



An International Network for Peace, Justice and Life

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Reflections on Abortion and Pacifist Principles

One point on which pacifist analysis excels is on how to prevent violence by going after its roots. What are its roots? They include:

- The victims of violence are dehumanized.
- The effects of violence are discounted.
- The act of violence is couched in terms that make it sound better – a military strike becomes a "surgical operation."
- Stereotypes are applied to opponents of violence.

Do these apply to abortion?

- The unborn child is sometimes referred to as a parasite, or as garbage, or as a mere clump of cells – if she is mentioned at all.
- Women who have had abortions are a major constituency group of the anti-abortion movement, and such women deserve a hearing.
- If abortion were in fact a surgical operation, then that's not a euphemism; but if it's an act of violence, then it is.
- Stereotype-breaking groups include:

Consistent Life, an international network for peace and life: <http://www.consistent-life.org/>
Feminism & Nonviolence Studies Association: <http://www.fnsa.org/>
Feminists for Life of America: <http://www.feministsforlife.org/>
No Violence, Period: <http://swissnet.ai.mit.edu/~rauch/nvp/articles.html>
Nonviolent Choice Directory: <http://www.nonviolentchoice.info/>
Prolife Alliance of Gays & Lesbians: <http://www.plagal.org/>

Yet the stereotype does come from somewhere – among current politicians for high office, the people who most oppose abortion tend to be the ones who most favor the war in Iraq, are most inclined to support the death penalty, and are most likely to de-fund the poverty programs that could help prevent abortions. Is this inconsistent? Of course! Does it outrage you? It does most of us.

But doesn't the principle of consistency work both ways?

There are millions of people of tender conscience who see photos of unborn children, both alive and aborted, and are deeply moved by compassion. Because most know women who say they were traumatized by their abortions, claims that abortion helps women's rights don't ring true to their ears. What are they to think of peace activists who say that we oppose killing children in the chaos of war, but defend it done intentionally targeted in a clinic? What are they to think of pacifists who claim that violence doesn't really solve problems, but then make an exception with the claim that killing the children benefits their mothers? Would they be wrong to feel the same puzzlement over inconsistency?

We hope you find these reflections helpful, as we all work toward a peaceful and just world, and devote thought to what that would mean.

We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, capital punishment and euthanasia. We believe that these issues are linked under a 'consistent ethic of life'. We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected.