

Why We Must Hear Stories of Abortion Survivors

The national frenzy over Planned Parenthood has died down somewhat since the House Oversight Committee hearing that occurred more than a month ago.

News headlines have shifted from the testimony of Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards to the latest developments in the race for president. However, as the media spotlight has shifted, I am still amazed at what the intense media coverage missed in the public debate on abortion.

Richards wasn't the only individual who testified before the congressional committee on the Planned Parenthood issue.

Gianna Jessen and Melissa Ohden also testified. These two women share one remarkable thing in common: they are abortion survivors. That's right, *survivors*.

Both of these women survived a saline abortion. This procedure involves injecting a toxic salt solution into the amniotic fluid surrounding the unborn child, burning it to death from the outside in. The gruesome photo accompanying Gianna's testimony indicates the intense trauma this normally fatal procedure inflicts on an unborn child.

I tried to reconcile these women's testimonies with how we think of abortion today. We are told that abortion is about "a woman's right to choose" and that we should not tell women "what to do with their own bodies." I struggled to reconcile these catch-phrases with Gianna's impassioned question to the House Judiciary Committee—"If abortion is about women's rights, then what were mine?" The answer to her question is simple: she had no rights. As the law stands, the unborn have no rights which we who are born are bound to respect.

Later, Melissa Ohden testified. As part of her Abortion Survivors Network, she has reached out to 203 fellow abortion survivors, and is still looking for others. At what point did these abortion survivors gain their humanity? Does the fact they survived death in the womb imply they were alive in the womb? And if they were alive, when do they gain the natural rights of human beings?

In America, many abortion proponents laud countries overseas for their healthcare systems. They praise universal healthcare and paid family leave. Yet in Europe, the only country to allow abortion after 20 weeks is the Netherlands, and their limit is 24 weeks. The United States is one of only seven countries in the world to allow abortion after 20 weeks, countries that include the likes of China and North Korea.

Perhaps, in the midst of America's pursuit of happiness, it is time to consider the right to life of embryos like Gianna and Melissa. To use Melissa's own words, "I deserved the same right to life, the same equal protection under the law as each and every one of you."