

## **An Anti-Abortionist Surviving In The Pro-Choice Movement**

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A few years ago, at a SisterSong meeting, I told my story of aborting my first child. For me, it was not the best choice. I still feel great pain from knowing what I did. I believe in my heart that it was a terrible thing for me to do. I live with that pain today, and I know that I will for the rest of my life.

After sharing my story, someone in the audience told me that I hurt the feelings of other women in the room. I was told that I had no right to judge.

Other people have criticized me this way before and I've reflected on their statements. But after this particular incident, being a little bit older and wiser allowed me to recognize what was happening to me. It is the same tactic men use when they hit you and tell you to just shut up and be glad you get to eat. It is the same tactic doctors used when performing unnecessary C-sections on women, telling them to be glad the baby's alive and get over it.

How was sharing MY personal grief about my choice and my actions JUDGING someone else? I still can't figure it out. Don't I have the right to tell MY story?

I finally came to the conclusion that the person who said those things to me was actually telling me that my feelings were not legitimate and my beliefs had no validity. This person was attempting to oppress me by trying to make me feel shameful for expressing my deepest most heartfelt belief. She didn't want to hear it. That behavior is, in my opinion, oppression.

These same people who say they are fighting for choice for women are often very quick to dismiss the feelings and beliefs of women who do not have the same intense fervor to see the positive effects of abortion and may suffer the lasting negative effects of it.

I have spoken to many women who have had abortions and later regretted it. Many of them expressed to me that they feel guilt, sadness and even depression from their abortion. I feel that guilt, sadness and depression.

Why are these views so easily and so harshly rejected in the women's movement? How can a group of women activists, who profess that they have a desire to help other women, dismiss some of women's trauma BECAUSE of abortion? How can we, a movement who professes intent to help women achieve their own health choices only concentrate our efforts on one particular choice? Why is birth choice the stepchild of the CHOICE movement?

Do we simply ignore it? Do we tell those whiney women who feel so bad about what they did that they should just thank the women's movement that the service was there for them and just get over it? This sounds kind of familiar!

I think some of those who have fought so hard for health rights have become the same kind of zealots they fight against. We need to be wiser than that and refuse to become so extreme that we become oppressors too. We need to listen to one another and not try to ignore some of the side effects of our choices, but instead, bring it to light so we can find the best possible solutions for everyone.



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I would also like to see our society create support, provide information and devise methods and models for people to use that would help them prevent painful situations that require painful choices. I think prevention – abstinence and relationship development – is the better path to take when it comes to unwanted pregnancy. I think we need to really open our minds and notice what we can use from those materials and put them to use for ourselves.

I want the right to make ANY well-informed personal health choice a legal reality for all people. This extends beyond just abortion and the choice of attendants and methods of childbirth, use of medicines and use of alternative health methods of all kinds. I think it is paternalistic and degrading to be forced to submit to procedures that we don't believe in nor want. I think it is not necessary to protect us from our own decisions. We are adults and what we need is good information to make informed choices, not laws that serve to dominate us and make guinea pigs of us and withhold needed material and services.

That is where I stand.