



# Heart to Heart . . .

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**W . A . K . E . U . P .**

Women Against the Killing & Exploitation of Unprotected Persons

## OUR CURRENT MISSION

To mobilize people of all faiths to the "Awakening" of the consciences of the world to the current Culture of Death, and for a changing of hearts to embrace the Culture of Life.

## OUR CURRENT PLAN

To use the social educational means of communication to draw public attention through the plight of the unborn, and to promote, among our youth, The New Sexual Revolution, CHASTITY.



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## THE LAST ABORTION DISPELLED



Welcome to the second issue of our newsletter "**Heart to Heart**". Like the first issue this issue will focus on women's health education.

Most of us who counsel at abortion mills have difficulty in convincing a women victim of rape or incest to let their baby live. Using arguments that the baby has a right to life, is made in the image of God, and deserves a chance at life at least through adoption has little effect. These arguments are usually expressed through the mother, father or a friend. It seems we don't often get a chance to talk to the victim her self. The reason for this is probably because most of the time the abortion is driven by the mother, father or friend. They "know what's best" for the rape or incest victim.

However the **Elliot Institute** has reported (September 7, 2006) that recent studies show that **RAPE AND INCEST VICTIMS DON'T WANT ABORTIONS, SAY IT DOESN'T HELP WOMEN**. Instead abortion intensifies victims trauma.

Abortion creates more problems for rape or incest victims than it solves, according to the Ad Hoc Committee of Women Pregnant by Sexual assault (WPSA).

In an effort to gain a public voice in the contentious abortion debate, the group has written a petition to Congress and state legislatures asking for public hearings at which women who've become pregnant through sexual assault can share their stories and address the real concerns that they have faced.

"In virtually every case, those people who claim to represent our interests have never taken the time to actually listen to us or to learn about our true circumstances, needs, and concerns," they wrote. *"We are deeply offended and dismayed each time our difficult circumstances are exploited for public consumption to promote the political agenda of others."*

The group is particularly concerned about the widespread misconception, even among people who generally oppose abortion, that sexual assault victims generally want or benefit from abortions.

For example, a statewide survey in South Dakota recently found a proposed abortion ban there would receive overwhelming support at the polls as long as it provided an exception for rape and incest cases. Without an exception for women who become pregnant through sexual assault, the ban is favored by only 39 percent, with 47 percent opposing it and 14 percent undecided.

However, the WPSA members say that abortion does nothing to help women pregnant through sexual assault, and in many cases is actually detrimental to them.

"In many cases, we felt pressured to abort by family members, social workers, and doctors who insisted that abortion was the 'best' solution," they wrote. "For many the abortion caused physical and emotional trauma equal to or exceeding the trauma of the sexual assault that our abortions were supposed to 'cure.'"

Dr. David Reardon, who co-authored the book *"Victims and Victors: Speaking Out About Their Pregnancies, Abortions, and Children Resulting from Sexual Assault,"* said the results of the South Dakota poll reflect voters' desire to spare women from the hardships often associated with giving birth to a child conceived in sexual assault.

"Typically, most people have accepted the premise that sexual assault victims not only want abortions but will actually benefit from them," said Reardon, a leading researcher on post-abortion issues and director of the Elliot Institute. "They assume abortion will help victims put the assault behind them, recover more quickly, and avoid any problems that might arise from giving birth to the child--who is often described as the 'rapists' child' rather than the woman's child."

But the only two published studies that have actually tracked the choices and experiences of women who have become pregnant after rape or incest, Reardon said, actually lead to the opposite conclusions. Remarkably, both studies found that approximately 70 percent of pregnant rape victims chose to give birth rather than have abortions,

even though abortion was readily available.

"Prior to becoming pregnant, many of these women would have said that they would have an abortion if they became pregnant through rape," said Reardon. "But after the rape, many change their minds because they have a heightened concern about abuse and trauma. They want to break the cycle of violence. Many also sense that an abortion will only add to their emotional suffering."

Furthermore, in the Elliot Institute's survey of 192 women who became pregnant through rape or incest, nearly 80 percent of the women who had abortions said that they strongly regretted the abortion, with most saying it had caused far more harm than good in their lives.. Among women who gave birth to their children, the consensus against abortion was even stronger.

Of the women who reported having abortions, most reported feeling pressured by family members or health care workers to undergo abortions.

"This was especially the case for those who became pregnant through incest," Reardon said. *"In almost every case, the abortion was chosen by the girl's parents or tragically, by the perpetrator himself. In some cases the abortion was used to cover up the incest and the girl was returned to the same abusive situation to be victimized again."*

According to Reardon, the problem of coerced abortions is a national epidemic. A recent survey found that 64 percent of women who report a history of abortion also report feeling pressured by others to have abortions Reardon said the percentage is likely higher for those who become pregnant through sexual assault.

In one case described in *"Victims and Victors,"* a woman who was impregnated by her father at the age of 15 wrote of being taken to the hospital, where her father demanded that an abortion be performed. When she refused, she was held down by the nurses and drugged before being subjected to the abortion.

*"I grieve every day for my daughter,"* wrote the woman, who asked that her name be concealed to protect her privacy. "I have struggled every day to forget the abuse and the abortion. I can do neither. . . . The trauma of the rape and abuse was only intensified by the abortion."

Abortion, Reardon said, *"gives molesters the means to cover up their crime and the opportunity to repeat it, subjecting the victims to repeated ongoing abuse as well as the additional trauma of an unwanted abortion."*

More than a dozen studies published in peer-reviewed medical journals in the past several years have documented psychological problems among women who have had abortions, including higher rates of depression, substance abuse, psychiatric problems, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, sleep disorders, and other difficulties.

"Many of these studies indicate that women with a history of trauma are even more likely to experience traumatic reactions following an abortion," Reardon said. "Sexual assault victims are not immune to post-abortion trauma. Indeed, the best evidence suggests that they may be at the greatest risk of severe reactions to abortion." But if pregnant sexual assault victims aren't offered abortions, what should be the response from those around them?

"The women in our survey said repeatedly that what they



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needed was time and support to come to terms with the assault and the resulting pregnancy," Reardon said. "While none proposed that there are any easy solutions, well over 80 percent believed that abortion clearly made their problems worse."

For Kathleen DeZeeuw, who raised her son after becoming pregnant through rape at the age of 16, the solution begins with attentive listening. She says abortion advocates have used the issue of sexual assault pregnancy to push for abortion without considering the real needs of the women involved. "I feel personally assaulted and insulted every time I hear that abortion should be legal because of rape and incest," she wrote in *"Victims and Victors."* "I feel we're being used to further the abortion issue, even though we've never been asked to tell our side of the story."

*"Women who have gone through the trauma of rape or incest need to be counseled, cared for, and listened to," she added. "A woman is most vulnerable at a time such as this and doesn't need to be pounced on by yet another act of violence. She needs someone to truly listen to her, care for her, and give her time to heal."*

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