

# The Making of an Activist

Category: Abortion

written by Jennifer Caputo-Seidler | June 4, 2019

As a medical student, I was covered by my mother's health insurance plan (thanks, Obama!). At that time, however, her (my) insurance carrier and my university's health system were in the midst of renegotiating their contract—and therefore my insurance was not accepted at the university-affiliated gynecology practice. In need of a pap smear and a refill of my birth control prescription, I turned to Google and found there was a Planned Parenthood clinic within walking distance of my apartment.

Until then, all I knew about Planned Parenthood was that they performed abortions. But the clinic was nearby and accepted my insurance, so it was the logical choice. At my first visit, I experienced high-quality care and even got my birth control refilled right in the office, saving me a trip to the pharmacy.

I continued to use Planned Parenthood for my gynecological care for the next four years. Every time I went for an appointment, I had to walk past antiabortion protestors gathered on the sidewalk. At that particular clinic, the group was small—typically, from three to seven protestors, depending on the day. They carried posters displaying photos of near-term fetuses, and yelled at me not to kill my baby and that Jesus loved me.

I wonder how horrified they would be to learn that their actions were the root of my pro-choice activism. They didn't convince me that abortion is murder or that Planned Parenthood profits from selling fetal tissue or any of the other mistruths promoted by those who are anti-choice. What they convinced me of was that no one deserves to be yelled at, publicly criticized, or shamed for seeking medical care.

Since then, I've been a dedicated pro-choice advocate. I've boarded a bus at 6:00 am to drive five hours to the state capitol to voice my opposition to a bill that would require parental consent for abortion. I've stood in the blistering Florida sun, rallying as part of the #StopTheBans national day of action in response to legislation that restricts access to abortion in multiple states. I donate monthly to Planned Parenthood and to Emily's List, an organization that helps pro-choice Democratic women run for office.

My experiences as a patient seeking health care during those formative years of my medical training set me on the path to being an advocate for access to reproductive health care, including abortion.

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