

The Least of These

They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

—Jeremiah 32:35

“Topheth is Moloch, which was made of brass; and they heated him from his lower parts; and his hands being stretched out, and made hot, they put the child between his hands, and it was burnt; when it vehemently cried out; but the priests beat a drum, that the father might not hear the voice of his son, and his heart might not be moved.”

— Medieval French Rabbi Schlomo Yitzchaki

Many in our society decry oppression in the past—African-American slaves in the U.S. colonies, women prohibited from voting until 1920, Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1940s—yet the ideological tactics employed to deny equal rights and protections to these groups have been successfully utilized in the present with great success.

Dr. Sherry Hamby, writing in “Psychology Today,” describes dehumanization as “redefining the targets of prejudice and violence by making them seem less human (that is, less civilized or less sentient) than other people.” In an AMA Journal of Ethics article entitled ‘Cautions About Medicalized Dehumanization,’ Alexandra Minna Stern writes “Archives of colonialism, slavery, and war abound with examples of dominant powers using religious, moral, and scientific rationales and stereotypes to disparage and treat minorities as subhuman.”

Following the overturning of Roe v. Wade by the Supreme Court, the issue of abortion has re-emerged. Several states have banned it entirely, while others advertise ‘sanctuary’ status,

implored women to visit for abortion access. Ballot initiatives concerning abortion rights will be decided in November in California, Vermont, Montana and Kentucky; one in Kansas occurred last week. While many celebrated the reversal of the Roe decision, the stage has been set for a new and more localized dialogue on the topic of abortion.

A national nonprofit group called Created Equal, founded in 2011 by Mark Harrington and Seth Drayer, equips volunteers on college campuses and in urban centers to initiate one-on-one conversations with the end goal of changing hearts and minds. Their website provides a navigator with easily accessible answers and provocative questions, empowering individuals to bring rationality, data and compelling ideas to bear when interacting with those who have not yet come to recognize the injustice of legalized infanticide.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Vital Statistics, 39 women died from illegal abortions in 1972, the year prior to Roe v. Wade. Yet the argument at the time was “safety first” and ending so-called ‘back alley’ abortions. An average of 220,000 abortions were performed in the years before its legalization; by 1980, that number had reached approximately 1.5 million. More than 60 million preborn lives have ended in abortion since 1973.

In 1992, Bill Clinton called for abortion to be “safe, legal and rare,” a slogan that his wife Hillary repeated in her 2008 presidential campaign. But by September of 2015, Lindy West launched the Twitter topic #shoutyourabortion, which went viral within days, and was applauded by the vice president of Planned Parenthood, who said “We’re happy to see more and more people coming stories are a powerful reminder that women should never feel shamed or judged.”

Created Equal encourages the rhetorical use of the acronym SLED as a guide for engaging the topic of preborn equality—naming size, level of development, environment and

degree of dependency as metrics of difference between persons but not as indicators of value. Science and technology, which in 1973 were not advanced to the point of 3D ultrasounds or measures that today enable the survival of babies born months before their due dates, cannot be cited as grounds for discarding a human whose heart is beating but needs its mothers care, just like a 6-month-old infant does outside the womb.

Pre-born!, another nonprofit, provides ultrasound machines to crisis pregnancy centers; the overwhelming majority of pregnant women decide to carry to term once they see their baby on the screen. Knowing their impact, Senator Elizabeth Warren said on July 10 "Those crisis pregnancy centers that are there to fool people who are looking for pregnancy termination help outnumber true abortion clinics by three to one. We need to shut them down here in Massachusetts and we need to shut them down all around the country."

The repeal of Roe shifted a burden to the states, and constituents must be proactive to make the concept of abortion not only locally illegal, but unthinkable. Created Equal, Pre-born!, and Loveline are just a few of the outreach organizations already doing this. Jesus said in Matthew 25:40 "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." Who indeed are less than those who are still being knit together in the womb by the very hands of God?

Jennifer is a flight attendant for a major U.S. carrier. She lives with her husband and her 19-year-old cat in Orlando, Florida, where she enjoys nearly complete Constitutional freedom but is unable to escape the perils of relentless sun and mosquitoes year-round.