Abortion Rights Student Training Day

Abortion Rights
the national pro-choice campaign

August 2015

Winning the Arguments

Anti-Choice Argument 1: Embryos are babies therefore they have the right to life.

*Anti-choice logic: If embryos are babies and babies are people then embryos are people and have all the rights that people have!*

**Pro Choice response:**  The right to life doesn’t include the right to use another person’s body to survive.

Even if embryos were babies and had the right to life, they don’t have the right to life at the expense of the pregnant person’s body. No one has the right to use another person’s body to survive. The government doesn’t force healthy people to donate blood, marrow or organs to people who would otherwise die without these things, nor does the government compel parents to donate these items to their children. In fact, a parent can decide to sever all parental obligations (financial, emotional & otherwise) by placing their child up for adoption.

It’s important to recognize that we’re debating the use of governmental FORCE here. We’re not talking about moral obligations or social obligations which can vary. Anti-choicers advocate for PUNISHING people who abort because in their eyes, people who abort are murderers. It’s imperative that we make that distinction.¹

The "right to life" also doesn’t imply a right to live by threatening somebody else’s life. Bearing children is always a threat to the life of the mother.

¹ [https://auragasmic.wordpress.com/2014/03/18/how-to-refute-popular-anti-choice-arguments/]
Anti-Choice Position 2: Gendercide

Anti-Choice Logic: Feminists support abortion because they claim its necessary for equal rights but how can they support the elimination of their own sex with sex selection? Hypocrites!

Pro-Choice Response: There’s nothing hypocritical in supporting a person’s right to abort regardless of the reason. This is something Anti-Abortion advocates often do; they intentionally conflate a person’s RIGHT to obtain an abortion with a person’s REASON for aborting. When we look at the issue of gendercide, we see the inevitable result of what happens when you constantly devalue people without penises. When a penis dictates what type of opportunities you’ll be awarded, why is it shocking when people decide that they too, want a child with a penis?²

Anti-Choice Position 3: Abortion is detrimental to the health of women.

Pro Choice Response: Women have the right to make medical decisions concerning their bodies, which includes the decision to either continue or terminate a pregnancy. If someone decides to terminate their pregnancy because they don’t wish to endure the risks associated with it, that’s their right. And if someone wants to risk their life to continue a dangerous pregnancy, that’s their right. The right to bodily autonomy includes the decision to risk one’s health and life just as it includes the decision to mitigate those situations.³

A woman’s risk of dying from having an abortion is 0.6 in 100,000, while the risk of dying from giving birth is around 14 times higher (8.8 in 100,000).⁴

Women who receive abortions are less likely to suffer mental health problems than women denied abortions. More than 95 percent of participants in recent research reported that ending a pregnancy was the right decision for them. Feelings of relief outweighed any negative emotions, even three years after the procedure.⁵

When performed by trained professionals, abortions are one of the safest procedures in medicine, with a death rate of less than .01 percent. The risk of dying while giving birth is roughly 13 times higher. Abortions performed by people without the requisite skills and training, however, are extremely unsafe. An estimated 68,000

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² https://auragasmic.wordpress.com/2014/03/18/how-to-refute-popular-anti-choice-arguments/
³ https://auragasmic.wordpress.com/2014/03/18/how-to-refute-popular-anti-choice-arguments/
⁵ http://thinkprogress.org/health/2015/07/13/3679652/abortion-study-choice/
women die every year from back alley abortions, which are generally most common when abortion is illegal and/or inaccessible.\textsuperscript{6}

If you’d like to examine the health impact of banning abortion, consider Romania, which banned abortions in 1966. That policy remained in place for just under fifteen years, during which time over 9,000 women died from unsafe abortions, and countless others were permanently injured. That’s around two women dying every day. When the policy was reversed, maternal mortality rate plummeted to one-eighth of what it was at its peak under the no-abortion policy.

**Anti Choice argument 4: If you have sex, you have to be prepared to be responsible for the outcome of your actions.**

Contraception does not protect against pregnancy 100%. Not all people who have sex choose to get pregnant, and even those who do should not be forced to continue a pregnancy.\textsuperscript{7} This essentially shames people for enjoying sex and makes it all about reproduction rather than pleasure or connecting with a partner. You can also argue that it is more responsible for a person to have an abortion if they know that they cannot care for or support a child. Abortion might very well be the most responsible decision for a person. Ultimately no one should be forced to undergo pregnancy against their will.

**Anti-Choice Argument 5: Abortion should not be legal as Abortion must be stopped, and the right to life must be protected.**

**Pro-Choice Response:** Laws have never stopped abortion. Legal abortion protects women's health and saves women's lives. The question is whether abortion should be legal, safe and dignified, or illegal, dangerous and fraught with fear and humiliation.\textsuperscript{8}

**Anti-Choice Argument 6: When do you think life begins?**

**Pro-Choice Response:** The question is really when legal personhood begins. Eggs and sperm are alive; so are bacteria and all plants and animals. Of course, embryos and foetuses are alive. That doesn't mean, though, that abortion should be illegal or that it constitutes murder.

**Anti-Choice Argument 7:** I've seen pictures of highly developed fetuses, bloody abortions, tiny feet, fetuses in garbage cans. It's obvious that abortion is the killing of a baby.

\textsuperscript{6} http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/general/lancet_4.pdf  
\textsuperscript{7} http://urge.org/your-pro-choice-cheat-sheet-how-to-respond-to-anti-abortion-arguments/  
\textsuperscript{8} http://www.prochoicewisconsin.org/what-is-choice/talking-about-choice/pro-choice-responses.shtml
Pro-Choice Response: Anti-choice visual materials are often grossly enlarged, undocumented and mislabeled. They are cleverly designed to evoke emotions of repulsion against abortion and sympathy toward the fetus. We should not take away women's rights because we are repelled by sensationalized images.

Anti-Choice Argument 8: I'm against abortion on demand.

Pro-Choice Response: No one is forced to have an abortion. That's the way it should be. So a woman can't just "demand" an abortion. But if what you're saying means that you think a woman should have to overcome lots of hurdles in order to exercise her right to choose, I disagree. For some (although not all) women the choice may be difficult and government shouldn't add obstacles on the assumption she can't reason about moral issues for herself. It is extremely patronising to presume that women and pregnant people can not make their own decisions about what is best for themselves and their body.

Anti-Choice Argument 9: Mandatory waiting periods between counselling and an abortion allow women to make an informed decision about abortion. These laws should be passed to protect women and are not a barrier to choice.

Pro-Choice Response: Anti-choice activists advocate for mandatory waiting periods to dissuade women from having an abortion. The waiting periods associated with so-called "informed consent" laws bear especially heavily upon women who must travel far to reach their nearest provider, and must spend additional time away from school, work and family. Like other anti-choice restrictions, these laws discriminate against women who are poor or live in rural areas; they are also an insult to all women because they imply that women do not think carefully about their decision unless they are required by law to do so.9

Anti-Choice Argument 10: Restrictions on abortion are made to protect women from coercion, danger and grief that may plague them their whole lives.

Pro-Choice Response: Laws restricting abortion are passed by anti-choice lawmakers who have the goal, not of protecting women, but of discouraging women from exercising their right to choose. There is no scientific evidence that legal abortion harms women physically or psychologically. Indeed, if anti-choice advocates wanted to promote women's health, they would stop stigmatizing abortion and the women who choose it. We should do more to reduce unintended pregnancy and the need for abortion by supporting family planning and responsible sexuality education.

Anti-Choice Argument 11: The "morning-after pill" is really an early-term abortion.

Pro-Choice Response: False. Emergency contraception, often called the "morning-after pill," are not the same as mifepristone (RU 486), and do not interfere with an established pregnancy. These pills are a high dosage of regular birth control pills that, when taken within 72 hours after unprotected sex, can decrease a woman's

chance of becoming pregnant by up to 89 percent. Unfortunately, the majority of
women do not have the correct information about EC, and many hospital emergency
rooms will not dispense them, even to victims of sexual assault. Increasing the
knowledge and availability of EC would decrease unintended pregnancies and
abortions.¹⁰

A few more Pro Choice Facts¹¹

1. Nearly all abortions take place in the first trimester, when a foetus cannot
exist independent of the mother. As it is attached by the placenta and
umbilical cord, its health is dependent on her health, and cannot be
regarded as a separate entity as it cannot exist outside her womb.
2. Abortion is a safe medical procedure. The vast majority of women - 88% -
who have an abortion do so in their first trimester. Medical abortions have
less than 0.5% risk of serious complications and do not affect a woman's
health or future ability to become pregnant or give birth.
3. The ability of a woman to have control of her body is critical to civil rights.
Take away her reproductive choice and you step onto a slippery slope. If
the government can force a woman to continue a pregnancy, what about
forcing a woman to use contraception or undergo sterilization?


¹¹ http://womensissues.about.com/od/reproductiverights/a/AbortionArgumen.htm