



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 21, 2011

Herman Cain Offers Confusing Comments on Abortion Issue

Cain began the interview solidly enough, answering Morgan's query, "What's your view of abortion?" by declaring: "I believe that life begins at conception, and abortion under no circumstances."



But then things began to go badly. Feigning disbelief at Cain's response, Morgan baited the rookie politician, wondering, "No circumstance?" adding, "... because some of your fellow candidates qualify that — rape and incest, and so on. Are you honestly saying that ... if one of your female children, grandchildren was raped, you would honestly want her to bring up that baby as her own?"

Cain told Morgan that "it's not the government's role or anybody else's role to make that decision." Using rhetoric that pro-life observers said made him sound like an abortion activist, Cain added that "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. Whatever they decide, they decide. I shouldn't try to tell them what decision to make for such a sensitive issue."

Sensing that Cain was floundering, Morgan countered with an insulting reference to his past, saying that "you can't hide behind the mask — if you don't mind my saying — being the pizza guy. You might be President of the United States of America, so your views on these things become exponentially, massively more important. They become a directive to the nation."

To which Cain responded: "No, they don't. I can have an opinion on an issue without it being a directive. The government shouldn't be trying to tell people everything to do, especially when it comes to social decisions they need to make."

Here is the relevant segment of the interview:

{youtube width="480" height="360"}eQXRr9GiV3o{/youtube}

The next day Cain found that his ill-advised comments had quickly become the latest topic of discussion on talk radio and pro-life blogs, as well as a talking point for at least one GOP candidate. He quickly sent out a [statement](#) in an attempt to "clarify" his comments and assure potential supporters that he is solidly pro-life.

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."

As to his position on the issue of abortion, Cain assured his supporters that he is "100 percent pro-life. End of story." He added that if he were elected President, he would "appoint judges who understand



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the original intent of the Constitution — judges who are committed to the rule of law [and] know that the Constitution contains no right to take the life of unborn children.”

He also promised to oppose government funding of abortion. “I will veto any legislation that contains funds for Planned Parenthood,” he said, adding, “I will do everything that a President can do, consistent with his constitutional role, to advance the culture of life.”

But Cain's pro-life statement might have been expected to kill the issue, but it did not do so. In a hastily prepared [fundraising e-mail blast](#) to potential supporters, GOP presidential candidate and former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum claimed that he was “absolutely floored” by his opponent’s comments, while trumpeting his own pro-life bona fides. “After acknowledging that he believes life begins at conception, Herman Cain went on to say it’s up to the individual to decide whether or not to kill an innocent unborn child,” wrote Santorum in the fundraiser. “That means that while he believes it is a life, he doesn’t consider it a life worth fighting for. As the author of the legislation that banned partial birth abortions forever, I am stunned that someone running for the Republican nomination for president would have this position.”

Santorum argued that Cain’s position on abortion “is similar to those held by John Kerry, Barack Obama, and many others on the liberal left. You cannot be both personally against abortion while condoning it — you can’t have it both ways. We must defend the defenseless, period.”

Craig Robinson, editor in chief of the GOP’s [Iowa Republican](#) news and commentary site, took up the cudgel against Cain, writing that his “position as a candidate is that of pro-abortion activists. The government has no right to tell a woman what she can or cannot do with her body. The difference is that a pro-life individual believes that child inside the womb is a life with inherent rights and that the mother should not be allowed to infringe it’s right to life.”

Kathleen Gilbert of [LifeSiteNews.com](#) noted that in an interview with [John Stossel on Fox News](#) the previous week, Cain had made similar mixed-signal statements on abortion. Gilbert recalled that “Cain responded to an initial question about the abortion issue by saying that he was ‘pro-life from conception.’ Then, after Stossel asked if there were any cases where abortion should be legal, Cain responded enigmatically, ‘I don’t think government should make that decision.’”

Cain immediately tried to clarify his position, emphasizing that “people shouldn’t be free to abort, because if we don’t protect the sanctity of life from conception we will also start to play God relative to life at the end of life.”

Admitting confusion as to Cain’s actual viewpoint, Stossel asked: “If a woman is raped, she should not be allowed to end the pregnancy?” To which Cain responded: “That’s her choice. That is not government’s choice. I support life from conception.”

Continued Stossel: “So, abortion should be legal?”

Answered Cain: “No, abortion should not be legal. I believe in the sanctity of life.”

Mystified by Cain’s confusing answers, Stossel responded: “I’m not getting it. I’m not understanding. If it’s her choice, it’s legal.”

Countered Cain: “No. I don’t believe a woman should have an abortion. Does that help clear it up?”

“Even if she is raped?” continued Stossel.

“Even if she is raped or is the victim of incest, because there are other options,” Cain mercifully



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concluded.

Gilbert recalled that in a speech at the Values Voter Summit in Washington in early October, “Cain drew loud applause with his ‘no exceptions’ message about abortion.” Declared Cain to the conservative crowd: “When you run for president and you move into the top tier ... you get this bull’s-eye on your back. And people take pot shots left and right. But I don’t want you to be unclear about where I stand on certain things.... So let me just set the record straight. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I believe in life from conception, period, no exceptions.”

Most pro-life leaders seem willing to give Cain the benefit of the doubt, chalking up his misstatements to political inexperience. Pro-life journalist Steve Ertelt of [Lifenews.com](#) wrote that Cain “appears to be genuinely pro-life but is clearly not thoroughly well-versed or comfortable on discussing the issue of abortion. His past history spending money on pro-life advertisements and railing against the racist nature of Planned Parenthood and its abortion agenda suggests he clearly opposes abortions and wants to protect unborn children under the law.”

But Ertelt warned that the presidential hopeful would need to become “more articulate on explaining those pro-life principles and doing so in a way that does not involve using typically ‘pro-choice’ phrases such as government not making decisions for women if he wants to be taken seriously as a possible Republican presidential nominee by the majority of Republicans and Americans who are pro-life.”

Thumbnail photo of Herman Cain: screen-grab from his interview with Piers Morgan



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