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Not Aborting My Plan

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Not Aborting My Plan

Abstract

I was walking on campus today, backpack tight against my shoulders, one headphone in my ear, phone in my back pocket, when I saw a poster calling me a baby killer. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, abortion, moral and political debate, Planned Parenthood, pro-choice

Disciplines

Family, Life Course, and Society

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

NOT ABORTING MY PLAN

September 24, 2015



I was walking on campus today, backpack tight against my shoulders, one headphone in my ear, phone in my back pocket, when I saw a poster calling me a baby killer.

“Calling all Conservatives,” it read, and the first line said “do you enjoy hugging babies versus killing them?” The rest went on to spew more ultra-conservative propaganda, none of which bothered me nearly as much as that first line.

The truth is, whoever took the time to write those hateful words and then spread them all around campus didn't have to say the word abortion for me to know what they meant. Abortions kill babies. Women who undergo abortions are baby killers.

I'm a baby killer.

Except, I know in my heart I am *not* a baby killer. Like the poster asks, I do enjoy hugging babies. I spent a week this summer with my 10-month old cousin; a beautiful, smiling, crying mess of a baby boy who my cousin chased around all day and night. I laughed when he smiled, walked with him on the beach, and pinched his cheeks because he was so darn cute. I also watched as my 35-year old cousin exhaustedly handed him over to my aunt every few hours, desperate for a nap or a glass of wine or just a few minutes alone. Sometimes, he'd bite her, hard, when he was teething. He crawled everywhere, and she had to watch him every second.

Choosing to have an abortion this summer was a hard decision, one I did not take lightly. Who would? But I know it was the right one. I am nineteen years old. When I found out I was pregnant I was not yet a sophomore in college. I still can't legally drink. My only job experience is working in retail for a few years. I have never been in a serious relationship, and certainly never been in love. My life is still beginning.

The truth is, I met a boy this summer, and we really liked each other. It was fun being with him; I felt appreciated and desired. I think he felt the same. He was twenty years old, had a job but not a college degree. He had a young son, too, from a previous relationship where the girl did go through with her pregnancy. We didn't know each other particularly well. He didn't know some of the secrets I carry in my heart, because I was not ready to tell him; and I'm sure there were things he never told me. But, we enjoyed each other's company. I loved playing with his dogs; I had dinner with his family once or twice. We stayed in his room fooling around on those hot summer nights after we'd both worked long days. And yes, we had sex. And one time we didn't use protection.

It wasn't until after we'd "broken up," for lack of a better term, that I found out I was pregnant. I was packed up ready to return to Gettysburg and leave the summer behind when I realized my period was late. It was a fleeting thought, but one that stuck. I drove to the CVS and bought a pregnancy test. I peed and waited about two minutes, but I had trouble reading the results. It seemed positive, but I couldn't tell. The panic began.

It wasn't until a few days later, when my period still hadn't come, and I had arrived in Gettysburg, that I really began to freak out. I looked down at my body, felt my arms and stomach with shaking hands, brushed the tears from my cheeks. The boy was far away from Gettysburg, but I was here, carrying this burden. I texted him to tell him my fears, and he couldn't understand my alarm. When I told him that I would likely get an abortion if it turned out that I was pregnant, he didn't seem to understand the weight of that decision. He relayed the earth shattering information that I was "not the first person to get pregnant" (was he sure about that one?) and told me to just call and make an appointment. In my bed, alone, I cried hot, angry tears that made my face swell and my heart beat fast. I could imagine my parents' shame if they found out what had happened. I'd done dumb things in the past, and the thought of disappointing them again broke my heart.

I ended up going to the health center here on campus where the nurse practitioner took a pregnancy test and confirmed what I already knew: I was pregnant. In her office, I broke down again. She gave me a pamphlet to a clinic in Maryland, about an hour away, that administered abortions.

I was surprised to learn there was nowhere closer for me to go to, and a friend later told me that healthcare services for women, like Planned Parenthood, were being cut in Pennsylvania, like many other states around the country. I felt incredibly lucky to be close enough to Maryland that it wouldn't be a problem to travel there. I had transportation to get there, as well. The procedure was about \$400, and split between the boy and me, I could afford it. But, even if I couldn't, if it came down to it, I could have asked my parents and they would have had the means to pay for the procedure. Even during all this internal chaos, I counted myself lucky for all these reasons. I wondered what girls who didn't have my choices do in these situations. I wonder if the men and women advocating for the defunding of Planned Parenthood wonder the same things.

I scheduled my appointment as soon as I could, right after the first week of classes. It felt like a daze. One moment I was starting a new job, figuring out my major, looking to what the future would bring, and the next, here I was, the image of a positive pregnancy test stamped in my mind. The boy who helped make the pregnancy happen drove down to be with me, and although he didn't understand what I was going through, it helped to have his presence there, if for nothing else than acknowledgment of his part in this

pregnancy. It's easy for men to walk away; even if it's not easy, it's possible. I didn't have that choice and neither does any woman who ends up in the same place. The privileged men in Congress don't seem to understand that distinction.

The clinic we went to was fine, just a normal, unassuming building. When we initially approached the place, I noticed some older people sitting in lawn chairs outside. I looked over and nodded at them, assuming they must live nearby. Two or three of them jumped up immediately.

"Are you guys going into the clinic?" A man asked, sticking out a pamphlet for me to take. I shrunk away. They gave one to the boy I was with, which listed "facts" about fetuses who can feel pain and baby-killers like myself. Luckily, there were workers from the clinic wearing bright "pro-choice" vests who grabbed us and ushered us inside, away from the protesters.

Once inside, the whole thing didn't last more than an hour. I filled out paperwork, handed crumpled bills to the receptionist, (my insurance would have covered my abortion, but I didn't know I had to get it approved in advance. The receptionist told me I could wait to get it approved and come back, but that didn't feel like much of an option to me, not after all the waiting I had already done.) The boy stayed in the waiting room the whole time because "guests" weren't allowed; which I suppose was his privilege. He missed the shots they gave me, the intake they took, and the abortion itself. And that was the worst part of all.

I don't want to act as if the abortion was the worst pain I've ever gone through. Certainly not as painful as breaking a leg or falling off a tree. But, it felt like a different kind of pain. I felt alone, there in the white-painted doctor's room with no one familiar around me. A nurse came in and held my hand, which I was grateful for. The doctor was a middle-aged man, and he was polite and quick but not particularly comforting. I suppose that wasn't his job. I laid back on the table and let the tears spill down my cheeks as I felt the pressure go deep inside of me; I squeezed the nurse's hand tight as she told me over and over how well I was doing. I felt like someone was reaching inside of me, squeezing my insides and pulling. I gripped the nurse's hand harder.

Afterwards, I waited in the recovery room. Maybe I could have asked if the boy could join me, but I didn't. I knew he wouldn't understand. The nurses gave me pads to help the bleeding; my stomach hurt from the cramps, but mostly my heart hurt. I had always been pro-choice, and always will be. I believe no matter what the circumstances that a woman has the right to choose what happens to her body. And I didn't feel guilty exactly, but I felt like a screw up. In some ways, I felt deserving of the physical and emotional pain I was in. I didn't kill anyone; the thing inside of me was just a cell, but I did feel responsible for getting pregnant in the first place. Society tells us girls who get pregnant young, as teenagers, without a husband or serious boyfriend, are bad. Slutty. I had only been sexually active for about a year, with a few partners, and not many times. I didn't feel slutty. I had enjoyed my time with the boy, had enjoyed the sex, but we'd made a mistake. Maybe it's because we were young. Maybe we got lost in the heat of the moment. Maybe we weren't thinking.

All I know is that I was not ready to be a parent. I'm happy to be a young woman in a country where I can explore who I want to be, have a career, and focus on family later in life (if ever). I'd never wanted to get married young or have children anytime in the foreseeable future. I'd never been in a long-term

relationship. I didn't know what love was. I wasn't sure I even loved myself, so how could I care for a baby?

So yes, the decision I made to have an abortion was completely selfish. It was about me. Not about the boy who I'd had sex with (who, granted, definitely did not want a child either), or about the cell inside of me who might've grown into a fetus and then a baby if I'd let it. It was about me. Because I'd toiled on this earth for nineteen years, I'd developed inside of my mother's womb when she was ready to have me, and I grew up in a home where I was wanted and loved, and was able to have all the opportunities I have now due in part to these things. And if I ever have a child they deserve the same things. And no anti-choice person, no man in Congress, no poster on a residential building, and no protester on the street, can tell me the choice I made was wrong.

For me, the choice was just right.

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This post is written anonymously not out of shame, but to protect my identity. To contact me, email surgegettysburg@gmail.com.