



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 24, 2011

## Herman Cain Gets into Trouble on Abortion

No, it comes down to is, it's not the government's role — or anybody else's role — to make that decision [about abortion]. Secondly, if you look at the statistical incidents, you're not talking about that big a number. So what I'm saying is, it ultimately gets down to a choice that that family or that mother has to make. Not me as president. Not some politician. Not a bureaucrat. It gets down to that family. And whatever they decide, they decide. I shouldn't try to tell them what decision to make for such a sensitive decision.



... The government shouldn't be trying to tell people everything to do, especially when it comes to a social decision that they need to make.

Not surprisingly, this created a firestorm in pro-life circles, prompting Cain to issue a clarification. Writes *The New American's* [Dave Bohon](#):

Insisting that he had understood CNN's Morgan to be asking whether as President he could "simply 'order' people to not seek an abortion," Cain clarified his belief that the President "has no constitutional authority to order any such action by anyone. That was the point I was trying to convey."

Given Cain's past pro-life activism and current policy assurances, I'm willing to give him the benefit of any doubt. It also seems obvious, however, that being pressured into addressing an unpopular truth caused Cain to massage his answer — and he didn't do a very good job of it (the one downside to not being a professional "politician"). Yet the incident does provide the opportunity to delve into abortion, the rhetoric and the reality.

While I don't believe Cain is one of them, there are those who claim pro-life status while also maintaining that abortion shouldn't be criminalized. They use the "I'm personally opposed to abortion but wouldn't impose that belief on others" argument popularized by former New York governor Mario Cuomo in a famous 1984 Notre Dame University speech. But it cuts no ice. When you advocate allowing the *choice* to have an abortion, it is by definition the pro-*choice* position.

The reality is that being "personally opposed" to abortion doesn't make one unique. There are no politicians campaigning to resurrect the Inca practice of sacrificing children during difficult times to appease the gods; there are no prominent figures giving speeches entitled "How Abortion Brightens My Day." The personal-opposition argument is simply a dodge — and one you could apply to anything. Child abuse? Sure, I'm personally opposed. But if my neighbor wants to mangle his naughty son, well, I won't impose my beliefs on him.

But what of rape and incest? Horrible crimes both, there certainly is pressure to accept abortion in such cases. Yet to do so is to lose the abortion debate. This is because the pro-life position hinges on two



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simple principles:

1. Human life begins at conception.
2. Every human has a right to life.

If we says that it's moral, however, to have an abortion in certain situations, it implies that one or both of the above statements are untrue. And if it's number two that we question and say there is no inherent right to life, then what determines whether a baby may live?

Unlike in Roman times — when a father could kill his offspring with impunity — we now know that a father (or mother) has no right to deny his progeny their lives. And nothing a parent does can change this fact.

This includes committing a crime.

After all, this isn't Middle Ages; if a man commits a crime and eludes the authorities, we don't imprison his son in his stead. Yet today, if a man commits a rape, it's as if we say that it's okay to administer capital punishment to a child thus conceived.

This isn't the reasoning used, of course; rather, the point made is that it's traumatic for a woman to carry a rapist's baby to term. And such a victim deserves the utmost sensitivity and compassion. Having said this, this is a *feelings*-oriented argument. And feelings change with the wind.

Consider, for instance, the [stories](#) of Heather Peterson-Grech and Heather Gemmen Wilson, who both became pregnant through rape. They ultimately decided to have their babies, though, and found that they loved them immensely. Those are feelings, too – beautiful ones

Then there is Irene van der Wende, who [conceived a child](#) through rape and had an abortion.

Then she learned that she had been conceived through rape.

Now she regrets having killed her baby. And those are feelings — painful ones.

The point is that it's hard to find a woman who holds her beautiful newborn and doesn't experience deep feelings of love – regardless of the circumstances of his conception. And when those circumstances involve a heinous crime, it's an example of how God can bring good out of evil. In fact, some rape-victim mothers say that their child has given them a reason to go on.

So is this all very complicated and an example of why abortion should be a personal decision based on individual circumstances? Yes and no — and no. As G. K. Chesterton once said, “Moral issues are always terribly complex, for someone without principles.” Man's feelings seem complex, as they're all over the map, change with circumstances aren't reliable indicators of reality. Yet this is a simple truth, easily grasped. And it's why we don't let crime victims choose their victimizer's punishment; it's why we don't let a person in the throes of grief hurl himself from a tall building. And if feelings must not be the arbiter of whether a baby eight months after birth has a right to life, why should they be the arbiter of whether a baby eight months before birth has a right to life? As for the government, if preventing murder — even the kind that momentarily feels right – isn't its role, I don't know what is.

When we look around us at our husband, wife, son, daughter, father or mother, we ought to ponder how this complex being was once two microscopic cells in a womb — just as so many future husbands, wives, sons, daughters, fathers and mothers are today. May it be as safe a place for them as it was for us.



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