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The Failed Experiment: Abortion and Women's Rights, Poverty and Racism

Roe v. Wade legalized abortion in the United States in 1973, so we now have experience to know what actually happens – rather than the speculation of what *would* happen that was common in the push to legalize. Before *Roe*:

It was predicted that poor women would benefit because they would not be burdened by unwanted children.

The feminization of poverty has *increased* since abortion legalization. Does abortion have anything to do with that? Studies suggest this is a possibility, due to an association with broken relationships, psychological difficulties, and substance abuse exacerbated by abortions and the availability of abortions. For documentation, see <http://www.fnsa.org/v1n3/strahan.html>.

It was predicted that child abuse rates would go down as all children would be wanted.

In fact, child abuse rates have skyrocketed. The U.S. National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect reports around 167,000 cases in 1973, and by 1991 it soared to around 2.5 million cases. This is consistent with an alternative idea of what millions of abortions might do: that abortion might act as other violence does, by serving as a model, and by desensitizing.

It was predicted that legal abortions meant safe abortions for women.

Scandals continue at the assembly-line abortion clinics where most abortions are done (see <http://www.fnsa.org/apaw/ch8.html>). So do sexual abuses of women patients (see www.fnsa.org/apaw/ch7.html). Abortion staff must necessarily cultivate insensitivity to women in a state of high distress. Abortion doctors are still stigmatized, even from other doctors who support abortion legalization, and therefore tend not to be of the most rigorous quality. Evidence suggests that post-trauma symptoms are common (see <http://www.fnsa.org/apaw/ch2.html>). Since those include emotional numbing and a sense of detachment from other people, it may be that it's not the legal nature of abortion that makes for poor medical conditions, but the nature of abortion, period.

It was predicted that women would have expanded choices in their lives.

What do we say to the man who says, "If my girlfriend is stupid enough to get pregnant, she's going down to the abortion clinic that afternoon"? Did we really think that attitudes of that kind would not be common among men of a sexually exploitative mindset? Or that employers would not regard a pregnancy as something to get rid of rather than to be accommodated? There are times when ready access to abortion actually *reduces* a woman's choices, as support to which she's entitled is withdrawn because of it. Sexism still abounds in our society, and it rears its head when people disdain women for being pregnant.

Racism

"It takes little imagination to see that the unborn Black baby is the real object of many abortionists. Except for the privilege of aborting herself, the Black woman and her family must fight for every other social and economic privilege. This move toward the free application of a non-right (abortion) for those whose real need is equal human rights and opportunities is benumbing the social conscience of America into unquestionably accepting the 'smoke screen' of abortion. The quality of life for the poor, the Black and the oppressed will not be served by destroying their children."

- Emma Clardy Craven, African-American activist

"Population control is too important to be stopped by some right wing pro-life types. Take the new influx of Hispanic immigrants. Their lack of respect for democracy and social order is frightening. I hope I can do something to stem that tide; I'd set up a clinic in Mexico for free if I could . . . When a sullen black woman of 17 or 18 can decide to have a baby and get welfare and food stamps and become a burden to us all, it's time to stop. In parts of South Los Angeles, having babies for welfare is the only industry that people have."

- Edward Allred, millionaire abortion doctor, *San Diego Union*, October 12, 1980

"I cry every day when I think how horrible her death was. She was slashed by them and then she bled to death . . . I know that other young black women are now dead after abortion at that address . . . Where is [the abortion doctor] now? Has he been stopped? Has anything happened to him because of what he did to my Belinda? . . . People tell me nothing has happened, that nothing ever happens to white abortionists who leave young black women dead."

- Belinda's mother, Mattie Byrd, in a letter to a Los Angeles district attorney, two years after her daughter's death in 1987; all deaths to which she refers are from *legal* abortions.



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