

Get facts about so-called 'partial-birth' abortion

In her Aug. 28 writing about the Supreme Court's decision on the Intact D&E or so-called "partial birth" abortion procedure, B.J. Nikkel once again deliberately misleads the public.

What the ACOG really said, in a January 1997 statement, was that their select panel could, "identify no circumstances under which this procedure...would be the only option...however, (it) may be the best or most appropriate procedure in a particular circumstance to save the life or preserve the health of a woman, and only the doctor, in consultation with the patient, based upon the woman's particular circumstances can make this decision." On the Supreme Court's finding the ACOG said, "Nebraska's law unconstitutionally bans safe and common abortion procedures used throughout pregnancy and thus prohibits physicians from giving their patients appropriate and necessary medical care."

The AMA didn't say what Nikkel claims either. They've said that their expert panel could not find "any identified situation" in which it was "the only appropriate procedure to induce abortion." That's a very different meaning than the one Nikkel tried to portray.

Before viability, (24 to 26 weeks), when a fetus cannot live outside the womb, it isn't inaccurate or immoral to describe the fetus as potential life. It's medically accurate.

Nikkel knows that the picture she paints in her 60-second bite of



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Soapbox**

a healthy fetus in the last days or moments of pregnancy being aborted using this procedure — insinuating it's because the woman has now decided she doesn't want to have a baby — is a lie. Nikkel's deceptive picture is akin to the picture that a swindler paints using a "children's cause" to swindle caring trusting people.

Statistics about when abortions are done belies Nikkel's claim. Prior to viability is when 95 percent of all abortions are performed and Nikkel knows that. Four percent occur between 16 and 20 weeks, (14 to 16 weeks before amniocentesis can begin to detect fetal anomalies), 1 percent at 21 weeks plus and approximately .04 percent at 26 weeks plus, after viability, aka, third trimester.

So, of 1,184,758 million abortions in 1997, 11,374 were in the second trimester and only 474 were done in the third trimester after viability because a fetus was incompatible with life and was endangering a woman's health or life, the only reason an abortion can be performed in the third trimester of pregnancy. Out of these 474, we don't know how many, if any, used this procedure. But we do know that these were very much wanted

pregnancies in which women and their families faced frightening, tragic, and emotionally painful circumstances. Both the statistics and heart-breaking stories of the women who faced tragic third trimester abortions, which ended, desperately wanted pregnancies, belie Nikkel's claim. I'll assure you that those 474 women and their families never thought they would have to make such a decision. I'll assure you too, that but for the grace of God go you and I.

Those statistics make clear that most abortions performed using this or any similar procedure are performed in the second trimester before viability. I am proud to support Roe vs. Wade, which gives women the right to decide about terminating a pregnancy, based on their own set of religious and moral values, in the first or second trimester for any reason. I also support women who decide that for them, second trimester abortions are unacceptable.

Finally, Nikkel is wrong to compare the ongoing and genuine theological and medical debate about when life begins with the blatant inexcusable racist behavior by white men in our past that was used to perpetuate racism. Such comparisons are erroneous, exploitive and should never be invoked in this debate.

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