



“This debate, over whether or not women should be able to have an abortion, is not acceptable in the student centre... It would be equivalent to having a debate over whether or not you can beat your wife.”

Kelly Holloway, president of the York University Graduate Students Association, *National Post*, Page A1, Mar. 8, 2008

Dear friends,

Last month I told you about how I managed to lose my voice to laryngitis. Sadly, a few days after I got it back, I lost my voice again—but this time due to censorship!

I was invited to do three debates in Ontario in February: at the University of Waterloo, Lakehead University (Thunder Bay), and York University (Toronto). It was at York where we got the most attention, thanks to pro-abortion students with the York Federation of Students (YFS).

The York pro-life club, Students for Bio-Ethical Awareness (SBA), invited me to debate Michael Payton, from the York Debating Society, and the Freethinkers, Skeptics and Atheists Society at York. The head of the Debating Society agreed to moderate.



Maria and Margaret, Students for Bio-Ethical Awareness at York

But from the very start, we faced opposition. A week before the debate, I received a complaint from the head of the Debating Society about our video. Though he initially agreed not to censor either debater, he later said pictures were not reasonable arguments. But I countered that lawyers use visual evidence in court and that was considered reasonable. After consulting with his club, he agreed to moderate the debate (again!). At 4 a.m. on the day of the debate, I got an e-mail from Payton telling me that he was afraid we might sue him and that others might hurt him so he no longer wanted to participate. I asked him to reconsider, which he did only after he talked to legal counsel.

However, the worst was still to come. On my way to York, the YFS put a poster (at left) on the door saying the debate was cancelled with no explanation. Since the notice was only put up about two hours before the debate, at least 50 students came. A representative of the Federation finally told one of the presidents of SBA that the abortion debate was unacceptable on their property, even though the club was recognized by that Federation. Kelly Holloway, one of the Federation’s executives even said, **“This debate, over whether or not women should be able to have an abortion, is not acceptable in the student centre... It would be equivalent to having a**

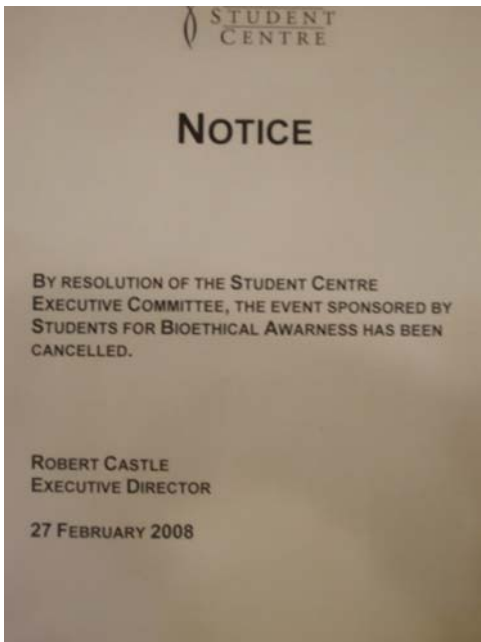
debate over whether or not you can beat your wife.” Ironically, the following day, this same student organized a protest by York students for free speech at McMaster University!

Because we couldn’t book another room in such short notice, we met at Baptist church near the school. Neither the moderator nor my opponent attended and only 12 pro-life people came. Despite the discouraging outcome, I told the SBA to send press releases and hope the media would cover the story.

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A few days later, the story hit the front page of the *National Post*. The paper was critical of the YFS and even quoted my pro-choice opponent as **supporting** the debate. In fact, the story was covered by major papers, radio broadcasters, and Internet blogs across the country (see “Coverage” inset). That’s not even counting all the university newspapers, blogs and religious media that discussed it as well. Rather than silencing pro-lifers, the YFS ensured more people talked about abortion.

The coverage was overwhelmingly supportive of us and I was astonished to hear even from those who are not pro-life. For example, the debate moderator at U of Waterloo told me

before our debate there that she doubted we even needed to discuss abortion. But a day after the *Post* article appeared, she wrote a letter to the *Post* saying how well their debate went and that York should allow it too.



Michael Payton (L) and moderator, York prof. Ian Gentles (R)

Some Coverage of the Debate:

1. *Aphrodite Salas Show on Montreal 940 AM radio*, Mar 11
2. *Calgary Herald*, Mar 16
3. *Sounds Like Canada, CBC Radio One*, Mar 6
4. *Cross-Country Check-up CBC Radio One*, Mar 9
5. *Culture Watch*, Catholic radio show, Mar 13 and 27
6. *Maclean’s Blog*, Mar 4
7. *National Post*, Mar 4 and 11
8. *Ottawa Citizen*, Mar 10
9. *Toronto Star*, Mar 7 and 19
10. *Winnipeg Free Press*, Mar 8

York’s administration itself wrote a letter to the *Post*, inviting the pro-life students to reschedule the event on their property, admitting that they regretted YFS’ decision. When the debate was finally rescheduled over 140 people came, including the *Toronto Star*, which also gave us positive coverage.

Of course not everyone was positive. Angry pro-abortion students called me names and one older woman insisted



Over 140 attended the rescheduled York debate.

that as a man I had no right to speak on abortion. But at least one woman was glad I spoke that night: a friend who had an abortion before becoming a Christian and had always been hesitant to hear me speak. Her family forced her to abort and as a Sikh, she felt so guilty and ashamed, that she believed God could never forgive her. She told me the reason she could be there that night was because, “God is healing me and has forgiven me [and I know this] because before I couldn’t sit through this. I am so proud of you for speaking today.” And it is really women and men like her that we need to reach.

Your faithful support allows us to continue to share the pro-life message despite the censorship, and in this situation, because of it. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Jojo Ruba".

Upcoming Schedule:

March for Life, Youth Conference in Ottawa, Ontario, Friday, May 9th

Link of the month: The debate continued as Michael responded to my comments on a blog: <http://nicholasquindon.com/?p=88>

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