

A March for the Victims—that *Excludes* the Victims?

By Stephanie Gray

Imagine having a march against drinking and driving and telling survivors of such accidents they weren't welcome because their disfigured bodies were too disturbing. Or imagine having a march to ensure equal rights for Blacks, but telling African-Americans they may not participate. On the contrary, in each case we'd place such victims front and centre.

It's bewildering, then, that some pro-lifers argue—as several have to me recently—that pro-life gatherings, such as marches, should exclude images of the aborted pre-born.

Historically, marches were effective for campaigns like the Civil Rights Movement because ***the very people being victimized participated***. By their presence they were able to convey their humanity and equality to others. Often at these events they were attacked by racists, and media would capture photos and convey their inhumane treatment.

What makes pro-life marches different is that the very people being victimized, the pre-born, cannot participate. Due to their age, the pre-born aren't capable of holding placards conveying that they are human, the way civil rights activists held signs that said "I am a man." Pro-lifers, then, must stand in their stead. We must tell their stories. When we gather, we must show the public ***who*** we're gathering for and ***what*** we're gathering against—pictures do that.

Are the images disturbing? Yes. But it's not the aborted children's fault that their deaths were so gruesome.

Would born children encounter these images? Likely. But isn't it more important that a march against killing save the ***lives*** of pre-born children rather than spare the ***feelings*** of born children? And sometimes those bad feelings are exactly what one needs to feel in order to act.

Consider Hannah Taylor. When she was ***five***-years-old, she ***saw*** a disturbing reality: a homeless man eating out of a garbage can. People did not complain that young Hannah was victimized by seeing such an injustice. On the contrary, they are inspired by her conviction to help the homeless through her Lady Bug Foundation—something she started when she was ***eight***-years-old.

Something similar happened to young pro-life activist Lila Rose: "I first saw an image of an abortion when I was nine-years-old in an old book in my home. Being nine-years-old and looking at this ten-week-old child, I remember thinking, 'How could anyone do this to a baby?'" Because of seeing the ***victim*** and the ***victimization*** she began to speak out against abortion.

And yet, some pro-lifers claim if pictures of the victims are present, they won't attend a march. Their lack of participation in a march is then blamed on the images, with some concluding the pictures are divisive because their presence drives people away.

But any effective social reform movement realizes it does not conform its campaign to the participants, or the public, but rather challenges the participants and the public to conform their lives to truth and justice. It's not a movement's fault that some people refuse to be in the presence of victims. The movement which stands for truth and justice must not be blamed for the cowardice of those who facilitate the cover up.

Lovers of truth unite. Lovers of comfort divide. Things eventually get uncomfortable, and if the idea of comfort reigns supreme, lovers of comfort will leave when comfort does as well. But the pro-life message isn't about making born people comfortable. It's about enabling pre-born people to keep living.

As J.C. Ryle once said, "Never let us be guilty of sacrificing any portion of truth on the altar of peace." For when we do, it's not real peace anyways—it's a perversion of peace.

Pictures prevent society from having perverted peace about abortion, and force a debate into the open so there can be peace in the womb. Pictures are also the evidence to convict people in a way slogans alone do not. When we tell the culture to "Defend Life," but do not give **evidence** for how the pre-born are lives worthy of defense, the public easily ignores the message. When we tell the culture "Abortion Kills Children," but do not give **evidence** of that reality, the public easily ignores the message.

And the problem with the public ignoring the message is it's not we who pay the price. It's the babies.

For over forty years, more than 3 million pre-born children have been legally killed in Canada. Shouldn't our expression reflect this tragedy? If we don't tell the stories of the aborted pre-born, who will?

Consider how the pro-life movement incorporates the stories of post-abortive women. It doesn't merely state, "Abortion Hurts Women," but rather it **proves** it with the testimonies of women who have been physically, emotionally, and spiritually wounded by abortion. Would we ever censor the stories of post-abortive women? Then why would we censor the stories of post-abortive children? For if those who have participated in the victimization may have their stories told, all the more should we make room for the ones who are the primary victims.

How do we expect Canadians to include the pre-born as members of our society, if pro-lifers exclude them from our own marches? How can we expect universities to make room for graphic images, if our own pro-life campaigns will not? How can we expect society to put lives over feelings, if we ourselves put feelings over lives?

So imagine a march, where amidst the slogans about life there is signage showing the wonder, dignity, and beauty of the pre-born child. Imagine a march, where amidst the slogans about killing there is signage showing the dismemberment, decapitation, and disembowelment that is abortion. Imagine a march, where amidst the slogans about women, there are those courageous souls who share their testimonies of pain and redemption. That is a message which is holistic. That is an approach which is evidence-based. That is a march which will rock the culture.

*Stephanie Gray is co-founder and executive director of the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform:
<http://www.unmaskingchoice.ca>*