



Written by [Nilai Lee](#) on March 28, 2019

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## How I Got Into Abortion Work, and Then Got Out

*From the print edition of The New American:*

In 1984, I decided to move to Boulder, Colorado, where a girlfriend from a Wisconsin nursing school now lived. I was unfamiliar with the area, and there were no day positions at the local hospital. I was not comfortable with a commute to Denver for night-shift jobs. Then I saw an ad in the paper:

“Nurse needed: Family Planning Clinic-Boulder”

I interviewed and learned that the clinic did abortions. Though an abortion was not something I ever planned to have, I rationalized the deaths of the infants: All the abused babies and children were better off going to heaven than being born and suffering if they were unwanted.

I was raised a Christian and still considered myself one, mind you, but I attended church rarely. Sanctity of life wasn't emphasized when I was young, and I remember a time in high school when I casually asked a close Catholic friend who had told me she was pregnant if she would have an abortion. She immediately answered, “No! That would be murder.” I was a bit taken aback, and dropped the subject.

At my job interview, the abortion doctor questioned me closely. I assured him that I was comfortable with abortion, so I was hired, and my training began.

A nurse taught me how to do gynecological exams to estimate the size of the uterus. In referencing the size of the fetus, we used terms such as tangerine, orange, and grapefruit. (It is always important to depersonalize the life you intend to end.) Later, I learned how to assist the doctor during early “procedures” up to 10-12 weeks. I opened sterile instrument packs, handed the doctor instruments, and turned on the suction, making sure the cover was on the suction jar. I also held the hands of nervous patients. After the “procedure” I would take the covered jar to a small room where a person waited to examine the pieces of the tiny person to be sure he or she was all there, nothing left behind.

After a few weeks, I was taught how to assist with late cases, 13-24 weeks. Those took three days total to finish. After dilating the cervix for two days, on the third day, I would hand sterile instruments to the doctor so that he could withdraw amniotic fluid from the uterus and replace it with a concentrated urea (salt) solution, which I was responsible to mix. He said that the solution caused the placenta to separate from the uterus, resulting in the fetus dying. The truth was, the babies likely suffered terribly in the salt solution, their fragile skin and lungs being burned. I would check with a doppler ultrasound for a fetal heartbeat. When it was gone, the doctor would start to remove the baby, usually in pieces.

An early troubling situation occurred when a married, successful couple came to visit the clinic. They wanted a child, but they found out at 16 weeks that she was carrying twins and were not sure if twins would fit into their lifestyle. That visit bothered most of the workers, but it was no trouble for the



Unplanned Movie Still



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doctor, who aborted the couple's healthy babies a couple weeks later.

After a couple years, I believe the Holy Spirit began to nudge me.

I was dating a man whose mother asked where I worked. I said "a women's clinic." She answered, "How wonderful it must be to be around all the mothers and babies." But it wasn't wonderful. Eventually, I left the clinic to work in a Newborn Intensive Care Unit. There I saw babies who were nearly the same size as the ones I saw in steel pans at the abortion clinic.

However, my heart didn't change overnight. Time was necessary to change my years-long belief in a woman's "right to choose." Slowly, I grew very ashamed at what I'd done, even though I knew I was forgiven in Christ. After I left Boulder, I never told people what I had done there. I got married, and we had three beautiful daughters. I did not tell them my story either; I just made sure they were raised to be pro-life. It felt very lonely to keep that dreadful secret.

Occasionally I would search online for a support group for former abortion workers, but never found one. Then a few years ago, another person told me I should reach out to Abby Johnson, who was a former abortion clinic director who held retreats for ex-abortion workers. So I did. I found a small, generally invisible group of people who are passionately pro-life. We have seen abortion from the inside, and we know the truth.

As my daughters each reached the age I felt appropriate, I then told them about my past.

In the last couple years, I have gathered my courage and decided to speak publicly. I even had a walk-part in the movie *Gosnell*, and I play my real-life role as an abortion nurse in a small but pivotal scene in the anti-abortion movie *Unplanned* (shown, Wilkinson at right).

I thank God for not giving up on me.

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