

## President's Message

This has been quite a year. The news has been filled with examples of people using violence: wars, police-citizen confrontations, abortion, people with serious illnesses or even just suffering from unhappiness taking their lives, and other acts of violence. The ties to the structural issues of racism and poverty we include in our Mission Statement have been prominent in many of these situations. The need for more visible witness to the worth and dignity of each human life has been very clear.

Many of these situations have long histories. The conflicts and terrorism in the Middle East reflect a long period of rising tensions and injustices affecting a number of communities in the area. In the United States, the heritage of enslaving Africans and committing genocide against Native Americans provides roots for today's situations such as the shooting of unarmed minority citizens. Some call nonviolent interventions ineffective because they may not quickly resolve dire situations without loss of life but don't make the same demands of violent interventions which usually result in extending cycles of violence rather than providing any genuine solution.

We are about a better way that is beyond ideologies and that bridges differences in faith understandings. This way is rooted in seeing other humans as of equal value to ourselves. The ways of violence wind up treating humans as objects to achieve political or other goals. Innocent civilians almost always suffer and die, and this is excused through such euphemisms as "collateral damage." Our call for nonviolent approaches to issues across the board is rooted in our refusal to dehumanize anyone or attempt to diminish their intrinsic worth.

More and more people are seeing the futility of the way of violence. We seek to network people working on alternatives to violence and ways to build communities where each person will be respected. The numbers on our lists are growing as people seek to join with others in rejecting the way of violence and going beyond the customary divisions in our societies.

An exciting new development is the emergence of regional gatherings where people across political and religious lines can meet together to explore how we can work to reverse the cycle of violence. We co-sponsored the Life/Peace/Justice Conference in Philadelphia in March organized by our friends at *Life Matters Journal*, which was an energizing event. Next year, Consistent Life will be co-sponsoring another regional consistent life ethic conference featuring Sr. Helen Prejean, C. S. J., known for her ministry against the death penalty, and Abby Johnson, the former Planned Parenthood Center Director who is now a pro-life activist. We will look for other opportunities for regional conferences, and we already have volunteers interested in organizing conferences in the Pacific Northwest and in the Dayton, Ohio, area.

The need is great, and there are many opportunities. However, it has been an enormous challenge to make the most of these opportunities when we have been operating without staff and with a shoestring budget. So we need people and organizations to pitch in and help us with the work, and we need you to share with us whatever financial resources you can. Let us partner together to build a world where the worth and dignity of each human life is respected and we increasingly move away from the ways of violence.

-Bill Samuel, President

To support Consistent Life's work, go to <http://www.consistent-life.org/join.html>.

## DEFENDING LIFE, PEACE, AND JUSTICE

By John Whitehead



CL Board, members, endorsers, friends, and other attendees of the Life/Peace/Justice Conference.

Activists from diverse ideological backgrounds, including much of the Consistent Life Board, gathered this spring to celebrate and explore the consistent ethic of life at the Life/Peace/Justice Conference. The day-long conference took place March 29 at Villanova University outside Philadelphia and was co-sponsored by Consistent Life along with our friends at *Life Matters Journal* (the main conference organizer) and Consistent Life member groups Democrats for Life of America, Feminists for Nonviolent Choices, the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians, and Secular Pro-Life, among other organizations. Several Consistent Life Board members spoke at the conference.

Aimee Murphy, the Executive Editor of *Life Matters Journal* and a member of the Consistent Life Advisory Board, opened the day's events with her introductory talk. She called for activists to come together to ensure "each and every human being has the rights he or she deserves" and commented that "both sides of the political spectrum have a kind of two-faced philosophy" when it comes to defending life, selectively defending some lives but not others.

### Insurgent Politics

Following the introductory talk came a panel discussion, "Be Consistent: Life & the Political Sphere," featuring Kristen Day of Democrats for Life of America, Jason Jones of conference co-sponsor I Am Whole Life, and Mary Meehan, a regular contributor to the *Human Life Review*, to present Democratic, Republican, and independent perspectives on defending life. Brian Lohmann moderated the talk.

In her remarks, Kristen quoted former Democratic senator and vice president Hubert Humphrey, who said "The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." This understanding of the government's moral responsibility to protect all people animates Democrats for Life's work and efforts to correct what Kristen sees as the institutional Democratic Party's current inconsistency in not defending the unborn.

Kristen spoke of the need to support pregnant women and women dealing with abortion's aftermath, noting that partisan divisions can interfere with such support: no Senate Republicans co-sponsored the Pregnant Woman Support Act, a part of the Affordable Care Act that provides funding to support pregnant women and parents; meanwhile, 205 Congressional Democrats voted against a bill promoted by Republican Chris Smith (NJ) to help women dealing with postpartum problems. *Cont. on page 6...*

## 40: A Film Review

By Kelsey Hazzard

The *40* film is a documentary that examines the pro-life movement 40 years after *Roe v. Wade*. It features interviews with dozens of pro-life leaders, including yours truly. But in case that isn't enough to persuade you to see it, here are four more reasons (and I'll try to be as objective as possible!):

### 1. You can bring your pro-choice friends to see this movie.

Does *40* have an agenda? Well, it's distributed by an outfit called Pro-Life Champions, so obviously the answer is "yes." But that agenda does not saddle the film with cheesy narratives. Nor does the film caricature pro-choicers. And the many post-abortive women featured in the film are portrayed with great respect and compassion. (*40* both begins and ends with Yvonne Florczak-Seeman, who has had five abortions.)

### 2. This movie busts all the stereotypes.

Pro-life women? Check. Pro-lifers of color? Check. Non-Christian pro-lifers? Check. Young pro-lifers? BIG check. Rebecca Kiessling of *Save the 1* remarked that "*40* is destined to become the premiere film for educating youth on abortion." I agree and would add that youth are also doing a great deal of the educating.

### 3. This movie makes the case for life compassionately and effectively.

The *40* film is equal parts historical documentary—where the pro-life movement has been, where we are, and where we're going—and abortion debate primer. Everything from "my body, my choice" to the rape exception to "safe, legal, and rare" is addressed. Not bad for a film that runs less than 90 minutes!

### 4. This movie is going to save lives.

Throughout the film, various interview subjects speak directly to any pregnant women who may be watching. Whoever is speaking, the message is consistent: "The pro-life movement is here for you. We can help." This message is reinforced by the many non-activist mothers who share their personal stories of choosing life. When I attended the screening of *40* in Washington, D.C., after the 2014 March for Life, director John Morales said that if the film saved just one life, all his hard work would be worth it. I'll be shocked if it's just one.

*Kelsey Hazzard is president of Consistent Life member group Secular Pro-Life. This piece originally appeared in Life Matters Journal 3 (3).*

*For more information or to order a copy, go to <http://www.the40film.com/>.*

## Would Nonviolence Work on Nazis?

By Rachel MacNair

While it took time to realize the extent of the Nazis' brutality, the night of November 9-10, 1938, gave intense warning that Jews were in great danger. Hundreds of synagogues and thousands of businesses were attacked with sledgehammers and several dozen Jews were killed, in what became known as Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. People around the world were shocked.

Beyond words of outrage, one obviously necessary action to protect people and to protest most strongly was for countries to take in Jewish immigrants. U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt asked Congress to allow those already in the U.S. on visas to stay; it would be inhuman to return them. But he didn't ask for the quota to be raised to allow more in. In May of 1939, the transatlantic liner *St. Louis* with 937 mostly Jewish passengers set sail from Hamburg with permission to land in Cuba. The permission was revoked, and all but 28 were denied entry. They begged for entry into the United States as they passed Miami and were denied. Most were sent back to Nazi Germany. After Kristallnacht, Brazil actually *added* an immigration requirement of a baptismal certificate dated before 1933, a Christian document no Jew would have.

The question of whether nonviolence works with people as vicious as the Nazis runs up first against this basic point: at the beginning, when the problem was clear enough and the numbers of people killed were in the dozens rather than the millions, the nonviolent approach needed was simple, clear, and insufficiently tried.

But while it's all very well to point out that things should be nipped in the bud, what can be done when things have in fact gotten out of hand?

When the Nazis took over Denmark, Danes organized a Freedom Council. Though there was some sabotage, the Council found through experience that massive nonviolence worked better. When staging strikes brought more bloody action from the Germans, workers would go to work but then leave early, claiming the curfew made them need to tend to their gardens.

The most dramatic and clearly successful part of the Danes' resistance to the Nazis was the rescue of Danish Jews. The Nazis arranged to start arrests at 10 PM on Friday night, October 1, knowing that Jews were likely to all be home for Rosh Hashanah. But the Danes got a warning that this was the plan. They sent word around so quickly that all the Jews went into hiding in hospitals, people's homes, and other places.

So a German order on October 2 said all non-Jews must turn Jews in. Organizers decided to send the Jews across the lake to Sweden, which the Nazis had not yet reached. During the night about 7,200 people – almost all the Jews of Denmark – were smuggled onto anything that would float. *Continued on page 5...*

## Feminists for Nonviolent Choices Engages Community

By Janice O'Rourke

## Sister Helen Prejean and Abby Johnson to Speak at 2015 Conference

By Lisa Stiller

Consistent Life endorses Sr. Helen Prejean, C. S. J., an advocate against the death penalty, and Abby Johnson, a pro-life activist who was once director of a Planned Parenthood Center, will speak next year at the first of a new series of regional conferences co-sponsored by Consistent Life. The conference will be held February 14, 2015, in Austin, Texas, at St. Edwards University.

In addition to Prejean and Johnson, the conference will feature Jason Boone, Coordinator of the Peace and Justice Network, Mennonite Church USA, who will lead a workshop. There will be two workshop sessions in the morning, with three to choose from during each session.

After a lunch break, we will reconvene to hear our main speakers, ending with a time for questions and discussion. The conference is still in its formative stages, so workshops are in the process of being set up, but we are planning on interactive and participatory workshops.

We invite groups and individuals to help us by becoming conference co-sponsors. Sponsorship includes recognition in the program and an opportunity to have a table at the conference.

We are hoping to keep costs extremely low: student rates will be about \$10; for others, attendance fees will be about \$25-45 on a sliding scale. More information and a link to registration will be coming up in November 2014.

If you have any ideas for conference workshops (all will be addressing life issues), any thoughts about the conference, or you would like to help out with the planning (people in Austin would be greatly appreciated), please contact Lisa Stiller, Consistent Life's conference coordinator, at [koffeenut@yahoo.com](mailto:koffeenut@yahoo.com).

We hope to make the conference extremely accessible to all, including students. Also, there is a possibility of an informal event Friday evening for people in Austin and people coming to Austin for the conference. More information will be available as planning unfolds: watch our Peace and Life Connections e-newsletter.

Our hope is that we will proceed to hold regional conferences in other parts of the country. If you would like to see a Consistent Life regional conference in your area, please contact us at [koffeenut@yahoo.com](mailto:koffeenut@yahoo.com).



To celebrate Women's History Month and engage the Rochester, New York, community in discussion about a critical health issue, Consistent Life member group Feminists for Nonviolent Choices sponsored a five-day series of events on the Sexual Objectification of Women and Girls during March 12-16. Over 50,000 people in the seven-county Rochester area were exposed to a problem that the American Public Health Association considers a hidden epidemic in our culture. The Association concluded that sexual objectification of young girls contributes to multiple health concerns, from poor self-image leading to eating disorders and cutting behavior to risky sexual behavior and potential vulnerability to human sex trafficking.

The series started with a compelling interview by journalist Evan Dawson of radio station WXXI of two of the leading authorities on the issue, Melinda Tankard Reist, author of *Big Porn, Inc.: Exposing the Harm of the Global Pornography Industry*, and Mary Rose Somarriba of *Verily*, a magazine that refuses to Photoshop its images of women. Ms. Tankard Reist pointed out that children as young as seven years old are exposed, through common mistakes that children make on a computer keyboard, to pornographic images of adults and children engaging in behavior that is highly inappropriate, including graphic violence against women and girls. The pornography industry targets these children as potential customers for the multi-billion dollar porn industry. Both brick and mortar and online retailers also engage in showcasing unrealistic body images and inappropriate clothing to young children and their parents. The online Target ad in which a model who was wearing a bathing suit for teenagers was airbrushed to such an extent that the natural shape of her body was deformed to suggest super-thin thighs is one recent example. Social media and its pervasiveness among middle and high school students propagates a competitive drive to chase an elusive and unattainable body image. This pressure leads to eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia and self-mutilation, as well as risky sexual behaviors.

The lively radio discussion was followed by a detailed presentation to community leaders at the Susan B. Anthony House luncheon. Representatives from the Center for Youth, the Rochester Police Department, the

Gang and Sex Trafficking Task Force, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Victims; local middle and high school educators; mental health practitioners and others in the medical fields; college and university professors; and others dialogued with Ms. Tankard Reist about the impact of sexual objectification and the pornography industry on our society. They also discussed practical ways we can fight against these powerful profit-motivated forces in our culture.

The theme of exploitation and sexual objectification and how our community can begin to “counter the culture” was continued in a community art exhibit featuring local and international artists held at the Brainery, a learning center in Rochester. Twenty artists including painters, musicians, dancers, and photographers engaged over 100 attendees in an evening wine and cheese reception on Saturday, March 15.

Melinda Tankard Reist led a book discussion and signing at Writers and Books on Sunday, March 16, where community members could engage in a deeper discussion about ways to counteract the influence of sexual objectification. The discussion was based on her books, *Big Porn, Inc.*, and *Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualization of Girls*.



*Feminists for Nonviolent Choices members at March 16 book discussion. Front row, left to right: Rachel Peller, Carol Crossed, Hannah Murphy, and Kelly Vincent-Brunacini. Back row, left to right: Mary Dahl Maher, Kathy McQueen, Meg Smerbeck, and Janice O'Rourke. Not pictured: Audrey Sample. Not at the book discussion: Toi Clawson, Tanishia Johnson, and Joann White. Rachel and Carol are also CL Board members.*

The final event, the film *Sexy Baby*, about the sexual objectification of girls and women, which was screened initially last November by the American Public Health Association, was rescheduled to April 2 following the inclement weather of March 12. In spite of the postponement, the screening at the Little Theatre was crowded with people from the community who wanted to learn more about the insidious nature of this problem. A panel discussion followed the film to talk about resources for formulating solutions.

*This is the fifth year that Feminists for Nonviolent Choices, a pro-women and pro-life organization, has sponsored a March series about women and cultural issues which demand community attention. For more information on Feminists for Nonviolent Choices go to [www.ffnvc.org](http://www.ffnvc.org).*

*For more information on the series topics, contact the Director of Projects and Special Events for Feminists for Nonviolent Choices, Hannah Murphy, at [hannahmariamurphy@gmail.com](mailto:hannahmariamurphy@gmail.com).*

## Protests against Nuclear Weapons in Kansas City



*Spray-painted entry sign at the new federal nuclear weapons facility in Kansas City, Missouri.*

American weapons of mass destruction attracted a notable protest this past summer. Carl Kabat, 80, a priest in the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), a Consistent Life member group, spray-painted the entry sign of the National Security Campus in Kansas City, Missouri, at 10 a.m. on July 4. This is Carl's fourth consecutive “interdependence action” in July at the so-called campus, the new home for the Kansas City Plant, where the National Nuclear Security Administration this year will begin making and procuring non-nuclear parts for nuclear weapons (the controversy over this plant received considerable attention in Consistent Life's Peace & Life Connections e-newsletter). In a phone call to friends at 10:03 a.m., Carl said, “This damned plant has got to be closed somehow, some way.” He chose red paint to signify blood, he said, and after painting was sitting alone by the huge sign, awaiting arrest.

The new \$687 million facility replaces the Kansas City Plant at Bannister Federal Complex, where the federal government has documented about 900 toxins—the legacy from radioactive and other substances used at the old plant. The plant is managed and operated by Honeywell Federal Manufacturing & Technologies, which produces 85 percent of the non-nuclear material used in the United States nuclear bomb arsenal. The Kansas City Plant makes parts such as wiring, fuses, guidance systems, security devices, and the trigger for nuclear weapons.

About noon on July 4, lawyer Henry Stoever took pictures of Carl's handiwork, but by 6 p.m., when his wife Jane went for more pictures, the sign was under cover. Both Stoevers were warned to leave or be charged with trespass.

In a statement Carl prepared before an earlier July 4 resistance action, Carl said, “One of our Minuteman III's could kill approximately three million of our sisters and brothers.... We have perfected the ‘art’ of killing and burning.... Four Minuteman III's could kill 12 million of our sisters and brothers.... The opinion of the International Court in 1995 states that nuclear weapons are a Crime Against Humanity!”

In 1980, Carl became one of the first Plowshares, following Isaiah's mandate to “beat swords into plowshares.” He has spent about 17 years in prison for resisting nuclear weapons. In his short phone call this July 4, Carl signed off, “God bless! Peace on you!”

*This article was adapted from a piece written by Jane Stoever that appeared on the website of Consistent Life member group Oblates of Mary Immaculate—Justice, Peace, & Integrity of Creation.*

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They all made it safely to the Swedish shore. Then word came that the Swedish king, being afraid of the Nazis, was refusing to give them asylum. But Niels Bohr, winner of the 1922 Nobel Prize for physics, had Jewish ancestry on his mother's side and had escaped to Sweden already. He sent word to the king that if the refugees were turned in to the Nazis, he would turn himself in with them. The king immediately allowed the refugees in.

The Bulgarian king and parliament, on the other hand, went along with the Nazis and proposed a "Law in Defense of the Nation" that would basically outlaw Jews. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church and many Bulgarians flooded them with letters not to pass it, but they did anyway. The plan was to begin by deporting 20,000 Jews. But on May 24, 1943, there was a huge demonstration. It began with a rally at a synagogue in Sofia and turned into a large march. The march was broken up by clashes with the police. But government officials were alarmed, and the deportations never happened. The cattle cars remained empty. The saving of Bulgarian Jews was a massive nonviolent action by the Bulgarian people.

Nonviolence in defense of Jews also occurred in the very heart of the Nazi empire: "Rosenstrasse" was the name of the street in Berlin where this remarkably effective protest happened. The Gestapo picked up Jewish men in Berlin who had non-Jewish wives. The wives demonstrated outside their husbands' prison and demanded their release. They were persistent. Gestapo headquarters were close by. A machine gun could have wiped the women out. They never fired. Instead, the government negotiated and let the men go. This wasn't a trick; most were found to be still alive at the end of the war. (This protest is dramatized in the movie *Rosenstrasse*).

These are a few examples; many more could be cited—we haven't even started on the trouble that the Nazi leader Quisling had in Norway. And of course thousands more Jews were saved by brave souls through an underground railroad.

But the consistent-life mind will naturally be curious about more than war and genocide. How did it build up into such a monstrosity?

The first victims were disabled people and unborn children. Jurist Karl Binding and psychiatrist Alfred Hoche published a book in 1920 called *Life Unworthy to be Lived* which helped set the ball rolling. Euthanasia of disabled people was rampant in the hospitals of Germany before the concentration camps were set up, and eugenics that kept the "undesirable" people from reproducing had advanced to widespread abortion by that time as well. The medical profession was well practiced in violence by the time the principle was extended to the idea that being Jewish (or Roma/Gypsy, or homosexual, or a member of another group viewed as inferior in Nazi ideology) constituted a disability to which the same "medical treatment" of death should apply.

For years now, the Nazis have served as a lesson about opposing violence: protecting the innocent and vulnerable—unborn and recently born children, people with disabilities, targeted minority groups of any kind—is not only inherently worthwhile but is crucial to preventing further violence. These vulnerable people can easily be the first people to go in what becomes a much larger conflagration. Wars and genocides don't come full-blown but start out small and grow. This adds urgency to the already crucial point about the importance

of opposing the killing of any human being: if the most vulnerable, who can easily be the first people killed in violent campaigns, are protected, then the rest of us are safer too.

*This article is adapted from Rachel's forthcoming book: Religions and Nonviolence: The Rise of Effective Advocacy for Peace, to be published by Praeger in 2015. A full book on the topic is currently being written by Kelly Rae Kraemer, to be entitled But What About Hitler?*

## Important Court Case for Consistent Life Groups

Consistent Life member groups are currently participating in a case to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, signing on in support of a friend of the court (*amicus curiae*) brief filed in the case *Young v. United Parcel Service*. The participating member groups are All Our Lives, Democrats for Life of America, and Feminists for Nonviolent Choices. One of the attorneys on the brief, Thomas C. Berg of the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, is also on the Board of Democrats for Life.

Peggy Young is a UPS employee who, when she became pregnant, was denied the accommodation of carrying lighter parcels. Having lost her legal case in lower courts, she is now appealing to the Supreme Court.

The amicus brief argues that Young's treatment violates the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, which states that "women affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions shall be treated the same for all employment-related purposes, including receipt of benefits under fringe benefit programs, as other persons not so affected but similar in their ability or inability to work" [US Code 2000e(k)].

Workplace discrimination against pregnant women can be an incentive for abortion, and the brief explicitly notes this, commenting that "economic pressure is a significant factor in many women's decision to choose abortion over childbirth. Protecting the ability to work can increase true freedom for women, promote the common good, and protect the most vulnerable among us."

The case will be argued before the Court on December 3, 2014. The decision will be handed down at the end of June 2015 at the latest.

*Read member groups' own statements on the Young case: All Our Lives (<http://www.allourlives.org/all-our-lives-joins-amicus-brief-in-pregnancy-discrimination-case/>) and Democrats for Life (<http://wholelifedemocrat.com/2014/09/12/friend-of-the-court-brief-of-pro-life-organizations-supporting-strong-protection-for-pregnant-workers-from-discrimination/>).*

# Guns & Abortion

By Carol Crossed

Two of the most contentious issues in New York are gun owners' rights and abortion rights. Out of 4,600 registered political action committees in 2008, the National Rifle Association is ranked 14th with \$650,000 going to Republicans. Abortion rights EMILY's List is ranked 5th largest with \$6,500,000 going to Democrats.

Despite the approximately 20 mass shootings and 1.1 million abortions annually in the United States, their supporters fight any restrictions on what they consider their constitutional rights. For instance, Colorado has no gun registration law. In 2012, Democratic senators and congressional leaders voted to allow abortions even if the unborn child was the "wrong" gender.

Both the gun and abortion industries claim a need for self-protection. NRA ads, increasingly marketed to women, use abortion rights language: "A gun is a choice women need to know more about and be free to make. The NRA is working to ensure the freedom of that choice always exists." Eighty-five percent of women gun owners claim their purchase is for self-defense. But the Violence Policy Center reported in 2001 that women are more likely to be a victim of a homicide with a handgun than to use a handgun in a justifiable homicide. For every woman who used one in self-defense, 101 women were murdered with a handgun.

Likewise, the abortion rights lobby claims abortion is needed for rape or life endangerment, when only 1.1 percent of women who have abortions cite using abortion for those reasons.

In the meantime, both guns and abortion are available with few restrictions to justify these extreme and rarely used cases. And the primary victims of gun violence and abortion are often minorities and the poor.

Supporters consider guns and abortion symbols of American freedom and claim even reasonable limitations will infringe on their privacy. Planned Parenthood opposes spousal notification and even parental consent laws for a teen's abortion. The gun industry fights gun restrictions in private venues.

We hear that abortion and shootings will happen whether legal or not. Indeed, sources say legislation may not have prevented the 2012 Aurora, Colorado, massacre killer from stockpiling on the black market. And this same market will find an abortionist for the right price.

But laws prohibiting the taking of life are teachers and can change attitudes about moral behavior. In order to reduce violence, can we not abandon unmitigated individualism and identify logical limits to "freedoms" that take life? As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The law cannot make you love me, but it can keep you from lynching me."

*This piece originally appeared in the Rochester, New York, Democrat & Chronicle in September, 2012.*

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Mary spoke about her background working for Senator Eugene McCarthy during his 1968 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination and his 1976 independent campaign for president; these experiences gave her a "taste for insurgent politics." As a consistent life advocate, she is disappointed by both political parties and outlined ways that consistent life activists could be politically involved.

Mary mentioned the importance of lobbying politicians, both incumbents and candidates, on life issues; town hall conversations or meetings after events such as the March for Life or anti-war gatherings provide opportunities for this work. She also emphasized the importance of supporting politicians who are consistent on the life issues, regardless of their party. Beyond advocacy on specific life issues, political engagement by consistent lifers can improve the larger political culture, Mary argued, by bringing civility and a love of people to political action.

Jason spoke next, describing how his personal experiences drew him to defending life. He came from a poor background, growing up in Section 8 housing as one of several children born to a single mother. The turning point in Jason's life came in the spring of 1989 when his pregnant girlfriend, contrary to both her and Jason's wishes, was pressured by her father into having an abortion. Going through this devastating experience made Jason resolve to end abortion.

His understanding of threats to life was further broadened by army service that took him to Southeast Asia, where he witnessed the developing world's poverty. A particularly powerful experience was seeing a boy in the region of the Thai-Cambodian border dying of malaria—and the boy's father was powerless to help him, just as Jason was powerless to protect his own daughter from abortion.

Shaped by such experiences, Jason went on to found I Am Whole Life, which serves to encourage people on the political right to support the consistent life ethic. The organization is based on beliefs such as the dignity of every human being and the importance of helping people by nongovernmental means while nevertheless working to build a more humane economy.

During the discussion period, the three panelists talked about various methods of consistent-life-ethic-oriented political action, both within and outside the current political system. Notwithstanding their different party sympathies, Kristen and Jason both emphasized the value of working within existing parties—Jason commented that both Democrats and Republicans should be involved in the pro-life movement. Mary acknowledged the value of working to convert the existing political parties to a more consistent-life-ethic-friendly stance but also emphasized the importance of independent, non-partisan candidates.

## Becoming a Defender of Life

Following this initial panel discussion, the conference had an impromptu change of speakers. Pro-life activist and Consistent Life endorser Abby Johnson had been



Jewels Green with CL Secretary John Whitehead.

scheduled to speak next, but sudden health problems prevented Johnson, who was pregnant at the time, from coming to the conference. In her place, pro-life activist Jewels Green spoke. Like Johnson, Jewels went through a dramatic conversion to the pro-life cause, having both had an abortion and worked in an abortion center. She began her talk by commenting on Abby Johnson's absence, praising Johnson for putting her health and that of her unborn child first. Jewels commented that Johnson was doing the "most pro-life job of all." (Johnson recovered and her son Carter was born in August.)

Jewels recalled being raised by a single mother who believed access to abortion was integral to women's rights. Her personal abortion experience came when she found herself pregnant as a 17-year-old high school drop-out. Despite being initially supportive of keeping the baby, Jewels' boyfriend pressured her to have an abortion. She was so reluctant to do so that she refused to go through with it on her first visit to the abortion center. Two days later, however, she returned to the center and had the abortion.

The emotional aftermath of this experience was devastating. Jewels “knew I killed my baby,” and this knowledge produced guilt, shame, and a perception of worthlessness. “If I could be swayed to devalue the life growing inside me, what value did my life have?” she asked. This turmoil led to a suicide attempt.

Her wrenching experience did not make Jewels pro-life, however. Not long after her abortion, Jewels marched for abortion rights in Washington, D. C., in April 1989 (in a notable example of an inconsistent defense of life, she recalled marching against Operation Desert Storm soon after that). She began working at an abortion center in her hometown of Allentown, Pennsylvania—as she explained her thinking in retrospect, surrounding herself with abortion rights supporters might convince her that abortion was acceptable. This rationale notwithstanding, working in the abortion center brought its own traumatic experiences.

One of Jewels’ responsibilities at the center was to sterilize surgical instruments in the autoclave room. While working there, she witnessed post-mortem examinations of the remains of unborn children and even sometimes helped with these examinations. The experience gave her nightmares and prompted her to speak to the center’s executive director. The executive director’s counsel was surprisingly blunt: despite the general use of euphemisms such as “the products of conception” at the center, the executive director explained their work by saying “What we do here is end a life” and making clear that Jewels had to be able to handle that in order to work at the center. Jewels could, at least for the time being, and returned to work (although she had to take temporary leave from the autoclave room).

The change in Jewels’ views of abortion did not come until years later, in 2011, by which time Jewels had obtained a graduate degree, married, and had three sons. The critical piece of information came from a friend who was serving as a surrogate mother and kept in touch with other surrogates. Through her friend, Jewels learned of a surrogate whose contract had included the measure of genetic testing of the unborn child. When the child tested positive for Down’s Syndrome, the surrogate was offered full payment of her contract in return for having an abortion, which she did.

Learning about this abortion and the commodification of children that it involved finally convinced Jewels that abortion was wrong. She discovered Abby Johnson, whose story was so similar to her own, read Johnson’s book, and eventually contacted her. Jewels praised Johnson’s organization for abortion workers who wish to leave their profession, *And Then There Were None*, and the love and support the group provides to such workers. As she put it, the group is the pro-life equivalent of the peace slogan, “What if they had a war and nobody came?”

Jewels emphasized the importance of what she called “casual evangelization” for the pro-life cause, which involves making friends with people on the other side of the abortion issue and presenting the pro-life perspective in a peaceful, non-threatening way. In contrast to this peaceful approach, she offered some vivid memories of extreme, violent anti-abortion activities. During her abortion center work, she remembered wearing a bullet proof vest for a time in the aftermath of the killing of two center workers in Massachusetts. She also remembered having to evacuate her center when a group of anti-abortion activists stormed it. Jewels drew a pointed conclusion from these experiences: violent or aggressive tactics only galvanize abortions rights supporters: they do not win converts and do not even stop abortions—when the protesters stormed the center she worked in, all the abortions planned for the day still took place. Violence is not the answer, she said.

Jewels’ speech was followed by brief statements by conference co-sponsors, including Consistent Life. Consistent Life Board member Lisa Stiller spoke and shared her own personal experience: she had once been pressured by her ex-husband to have an abortion, under threat of taking away custody of her children. Although she successfully resisted this pressure, the experience did involve a traumatic visit to an abortion center. Lisa commented that today “we live in a culture of death” and spoke of how Consistent Life worked against this culture.

The co-sponsor statements marked the end of the general morning session, after which the conference broke up into multiple talks and panel discussions. Several Consistent Life Board members spoke on panels: Carol Crossed spoke about the feminist tradition of nonviolence, while Rob Arner and John Whitehead appeared on panels with Consistent Life endorsers Shane Claiborne and Rev. Patrick Mahoney about Christian perspectives on the consistent life ethic. Cecilia Brown of the

Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians and Kelsey Hazzard of Secular Pro-Life were members of a panel about secular perspectives on life issues. Kristen Day appeared on a panel with Ben Jones of Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty to discuss their work making the cases against abortion and the death penalty to liberals and conservatives, respectively.

Also speaking at the conference was Kirk Bloodworth, a former death row inmate who had been found innocent through DNA evidence. Another speaker was Bobby Schindler, whose sister was Terri Schiavo, a disabled woman who died after being denied nutrition. Schindler now works against euthanasia and on behalf of people with disabilities. The afternoon sessions also included group discussions about advocating for the consistent life ethic within religious communities, the political sphere, and college campuses.



*Consistent Life Board members gather at the Life/Peace/Justice Conference. Seated, left to right: Carol Crossed, Mary Rider, and Lisa Stiller. Standing, left to right: Richard Stith, Bill Samuel, Tony Masalonis, John Whitehead, and Rob Arner. Not at the Conference: Jim Balmer, Rachel MacNair, Rachel Muha, and Nick Neal.*



*CL Board member Rob Arner with CL endorser Shane Claiborne.*

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**Consistent Life**

**OUR MISSION**

We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, the death penalty, and euthanasia.

We believe that these issues are linked under a 'consistent ethic of life.' We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected.

**OUR PURPOSE**

We serve the anti-violence community by connecting issues, building bridges, and strengthening the case against each kind of socially-approved killing by consistently opposing them all.

**DISCLAIMER**

Consistent Life is a network of groups and individuals who agree on our mission statement and join together in working for the consistent life ethic. While some member groups focus on a particular strategy, the Network's Board supports all non-violent strategies to protect the unprotected, whether education, legislation, civil disobedience, prayer, or service. Although as an organization we do not necessarily endorse all viewpoints expressed in our newsletter—we recognize that there is a diversity of views within our constituency on many topics—we appreciate all points of view on how to advance the consistent life ethic.