

Birthmother Opts for Adoption... The Loving Alternative

It was the beginning of my junior year in high school. I was excited, looking forward to another year of diving, gymnastics and track. But this excitement quickly came to an end when I realized I was pregnant.

When the pregnancy was confirmed, my mind went racing. It wasn't enough to just say that I was scared - I was terrified! The idea of having an abortion was **NEVER** a consideration for me. I could not live with the realization that I was responsible for taking the life of my child - a death because of my actions.

My first instincts told me that I needed to raise my child on my own. I knew I could love and care for a child, but when I stopped thinking about myself, and thought about what was best for my child, I knew adoption was the right decision. I was sixteen at the time. I wanted to go back to school for my senior year and wanted to participate fully, in sports etc. I wanted to go on to college.

I knew I could not do all of this and raise a child at the same time. I did not want to have to live with my parents indefinitely and depend on them for everything. I did not want them to be thrust into the role of prime care-givers for my child. It just would not be fair for any of us, for them, myself or the baby. I knew that placing my child for adoption would be the right thing to do, the loving alternative!

The adoption procedure I opted for is not your ordinary plan. I chose to do an independent open adoption. Through this process I was able to select from among the prospective adoptive parents. I had the opportunity to establish a personal relationship with them as well as to develop a lasting friendship. The more I got to know them the more excited I was about placing my baby with this couple. They had so much love and



Lisa O.

security to offer my child. They were there with me in the hospital when my son was born. Their video camcorder ran non-stop.

I will always treasure the three days I spent in the hospital with my son. Handing him over to his new parents was by no means easy, but I knew in my heart that this was the right decision for both of us.

Many tears were shed throughout the nine months and during the hospital stay. But, they were not all tears of sadness. I miss my son very much. I think about him every day and a smile comes to my face. I thank the Lord that He led me to two such special people to be adoptive parents for my child.

It has been several years since my son was born. He now has an adoptive sister. I keep in contact with the family through letters and pictures. I can't begin to explain the feelings of pride and contentment that I experience when I see the smile on his face.

I am now a junior in college majoring in paralegal studies. Relinquishing my son was the hardest decision I will ever have to make but I'm more confident than ever that it was the right one. While in the hospital I received a card which read, "Some people come into our lives, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never the same." This is so true!

Testimony by Lisa O. of Minnesota.
(Printed with permission)

Every year over two million requests for adoption go unsatisfied.



18 week-old baby developing in the womb.

*If he is not alive,
why is he growing?*

*If he is not a human being,
what kind of being is he?*

*If he is not a child,
why is he sucking his thumb?*

*If he is a living,
human child,
why is it legal to kill him?*

The abortion experience for victims of rape and incest

by David C. Reardon

Rape and incest are very emotional topics. They often elicit in the general populace feelings of revulsion; people draw back from the issue of rape and incest, even from the victims of rape and incest. People don't know how to handle a person who is in that much pain. There is no quick fix....

Some people who are otherwise very pro-life will condone abortion in rape and incest cases because they don't know what else to offer. And they will accept it as a rare case. This pro-life difficulty in defending the unborn even in rape and incest cases is largely due to ignorance because the facts, as I have found them, show that the victim's needs are not being served by abortion. In fact, rape and incest victims actually suffer considerably from the abortion.

The facts suggest that only a minority of rape and incest victims actually choose abortion¹—so right there, one should pause and reflect. Abortion is not usually chosen as the immediate solution by rape and incest victims but that is the prevailing belief of the general population. A woman has been raped and made pregnant: "Oh, she's got to have an abortion." No one has studied the rape and incest victims' needs; abortion is presumed to fill their needs.

Kathleen DeZeeuw states, "Having lived through rape, and also having raised a child 'conceived in rape,' I feel personally insulted and assaulted every time I hear that abortion should be legal because of rape and incest. I feel that we're being used by pro-abortionists to further the abortion issue, even though we've not been asked to tell our side."

The children conceived through sexual assault also have a voice which deserves to be heard. Julie Makimaa, conceived by an act of rape, works diligently against abortion. She believes every life has a value beyond measure, a purpose which only time can reveal. Not ashamed of her origin, Julie proudly proclaims: "It doesn't matter how I began. What matters is who I will become."

Abortion Adds to the Pain of Rape

Various studies and my own research indicate that rape and incest victims fall into the high risk category of aborters, and the existence of rape or incest is actually a contraindication for

abortion. Jackie Bakker, whose testimony is in my book,² says, "I soon discovered that the aftermath of my abortion continued a long time after the memory of my rape had faded. I felt empty and horrible. Nobody told me about the emptiness and pain I would feel deep within causing nightmares and deep depressions. They had all told me that after the abortion I could continue with my life as if nothing had happened." This is the same story we hear from a lot of aborted women. But for the rape and incest victim it is an especially keen story, because they have been told, "In your situation that is the only thing you can do." And they have been betrayed by that advice.

"I felt empty and horrible... They had all told me that after the abortion I could continue with my life as if nothing had happened."

Victims Gave Reasons to Forego Abortion

Perhaps the best study was done by Dr. Sandra Mahkorn, published in *Psychological Aspects of Abortion*³. Dr. Mahkorn was an experienced rape counselor who, in 1979, identified 37 pregnant rape victims who were treated by a social welfare agency. Of these 37, only five chose to have an abortion. Of the 28 who gave birth, 17 chose adoption and 3 kept the child themselves; for the remaining eight, research was unable to determine where the child was placed.

"I was being sexually attacked, threatened by him and betrayed by Mom's silence...the abortion which was to be in 'my best interest' has not been...it only 'saved their reputations,' solved their problems and allowed their lives to go merrily on."

Several reasons were given for not aborting. First, several women felt that abortion was another act of violence—that it was immoral or murder. One said she would only suffer more mental anguish from taking the life of a baby. Second, some saw an intrinsic meaning or purpose to the child. Somehow this child was foisted into their lives but, on the other hand, they sensed some sort of hidden purpose behind it. And although not responsible for having brought the child into being, it had happened, and the consequences could be lived with. Third, at a subconscious level, the rape victim feels that if she can get through the pregnancy she will have conquered the rape. Outlasting pregnancy shows she is better than the rapist who brutalized her. Giving birth, then, is the way rape victims seek to reclaim their self-esteem. It is a totally selfless act, a generous act, especially in light of the pressure to abort. It is a way for them to display their courage and strength to survive even a rape.

In her study, Mahkorn found that feelings or issues relating to the rape experience were the primary concern for most of the pregnant rape victims—not pregnancy. While 19%—a significant number—placed primary emphasis on their need to confront their feelings about the pregnancy, including feelings of resentment and hostility towards the unborn child, the primary difficulty they experienced with the rape pregnancy was pressure from other people who saw the pregnancy as a blot to be eliminated. Family and friends just weren't supportive of the woman's choice to bear the child.

Dr. Mahkorn also found that, in the group who carried their pregnancies to term, none, at the end of pregnancy, wished she had decided on an abortion. Abortion therefore inhibits the healing to the rape victim and reinforces negative attitudes.

Abortion Reinforces Women's Powerlessness

Another example from my book is Vanessa Landry, another rape victim who said, "I didn't really want to have the abortion. I have always been against abortion all my life. People think that whenever anyone is raped, they have to have an abortion. My social worker just kept telling me all kinds of things to encourage me to have the abortion. They didn't give me any other option except to abort."

(Continued on page 10)