

An Honest Letter to the Pro-Choice Activist Who Filmed Her Own Abortion

On Mother's Day, Emily Letts, you probably honored yours as I did mine on this annual celebration of motherhood. I purchased two large hanging floral baskets for my mother's patio. Maybe you bought chocolates or fresh flowers for your mother, like millions of other Americans.

I'm writing this open letter today because I've read your comments published in a magazine for women and watched your YouTube video, "This Is My Story" about your own prospect of becoming a mother after ending your first pregnancy at the clinic where you work. Hopefully my words are constructive.

I don't as a rule read the magazine that published your story or frequent the websites that originally posted your video. But after it went viral, the video was impossible to avoid; it landed on websites I read regularly. It's brought you some acclaim and, unfortunately, some hateful vitriol from people who disagree with you.

"I feel in awe of the fact that I can make a baby. I can make a life," you say.

I share that sentiment with you, Emily. Life is truly amazing, and I'm grateful that my mother brought me into this world, even though she was a teenager and unmarried when she learned of her pregnancy. I honor her today.

No doubt you're as inspired by your mother's capacity to produce life as you are by your own capability to make a baby.

I hope, Emily, that someday you are among the first to hold your newborn boy or girl, assuming you are fortunate enough to

have either. I say “among the first” because you probably already know that an amazing obstetrician and caring labor and delivery nurses will be in the No. 1 and 2 spots ahead of you. The doctor will first confirm your child’s sex, then cut the umbilical cord and clear the mouth and nose so your bundle of joy can take his or her first breath. Only then will a nurse or doctor place the wrinkled baby into your loving care.

As a former professional actress, I hope you have the foresight to film the birth, capturing the sights and sounds of everybody in the delivery room, just as you did in your abortion procedure video. You know a winning performance is all in the delivery. (The pun is intended, I’m sorry to admit.)

I’m no Hollywood scriptwriter or movie producer, but I can imagine your action video will make you a YouTube sensation for the second time in your now-25-year-old life. It may be honored as much—maybe more than—your abortion video, which earned the Judge’s Choice award in a competition designed to destigmatize the procedure.

Most importantly, the video of your live birth, if you chose to film it as you did when terminating your first pregnancy, will inspire women who’ve had abortions (I know that’s important to you from reading your story) and those who have not. Everybody wins. Maybe even women who regret their abortions will find some consolation watching your video of a live birth. I hope so.

One thing I do know is how passionate you are about abortion and childbirth.

“I remember breathing and humming through it like I was giving birth,” you wrote after the procedure.

“I know this sounds weird, but to me, this was as birth-like as it could be. It will always be a special moment for me.

"I still have my sonogram and, if my apartment were to catch fire, it would be the first thing I'd grab," you say.

Your video of a live birth—should you be inspired by my words to produce one—is also something you'll probably cherish at least as much as the digital image of the life that ended during your procedure.

At the risk of sounding like a stage director, I think the camera should pan the room, capturing the loving hands of your husband and nurses wiping your brow and holding your clenched hands as supporters did for you in filming "This Is My Story." Include audio of the doctor coaching you to pace your breathing as contractions quicken and as the baby's head crests. Make sure the camera—maybe just your cellphone—is close enough to record the baby's first cry and your words upon seeing him or her.

I think it will be an award-winning video because childbirth, motherhood and babies inspire everybody. You'll be the star once again, the one you dreamed of becoming as an actress-turned-patient advocate.

I hope my words inspire you as much as others have guided you as an abortion counselor and in your decision to film your first-trimester abortion. If you choose to accept the challenge, I think filming your live birth will embolden women and provide the best possible sequel to "This Is My Story." I'll be waiting and watching for it.