



Voices

OF WOMEN WHO MOURN

WOMEN'S ISSUES, women's rights and human rights have always been a passion of mine. As a teenager I assumed that legalized abortion was necessary for women to attain their educational and career goals. So it's not surprising that when I became pregnant at 18 I thought about having an abortion. I also considered adoption, but when I told my boyfriend, he said he would kick me out if I didn't have an abortion. I turned to my employer for advice. She agreed that abortion was the only logical option and offered to arrange one for me.

My experience at the abortion clinic was painful and humiliating. Although the young women awaiting their abortions were anxious and tearful, the clinic staff was cold and aloof. When the abortion provider entered my procedure room, I began to have second thoughts and asked her assistant if I could have a few minutes. The doctor yelled "shut her up" and started the suction machine. It was not an empowering experience. I felt violated and betrayed.

The promised solution — really the only option presented to me — wasn't the end of my nightmare, but only the beginning. I was completely unprepared for the emotional fallout after the abortion. It was difficult for me to understand why a surgical procedure would cause such deep regret and a sense of loss.

I soon found myself in a cycle of self-destructive behavior as I attempted to repress the sense that I had destroyed my child. Desperate for a fresh start, I broke up with my boyfriend, quit my job and moved to another state. Unfortunately my depression and self-hatred only deepened. When suicidal thoughts began to overwhelm me, I sought assistance.

As I struggled to come to terms with my negative reaction, I began to question whether abortion was compatible with my feminist beliefs. The abortion was unnatural. It was an act of violence against my own body and the body of my developing child.

It has been eighteen years since my abortion. Although much has changed in eighteen years, not much has changed for women experiencing an untimely pregnancy. They still face unsupportive partners and employers and are often unaware of the community resources available to them. They undergo abortion not so much out of choice, but out of desperation or as a last resort. In all the noise surrounding abortion, women have been forgotten.

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