

being who, like ourselves, was not able to determine the circumstance of his/her existence. Of 14 incest victims who had abortions, 11 explicitly stated that abortion was not a good solution and they would not recommend it to others.⁶ In almost every case, it was the girl's parents or the perpetrator who made the decision and the arrangements for the abortion, not the girl herself. Destroying the life of the unborn child allows the perpetrator to cover up his crime by eliminating DNA evidence (the baby). Nearly all of the sexual assault victims who had abortions stated that abortion only compounded their problem and they regretted having the abortion.⁷ 90% stated they would discourage other sexual assault victims from having an abortion.⁸

13. How common is pregnancy from incest?

No one really knows. It is likely to be less common than from a normal sexual relationship because the victim is usually younger and the trauma may cause ovulation (and menstruation) to stop or in some cases, menstruation may not have actually started as the victim may be pre-pubescent.

14. Isn't abortion the best thing for the incest victim?

Incest is a very complex family problem. It is possible that the victim's pregnancy gives her the first real chance of overcoming the family's denial of the situation and of escaping from it. It further provides absolute proof of the crime of incest being committed on the incest victim. Abortion would not only add to the girl's guilt and trauma but it would also frustrate her escape from the situation by exposure of the crime, and therefore a chance for justice.

15. Do incest victims always want an abortion?

No. Dr George Maloof's study⁹ showed a large proportion of incest victims wanted to keep their babies; when they did abort, it was usually because of the pressure from the impregnating relative (usually the victim's father or step-father), who was seeking to cover up his crime. In fact, a pregnancy may even be "desired" by an incest victim in order to expose their tragic circumstances.¹⁰ Abortion is a further assault on their sexual integrity. As with rape, it can be the prejudice of those around the victim that make the

pregnancy difficult, perhaps more so than the pregnancy itself.

16. Isn't a baby conceived from incest likely to be disabled?

While there may be some increased risk of a disability, it is still much more likely that the baby will not be disabled. In any case, why should babies be killed because they are or may be disabled? None of us can guarantee we will go through life without a disability, even if we came into the world with none. Once born, we value life "imperfect" in the eyes of the world though that life may be, so why not before birth too? Human life is a continuation from conception to natural death with an innate intrinsic value. No one has the right to destroy an innocent unborn life.

Footnotes:

1 *South Australian Abortion Reporting Committee Seventh Annual Report, p. 6 – (latest figures available at time of printing)*

2 *Cited in David C Reardon 'Aborted women, silent no more', Acorn books, Springfield, Illinois, 2002, p. 194*

3 *Ibid, p. 195*

4 *Victims and Victors, David C Reardon, Julie Makimaa, and Amy Sobie, Acorn Books, Springfield, Illinois, 2000, p. 20.*

5 *Ibid, p. 20*

6 *Ibid, p. 21*

7 *Ibid, p. 21*

8 *Ibid, p. 21*

9 *Cited in David C Reardon 'Aborted women, silent no more', p. 202*

10 *Ibid, p. 203*

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Pamphlet 643

Is abortion okay in the case of Rape & Incest?

1. Surely abortion should be allowed in the case of rape?

Rape is a despicable crime against women. The victims need our support, help and care. Abortion, like rape, is a destructive act. To abort an unborn child conceived by rape is to respond to violence against one innocent victim (the woman) with violence against another innocent victim (the unborn child). Irrespective of our parentage, each and every one of us has an intrinsic worth and value as a human person.

2. Is pregnancy from rape common?

Conception from rape is extremely rare. Many studies have found that very few pregnancies ever result from rape. Few states in Australia keep track of the reasons why an abortion is done, however South Australia does. According to SA statistics for 2009¹, no abortions were done on the grounds of rape. One could assume very similar statistics for the rest of Australia.

3. Why is pregnancy from rape so rare?

There are several reasons for this:

- The ovum (egg) only lives for 24 hours, so for a pregnancy to occur, the rape would have to happen a day or so either side of ovulation (egg release) — a very small window of time.
- The victim may be too young or too old to conceive (pre-puberty or post-menopause).
- She may be on the pill or other contraception, or have been sterilized, or have known or unknown fertility problems.
- She may already be pregnant to her husband or boyfriend.
- Trauma from the rape may bring into play some natural defense mechanisms that reduce the likelihood of pregnancy, such as hormonal change and spasms of

the fallopian tubes, which inhibit ovulation or fertilization.

- Rape does not always involve a complete act of sexual intercourse — ejaculation may not occur at all, may occur prior to or after penetration, or the rapist may be infertile or have low fertility.

- The chance of conception resulting from a single act of unprotected intercourse even between consenting fertile individuals has been estimated at only 2-4%.

4. Can pregnancy be prevented once rape has occurred?

Yes — but without the need for an abortion. When a woman is raped she should seek immediate medical attention. Since there is a time lag between ejaculation and conception, measures to prevent conception can be taken eg a spermicidal douche to kill the rapist's sperm (sperm is not a human life) or a hormone pill to suppress ovulation (an ovum is not a human life) if it has not already occurred.

5. But is a human life really present when pregnancy is first diagnosed?

Yes. A unique human being comes into existence when a human egg is fertilized by a human sperm (this process is called conception or fertilization). The new cell contains all the genetically inherited characteristics of the new individual such as the color of his/her eyes, hair and skin, facial and body features. After conception growth is extremely rapid. The baby's heart is beating around Day 18 and by about 4 weeks (post-conception) the brain, spinal cord and nervous system are established.

6. Isn't abortion the best thing for a woman pregnant from rape?

No. The woman has already been raped physically — being raped mechanically by a surgical abortion will not help her deal with the trauma of her rape. As abortion itself can give rise to severe psychological disturbances, it would only compound her problems. Society's easy assumption that abortion is in the woman's best interest may reflect an attitude that sees the rape victim as "unclean" and abortion as "necessary" to "cleanse" her

of rape's stain. Unfortunately, once the pregnancy is "fixed up" by an abortion, the anger, guilt, fear and low self-esteem related to the rape may be ignored. What a woman wants after the horror of a rape is to have her sense of safety, her sense of self and her security restored. Abortion destroys a woman's sense of self and removes her feelings of safety and security.

7. Don't women who are pregnant from rape always want an abortion?

No — but the opinions, attitudes and beliefs of other people about the rape and pregnancy (rare though this is) often push the victim down an abortion path. Fear of being blamed or rejected by family, friends or society may make a pregnant rape victim want to cover up what has happened by removing the visible evidence of it. These women are victims of rape not "victims of pregnancy". Dr Sandra Mahkorn, an experienced rape counselor published a report in 1979 studying cases of women who had been raped, became pregnant and their desired outcome of the pregnancy. It looked at 37 pregnant rape victims, of whom 28 continued with their pregnancies (5 had abortions and 4 outcomes couldn't be determined)², clearly proving a majority of women in this situation do not want abortion when allowed to follow their hearts and not bow to the pressure of those around them. Further, there is a need to establish if this pregnancy is truly caused by the rapist, or perhaps is an unknown pre-existing pregnancy from a husband or boyfriend. Sadly, rape can and does happen in some relationships and marriages and though conceived due to rape, many women recognize these children have the same right to be born as any other sibling or child.

8. Don't women hate the children they bear from rape?

Early in the pregnancy there may be feelings of resentment and hostility however in her study of pregnant rape victims, Dr Sandra Mahkorn³ found consistently that negative attitudes changed to positive ones as the pregnancy progressed, and the overwhelming majority of the women had a positive view toward their child by the time of delivery. Further there is no onus on the woman to keep the child. The healthy life-giving option of allowing the child to be fostered either within the family or through a government agency is always available, as is the selfless

act of love in gifting the child to a childless couple through adoption.

9. But isn't it unjust that a woman must carry to term a child conceived through rape?

Rape is a great injustice to the woman and its consequences may be unjust. But an even greater injustice is done by killing the child, who is the other innocent victim of rape.

10. If pregnancy from rape is so rare, why not allow legal abortion only in the case of rape?

Apart from the fact that innocent babies' lives would still be unjustly ended, such a law would be very hard to apply consistently. If a woman claimed an abortion because she was pregnant from rape, should she have to prove she was in fact raped? Should she have to report the rape to the police? How long after the alleged rape should she be able to claim an abortion? In practice, allowing an exception in the case of rape would open the door to further exceptions and finally to abortion on demand. Abortion lobbyists realize this, which is why they emphasize the rape situation so much.

11. Doesn't the pro-life position demand too much from the woman pregnant from rape?

It does demand a great deal. It reaches into a woman's soul and asks for the motherly love and strength that is within her to win through. However the choice for childbirth is a choice to bring something good (the baby) out of what is evil (the rape). It is a triumph over the rape; a choice that will allow her to remember her courage and generosity, rather than just her fear and shame. In a study of rape victims who became pregnant and aborted, 88% of those expressing an opinion (on their abortions) regretted their abortion and stated it had been the wrong solution to their pregnancies.⁴ Many stated the pressure to abort did not originate from them, but from family or healthcare workers.⁵

12. What about pregnancy from incest?

Why should the circumstance of one's conception be a factor in determining one's right to life? The unborn child conceived through incest is in a similar position to the child conceived through rape. The child is a human