

**BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE OF OHIO
HB228
CHAIRMAN WHITE AND MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH COMMITTEE**

PREPARED TESTIMONY OF DIANE CARTOLANO

June 13, 2006

Chairman White and Members of the Health Committee:

My name is Diane Cartolano. Attempting to sum up, in just 5 or 10 minutes, the destruction that abortion has had in my life for the past 15 or so years, is challenging, to say the least.

My abortions affected my life on so many different levels that it is often hard to know where to start, but the first time I realized I was pregnant, I was in shock, although given the choices I was making at the time, I should not have been. My boyfriend made it clear that marriage and adoption were not options, leaving little doubt as to the remaining “choice”. Funny thing, “choice”; like the majority of women who have abortions, I ended up feeling as if I had no other choice. As for my family, even though I was 27 years old, I was terrified of my father and unsure of how my mother would respond. She was always concerned with what other people thought and I knew she would be embarrassed. Looking back, I think I feared a total family breakdown if they found out, so I never told them. Consequently, in my desperation, I made the first of two appointments that would forever change my life and although I didn’t realize it at the time, I was simply exchanging one kind of shame for another and this time there would be no perceived “easy fix” for the anguish and heartache that lie ahead.

I bought all the lies, including the ones that have been used for years. Crass euphemisms, contrived just for the unborn, whose sole purpose is to distance women from the truth of what they are doing. Phrases like “blob of tissue”, “pregnancy tissue”, “uterine contents” and the grotesque, “conceptus”. I was assured that “it” was simply a “mass of tissue”, devoid of the ability to feel pain during the so-called “procedure”. I was never told about the consequences I would experience later and the fact that they would be “terminating my pregnancy” by tearing my baby limb from limb, causing it to bleed to death, also seemed to slip their minds. They just parroted the tired rhetoric that it was a woman’s “right to choose”...*to kill her unborn child* (they never do finish that sentence). It also seemed to escape them that I might be able to see the “specimen jar” on the counter to my right — my child’s temporary coffin. But I did and I will never be able to erase the memory of seeing my child’s blood as it was suctioned into the jar, while the sickening sound of the equipment droned on, oblivious to the fact that it was brutally taking the life of what would have been my first born child. And I was far from the only one living out this nightmare. There were others experiencing, or about to experience, the same life-altering horror. Of course, I swore it would never happen again. But it did. And I did it again, only this time I was put to sleep and in the years that followed, there were days I wished I had never woken up.

For a while, my life appeared to go on as usual and I became proficient at dressing my pain in pretty clothes and nice hair in order to hide the train wreck inside. But we can only hide that

which is breaking our hearts and destroying our souls for so long, before it demands attention. There is a Scripture that reads, “*Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?*” which describes just how I felt. In his book, *Love Beyond Reason*, John Ortberg states it perfectly when he writes, “the human heart cannot deal with the guilt of secret shame” and ironically, it was that very kind of shame that was instrumental in saving my life. A life, at one point, I was certain was no longer worth living.

My shame was screaming and though I managed to find ways to “stuff it” to avoid dealing the truth of what I had done, the pain eventually found its way out as I began to experience many of the symptoms typical of post-abortive women, including repressed (and unrepressed) anger; perfectionism; overwhelming shame and guilt; nightmares; depression; suicidal thoughts; financial difficulties; alcohol abuse; promiscuity; emotional indifference; debilitating insecurity and an inability to make decisions, or to trust any that I did make. But the worst symptom by far, was the ever-present and profound sense of *sadness* that I just couldn’t seem to shake. I didn’t know what it was or where to put it and I was discovering, first hand, that my “choices” were not such a quick fix after all. I knew in my heart, what my head had not yet acknowledged and what every other post-abortive woman knows: I had not made a simple “choice”; I had paid someone to kill my babies and all the denial in the world would never change that fact.

The obvious victim in an abortion is the unborn child and until recently, little attention has been paid (or given, for that matter) to the adverse effects of abortion on the women who have them. It is devastating and demoralizing and affects every conceivable aspect of their lives in varying degrees. And since there is a mother (and a father) for every aborted child, there are literally millions upon millions of what I call the “walking wounded”, who desperately need validation and healing for their private anguish. I’ve summed it up with the words, “one heart stops and another heart breaks”. How in the world does it benefit a woman to kill her unborn child (for a fee, mind you) and then further insult her by saying she is lying or unstable, when she feels remorse?

We’re told that abortion empowers women, but in truth, it demeans and devalues them. We’re told that abortion should remain legal for cases of rape and incest, but how is the life of a child, conceived in rape, less valuable than others and how does killing that child help bring healing to someone who has already been horribly violated? Shouldn’t we be pursuing the perpetrator? A \$250 fine is imposed for illegally using a handicapped parking spot, but we find it acceptable, even preferable, to abort children, determined to be handicapped in some way.

My healing came in bits and pieces and included professional counseling and treatment for clinical depression, but it was not until after I was married and became pregnant with our daughter, Isabella, that my need for deeper and more complete healing was revealed. As I viewed the first ultrasound of her in my womb, at 10 weeks of age, I came face-to-face with the truth of what I had done. And I wept. Not for joy, as should have been the case, but with unrelenting sorrow because it was impossible to look at that ultrasound without thinking about the children I had aborted. I was also robbed of much of the joy I should have experienced upon her birth, again, reflecting on the two children I had sacrificed.

Following her birth, I participated in a post-abortive healing program, which was a significant turning point. It provided a safe place to deal with the consequences of my abortions and *finally* helped me to identify the unspeakable sadness that had become my constant companion — it was called *grief*. Oh, what a relief to finally know its name and come to terms with what my heart

had known all along: my abortions were not “choices”, they were children — my children — and the time had come to embrace that fact and express my overwhelming sorrow, but most important, to honor the innocent lives that had been taken and to give them names: Sarah and Seth.

I pray that my testimony will bring honor and meaning to the lives my two precious children; encouragement to others still living with the silent heartbreak of their abortions, to seek forgiveness and healing. I also hope to help change the legal landscape of our country, so that *all* forms of human life are respected and deemed worthy of protection. We have an unprecedented opportunity to change the course of this nation and untold millions of lives hang in the balance — may we not fail them.

For Sarah and Seth

Two trees I shall plant
And beneath them you'll sleep.
Their limbs will reach high
And their roots will run deep.

They will be symbols
Of God's perfect love,
Which He showed us
When Jesus came down from above.

A tree for you Sarah
And Seth, one for you
To remind me, in Jesus,
We have life anew.

Each time that I see them
I'll remember to pray,
And to tell you I love you
And will see you one day.

But I know that sometimes
When I see them, I'll weep,
For the two tiny lives
That I chose not to keep.

My tears are for you
And for so many others;
The mothers and fathers
And sisters and brothers.

How my arms ache to hold you
And stroke your soft skin,
To inhale your sweet scent
And to know you within.

What would you have looked like?
Who would you be now?
Perhaps through my dreams
I can know this somehow.

I'll just close my eyes
And let God bring you near,
As your sweet voices tell me
"There's nothing to fear."

Because you're with Jesus now,
Yes, this I know.
But for now, it is time
That I let you both go —

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" — and you forgave the guilt of my sin."
(Psalm 32:5)*

"He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters."