

RJ Daniels
HPRB 3150
Ally Driver
19 April 2024

Abortion is Not a Dirty Word.

I first learned about Abortion when I was in the 6th or 7th grade. At the time my friends and I were watching Greys Anatomy and early in the early seasons one of the main characters found out that she was pregnant. Throughout the next episodes she exercised her right to choose to have an abortion, and while she ended up miscarrying the pregnancy, but the storyline was still effective at bringing up the topic of abortion. During that time period I was watching it I was 13 and completely uneducated and couldn't fathom how anyone could get and support abortions. From looking back in my memories, I remember talking to my friends at our lunch table about abortion and how we all felt strongly against it. To us, abortion meant cutting up and killing full-term babies, which I've later learned is very far from the truth of course. Talking about topics like this was not an anomaly for us at lunch, especially since we relied on each other to learn about sex education and sexual health since we weren't taught it in school at the time. However, from then forward I started doing more research about abortion and how it was even acceptable in society. What encouraged me to delve more into abortion was the fact that at the time I wanted to become an Obgyn and wanted to know more about the ethics of abortion care, especially through the lens of Christian "teachings" of abortion. I remember specifically reading the testimony of one Catholic Obgyn who was faced with the decision of whether she'd be providing abortion care in her practice. Ultimately, she decided to provide abortion care, even though it went against the beliefs of the church and her community's beliefs surrounding the topic. After reading that story, I think that was the point when I started to view abortion less negatively. Throughout my watching of many seasons of Greys Anatomy, abortion has come up sparsely, and while I don't watch the show anymore, each one of those times helped me change my view on abortion.

I want to go back to the memories of discussing topics like abortion during lunch in middle school. I used to sit and eat lunch with two girls, who at the time were my very best friends in middle school, and during the lunch period we would talk about anything we were interested in although many of our conversations were related to sex education and sexual health. I believe those conversations came up from my initial questions I asked them about periods and menstruation because I was genuinely curious at the time. We discussed birth control methods, sex, sti/d's, and many more things that were deemed "taboo" to talk about. Of course, that was many years ago and I don't remember every conversation I've had with those girls, but I do want to say that because of them and the conversations we had I was able to find my passion in life. I'm very thankful to those girls for allowing me to ask questions and discuss those topics in a safe space.

After middle school, in 9th grade I took AP Government & Politics, and it was in that class that I first learned and understand what Roe v. Wade was and its importance in a political environment. Also, it's important to note that during that time in Georgia Brian Kemp had just recently become governor and the Heartbeat Bill was just starting to be introduced in Congress. I remember talking to one of my friends in class and she was telling me how her older sister thought she was pregnant, and we discussed how if the heartbeat bill was passed, she wouldn't have been able to get an abortion. The Heartbeat Bill which says that abortions are banned once cardiac activity is detected by a doctor, which is usually around six weeks in pregnancy, which is

before most women even know that they're pregnant. Even then at that time six weeks was extreme in my mind. Six weeks isn't even a full two months or the end of the first trimester. I think learning more about the political implications around abortion in that class, helped me expand my initial beliefs about abortion. Throughout the course of high school, from conversations with friends and my mom, reading articles and more research I went from staunchly "pro-life" to "pro-choice". Whenever I was in the situation explaining my stance, my go to reasoning was, "No one wants to be in the position where they're considering abortion". My rationing behind that was that no one wants to be in a situation where they're dealing with a unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and choosing whether to go through an abortion is not an easy decision for some, if not most people. Most of the "pro-life" people I was interacting with on the subject, I came to the realization that many of them believed that women were getting abortions at 40 weeks willy-nilly.

Also in 9th grade, I had a semi-personal experience with abortion. One of the girls from the middle school lunches, continued to eat lunch with me that year. And if my memory serves right, I remember that she was seeing a guy for a bit that year, and one day during lunch she told me that she thought she might have been pregnant. A couple days later she brought in an ovulation test to take in the bathroom at lunch to see if she was pregnant, which of course is not the most effective way to indicate pregnancy. The test said negative, and she was happy. However, that wasn't the actual case and shortly after she did find out that she was pregnant. About a week after she told me that she was taken to the doctor with her mom, and she was given a pill and she said that it was like she had a heavy period, and that was that. Her pregnancy had ended.

After I graduated high school that summer in June 2022, Roe v. Wade was overturned, and I remember that day so clearly. So many people, friends, mutuals, were posting their opinions about the decision. Many of my friends were devastated and felt strongly about the decision, while there was a select few of people on my timeline that were posting about how the overturning was a success and a good thing. I think it was during that time when I officially became passionate about abortion rights and care. At that point I understood the depth of the overturning, about how it would disproportionately affect women in the south, mainly women of color. And since coming to college, I'm now able to make the connections of abortion care and the economic landscape of certain demographic groups. For example, since the overturning many family planning clinics and services have been closed down in states. Because of this many people who rely on these family planning services no longer have access to them, which leads to a decrease in safer sex practices. A decrease in safer sex practices increases the risks of unwanted/mistimed pregnancies, and since states are passing complete abortion bans, many women are forced to go through pregnancies that they don't want. And a common rebuttal I hear from "pro-life" advocates, is that if a woman doesn't want to keep the baby, then she should just give the baby up for adoption. Which is a completely impractical solution, completely negating the fact that pregnancy takes a tremendous toll physically and mentally on women during and after pregnancy. As well as the fact the foster and adoption services in the United States is not currently in the best state, and often negatively affects the kids that are already in the system. And I could go on and on about the links to economic effects from banning abortion.

As a public health major, who's focus is on sex education and sexual health, it is imperative that I'm able to make defining connections to reproductive rights and other political systems in our country. As of now, I can confidently say that currently I identify with the "pro-choice/abortion" side. I don't see abortion as "killing babies" as I once used to, but as a medical

procedure that only needs to be dealt with between a doctor and their patient. For so long, I never understood the saying “Abortion Saves Lives”, but since being a closeminded 13-year-old I finally understand. All because I got past the fact that abortion is not a dirty word.