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The Culture of Death at the National Press Club

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Friday, January 16, 2004

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With the thirty-first anniversary of Roe v. Wade just days away, Michelman told the assembled press corps that "a woman's right to control and decide the most intimate aspects of our lives...is greatly imperiled." As she told her audience, "After nearly 20 years at NARAL Pro-Choice America, I would have hoped that we would be a bit further along in recognizing at least one broadly shared interest: working toward a world of only-wanted pregnancies." Nevertheless, "in 2004, the fact remains that a woman's right to choose . . . is gravely imperiled and its only security lies in what I believe is necessary: an alert, active, vigilant citizenry devoted to its protection."

This is NARAL's only song, and Michelman decided to sing it one last time with gusto. She returned again and again to her dire warning that the coming presidential election represents "the most important presidential election year in my lifetime."

Michelman recognizes that her continued rants on behalf of abortion—constantly warning of an immediately threat to Roe v. Wade—may be wearing thin. "I'm a little worried that some people listening today will dismiss my message as a warning I sounded many, many times before, because we have been under assault for nearly 31 years. So I'm left with a dilemma: How do I avoid sounding like the little boy who cried wolf, when the wolf is really at the door?"

Of course, the "wolf" is President George W. Bush, who has earned NARAL's ire by his support of limitations on abortion and his appointment of pro-life justices to federal courts. The President's ultimate offense in the eyes of the pro-abortion movement was his public signing of "The Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003," just as the year came to an end. NARAL's ultimate fear is that a second Bush term in office would mean the appointment of pro-life justices to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Abortion is the main issue for NARAL, but it isn't the only issue. According to Kate Michelman, President Bush "has tried to take away access to contraception." She ties this to the administration's decision to eliminate funding for foreign family planning organizations that support abortion. But Michelman also criticizes the President because of his support for abstinence-only sex education as well as the right of states to establish required waiting periods for abortion and parental notification laws. When NARAL and its allies describe their position as "pro-choice," what they are really talking about is the "right" to have sex without consequences.

For Michelman and the other ideologues of the pro-abortion left, abortion is the most fundamental right of human existence. Again and again, Michelman comes back to her claim that abortion is a "fundamental right" essential to democracy.

This claim that abortion is a fundamental right demonstrates the ideological rigidity and extremism of the pro-abortion camp. This also explains why Roe v. Wade is so essential to the abortionist's worldview. The constitutional argument

cooked up by Justice Harry Blackmun tied a woman's right to abortion to a "right to privacy" that is itself not mentioned in the Constitution. On the basis of *Roe v. Wade*, Michelman and her allies jumped to the assertion that abortion is now firmly ensconced as a constitutional right in immutable form. The language of fundamental rights is no accident. Kate Michelman knows that a lie told often enough may well be accepted as true.

An illustration of this comes when Michelman referred in her speech to a parallel between a woman's right to abortion and the right of religious liberty granted explicitly to all Americans in the First Amendment. In criticizing President Bush for stating that Americans are not yet ready for a total ban on abortion, Michelman said this: "But imagine that reasoning applied to any other fundamental rights that this democracy is founded upon. Imagine a president saying, 'I don't quite believe in freedom of religion, but America isn't ready yet to repeal the First Amendment.' We would hardly find that comforting. We would rise up. We would take action. And that's exactly what we must do today because America may not be ready for criminalizing all abortions and robbing women of their right to choose, but I believe President Bush plainly is."

This argument reveals the clever slight-of-hand routinely accomplished by pro-abortion advocates. Michelman argues that abortion is a "fundamental right that this democracy is founded upon." Could any sane historian claim that a right to abortion was even in the consciousness of those who founded the nation and framed the Constitution? Furthermore, can any sane person claim that a plain reading of the Constitution includes any statement about abortion whatsoever? Michelman's argument making a right to abortion and the right of religious liberty to stand on equal terms indicates the radical orthodoxy of the pro-abortion movement and the dishonest constitutional arguments on which their ideology stands.

Michelman sees a steady erosion of abortion rights in America. "Anti-choice politicians have spent the last several years taking choices away one procedure at a time, one woman at a time, one circumstance at a time, going most aggressively after the rights of women they believe able to fight back: Poor women, often disproportionately women of color, young women, rural woman, women living in the quiet corners of our society." Of course, all that is asserted without evidence, or even without the minimal requirement of logical clarity.

The histrionics of the pro-abortion movement leads advocates like Kate Michelman to absolutize a right to abortion as essential to human dignity for women. She describes "a woman's right to choose" as "the single option that ultimately determines whether women control their destinies during their child-bearing years." To identify abortion as "the single option" that determines whether women control their own destinies is so extreme as to be hallucinatory. Nevertheless, this hallucination is part and parcel of the abortionist's worldview. The elevation of abortion to such singular status explains why some abortion advocates speak in almost reverent tones about a technology of death.

The over-the-top language and extreme arguments coming from NARAL and other abortion-rights organizations are what has lead to the steady erosion of support for their position. Consider this question posed by Michelman: "Should women be equal, contributing partners in society? Or should they be held captive to their reproductive function for the entirety of their child-bearing years?" Captive to their reproductive function? This language is an insult to every woman and a devaluation of human dignity.

The mythology of the abortion-rights movement is based on a theory of history that sees women as "captive to their reproductive function" for most of human experience—until they were recently liberated by the advent of effective abortion techniques and the contraceptive revolution. That is why these two issues are always tied together in the ideology of the pro-abortion camp.

The insidious logic of death is hauntingly reflected in Michelman's exhortation to her audience: "We can persevere, and we can preserve this freedom. We can save women's lives, we can make families healthier, and we can make this society stronger, and we will." She would have us make families healthier, save women's lives, and make society stronger by killing unborn children? Was her audience even listening?

Michelman aborted a pregnancy in 1970—just after her husband left her and abandoned the family. She claims that pro-life advocates have a "blind spot" when it comes to the need for women to determine their own destiny, even if it means the death of their unborn child. Responding to a question from a reporter at the National Press Club event, Michelman referred specifically to Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, but also to all opponents of abortion on demand: "Fundamentally, however, there is a blind spot I seem to see; that when it comes to the moral value of women's lives and the moral value

of childbearing and who should make the decision, that they put the act of abortion at a higher level of value . . . with very little if any discussion about the moral implications of bringing a child into the world.” The real blind spot is Kate Michelman’s failure to consider the moral implications of not bringing a child into the world—when it is already growing in the womb.

The ideology of death is now so accepted in some sectors of our society that arguments like those offered by Kate Michelman receive polite applause and outright support. She is moving on from NARAL to work full-time for the election of a pro-abortion president. According to Michelman’s repeated claims, the 2004 presidential election may be the most important of her lifetime. On that point at least, she may finally have hit an argument on which both sides of the abortion debate can agree.

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