property with public regulatory oversight.

While we mumble and bumble through possible solutions for poverty, disease, lack of healthcare and just plain human error---often the precursors for the decision to terminate a pregnancy---the only legislation that seems to please the extreme is rigid control of every fertilization. Solving those other difficult issues is too close to Socialism for the "Right-to-Life," who instead willingly accept Fascism for the uterus.

# THE BYSTANDER



Perhaps you are one of the majority of diverse Americans who don't want Roe vs. Wade overturned and would let it stand, rather than legislating a "one-size-fits-all-or-nothing" approach to a difficult and complex subject.

Many of you politely demurred to discuss abortion, and kept the public mention of your reproductive organs private where it belongs---effectively sitting out this conversation because it was too personal.

Many of you were amnesic optimists who didn't believe that this country would digress to a place where it could forbid access to safe, convenient and affordable methods of birth control, or would charge you or your doctor with murder for terminating your pregnancy.

Many of you stood on the sidelines because the advocacy groups who dared to fight this fight on your behalf seemed elitist and brazenly money-hungry.

If you opted out of this debate, you gave space to millions who participated in your place. The hearing was held, the process begun, the ballots counted, the judges confirmed. With one arm raising the flag of victory, the other clutching your pelvis as their prize, it's no wonder they have not a spare hand to embrace either the new-born or the post-partum, much less voice a concern about the complications of childbearing or the overwhelming burden of childrearing.

And with your silence while thinking that your body was a sacred place of respect that none should enter, by force or by force of law, without your consent; it may take another lifetime of elections to reverse the course of events that would restore those rights to you.