

The Children Not Frequently Mentioned

Category: Abortion: Then and Now

written by Wynne Morrison | August 7, 2022

I held her hand. We weren't quite twenty years old. I wasn't sure what decision I would have made, I'm still not. All I knew was that she was the one whose opinion mattered in this moment. Today it was her choice, and the most I could do was try to be there for her.

The doctors and nurses walked us through what to expect. We weren't the only ones in the clinic that day, and they had the routine down. And, yes, there were people outside shouting and holding up pictures. Her boyfriend came as far as the waiting room; he deserves credit for that. We were all so young, and it's probably no surprise their relationship didn't last.

At the end of the procedure, the suction canister held what looked like a small amount of blood. Not even visible tissue. A potential life, a future human being not yet formed, but with all the instructions there to make an individual. An individual who would have been loved.

I think about it a lot. I'm sure she does even more than I do. I imagine it's almost never an easy decision – the moral weight of it on top of the usual fears about the medical world. The road diverged, and this was the path she needed to follow.

Decades later, we each have our own children, now grown. We have learned to accept that they make their own choices that we can't control. I recently read an article written by an anti-abortion activist who made the point that she would have been aborted as a fetus if her mother had the option. I understand how she feels. There are so many choices, so many coincidences, that lead to any of our lives – it's hard to imagine that we could simply just not have been.

Yet, if my friend had not made the choice she did that year, chances are that the children she eventually had, when older and married, would be the ones that would never have been born. How many of us exist only because of such decisions without even knowing it? Our mothers lost a pregnancy, or perhaps chose to end one, and we came later. There are probably so many more than we know. So many possibilities.

Yes, an abortion means that one particular future child will never be born. That is not something to take lightly. Yet, if that child is born, there are likely other potential future children who will never exist. You could argue that society would be better off if women have agency to have their children when their families are best able to care for them.

Many decades have passed since my friend's abortion. Each year when I receive her holiday card, I note how happy her family looks. And now her children are beginning to have children of their own.

Wynne Morrison
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania