

So You Want to End Abortion? Stop Ignoring This Reality

I have spent the majority of the last decade working to end abortion through education and policy reform while unraveling my own pro-life foster care adoption story. My birth mother, an immigrant from Honduras, sought the help of infamous New Orleans doctor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okpalobi in 1990 after being referred to him by a friend for his low costs.

My mother was a prime candidate for abortion: living below the federal poverty level, relying on government services (both Medicaid and food stamps), and coping with the challenges of leaving her home country to live in America. On a daily basis, she dealt with racial bias and discrimination, something I have not experienced in my adult life.

Dr. Okpalobi intended to leave me for dead after inducing labor and delivering me breech at 26 weeks. Because I wasn't breathing when I was born, he believed I would be a mental vegetable, incapable of having a normal life. However, in a quick and miraculous decision, my mother, who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, resisted Dr. Okpalobi and fought for my life.

I know this story is astounding, but what is just as astounding to me is what I've learned from my mother's life. I've learned that by walking a while in her shoes, I can walk in the shoes of the majority of abortion-minded women in our country.

Statistics show that women who have abortions are economically disadvantaged, with about half living below the federal poverty level. They are also primarily minority women and women who have had abortions before. My birth mother had two abortions prior to her pregnancy with me and shared with me

the troubles she faced simply because of her socio-economic status, which included limited access to health care, fewer job opportunities, and bias from people who treated her as less than because of her appearance.

As for me, I had to watch all of these realities play out in her life in a way research just doesn't describe. I was placed in foster care for the first time when I was 16 months old but, as many foster-care kids do, returned home and observed firsthand the devastation that poverty, systemic racism, and mental illness can have on a family. My mother went on to have three more children after me but lost her parental rights when I was nine years old.

For most, poverty and abuse coupled with the ramifications of discrimination can be unrecoverable, unless, like me, you are fortunate enough to escape it at a young age. My escape came through foster care and adoption, but it didn't come immediately. I endured starvation, suffered physical abuse, contracted the potentially fatal lung disease, Tuberculosis, and was separated from my siblings. Worst of all, though, I had to watch my mother suffer, in part, simply because she was vulnerable and disadvantaged.

That said, in my almost eight-years of observing her in my childhood, I learned a valuable truth— her vulnerability is what made her abortion-minded. She didn't want to end the lives of her unborn children. She didn't celebrate abortion and she certainly experienced psychological damage after her abortions. She was desperate, destitute, and victimized by the abortion industry that profits off of women like her.

Ultimately, she believed she had no other choice.

Please don't misunderstand: I know there are women that do not fit this description, having abortions for convenience or to advance their careers, however, the data shows such women are not the majority. Rather, as we work to end abortion by

advancing pro-life initiatives, we must also befriend women like my mother.

I bet you know these women. If you start looking, you'll find that they are everywhere—the homeless woman on the street, the mother of the child that comes to your classroom every day without clean clothes, or the single mom that moved in next door. In becoming part of their lives, you'll become the support they need to help them make a better choice for themselves and their baby's future if they face an unplanned pregnancy. If the pro-life movement can accomplish this while also working through legislation and education to end abortion, the end of Roe is truly in sight. {eo}

Sarah Zagorski is the Special Projects Director for Louisiana Right to Life. In 2012, she graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago with a Bachelor of Arts in communications and biblical studies. Sarah was rescued from abortion and often shares her story of survival, hope, and healing. After spending seven and a half years in the Louisiana Foster Care system, she was adopted at age nine by a loving family dedicated to the pro-life movement. Sarah, her husband, David, and their young son reside in New Orleans, Louisiana.