

Abortion Advocates: Graphics Work

By Jonathon Van Maren

One of the most common ways for social movements to judge the success of their tactics is to examine how their opponents react to them. In regards to the abortion debate, strategies to expose the inhumanity of abortion and convey the humanity of the born must also be examined in light of how abortion advocates react to them. If abortion advocates are not disturbed by our means of activism, then we are clearly doing something wrong: if we are actually exposing the destruction of thousands of children a year, a standard they fight to uphold, then their antipathy towards our tactics is, in a way, one way to measure our success. As pro-life leader Gregg Cunningham notes, effective reformers are rarely liked and liked reformers are rarely effective.

The use of graphic images, as I have previously noted, has been fiercely debated even inside the pro-life movement. The Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform has addressed the concerns of those who fall beneath this umbrella at length. Generally, however, we tend to ignore what our opponents say about our strategies—a critical oversight in regards to testing our effectiveness. A review of the facts shows that abortion advocates are terrified of the use of abortion images and react to the exposure of this injustice with almost unparalleled vitriol.

Two abortion advocates, Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice and Kate Michelman, former president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, revealed that the exposure of the abortion procedure in the public square has created an unparalleled problem for those who defend the procedure. In a *Los Angeles Times* editorial published in 2008 entitled “Abortion’s battle of messages”, Kissling and Michelman detailed the challenges that they believe abortion advocates face in the ongoing debate.

“Advocates of choice,” they admitted, “have had a hard time dealing with the increased visibility of the fetus.” Additionally, they noted, “In recent years the anti-abortion movement successfully put the nitty-gritty details of abortion on public display, increasing the belief that abortion is serious business and that some societal involvement is appropriate.” In other words, these abortion advocates admit that graphic visuals have drastically contributed to a shift in public opinion on abortion.

Prominent pro-abortion feminist Naomi Wolf also addressed the use of graphic visuals in her article “Our Bodies, Our Souls”, a piece published in the *New Republic* calling for a change in how abortion advocates make their case. She states that: “While images of violent fetal death work magnificently for pro-lifers as a political polemic, the pictures are not polemical in themselves: they are biological facts. We know this.”

In a shockingly honest statement that many in the pro-life movement should take notice of, she adds later that “how can we charge that it is vile and repulsive for pro-lifers to brandish vile and repulsive images if the images are real? *To insist that the truth is in poor taste is the very height of hypocrisy.*”

Graphic images employed through CCBR projects in Canada have not gone unnoticed by abortion advocates. Jane Kirby wrote an extensive article in *Briarpatch Magazine* entitled “Freedom of (hate) speech” detailing the challenges of confronting graphic images.

Kirby notes angrily that while she believes campuses are the “new front line of pro-choice activism”, CCBR’s projects have “anti-choicers setting the terms of debate.” In contrast to past pro-life activism, Kirby notes that “These presentations and displays have provoked a pro-choice response in a way the activities of other anti-choice groups have not.” She then quotes a Ph.D. student in women’s studies from York University, who warns that “one thing that they have been really effective at doing is coming up with messaging that affects the popular discourse, which I think is a really dangerous thing because it will eventually seep into the legislature and the courts.”

Those who seek to protect the “right” of a woman to systematically dismember her offspring in her own womb are terrified of the truth. These pictures, which even Naomi Wolf is forced to admit are accurate, force the debate away from “choice” to *what is being chosen*.

These are just several very stark examples of “pro-choice” reactions to the use of graphic visuals, and by no means the only ones. The hysteria with which those who advocate for abortion often treat the exposure of the procedure speaks volumes to the effectiveness of this tactic. A brief glance at the Facebook page of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, run by pro-abortion fanatic Joyce Arthur (one of her articles is entitled “Let no Fetus defeat us”) shows seven postings condemning the use of graphic images.

Any strategist, debater or even lawyer will tell you that if your opponent fears an argument you are making, that is the argument you should use. The abortion industry fears graphics because they cannot defend themselves from the essential point being made in these images—that their “choice” is actually the choice to destroy a child.

Abortion advocates themselves admit, as I have illustrated, that using images is a devastatingly effective strategy in changing public opinion and perhaps, they fear, even translating to legislative and legal action eventually. The abortion advocates want the cover up to continue. Those who consider themselves part of the pro-life movement must not aid the abortion industry in this death-sustaining cover up.