

# CANADIAN CENTRE FOR BIO-ETHICAL REFORM

CHRISTMAS 2006

***“You guys aren’t so scary once you get past the orange fence.”***  
*–Pro-choice student turned pro-life, University of Calgary*

Dear Friends,

The aforementioned student, Sean, made that statement to me shortly after getting into my car. I was driving him home following a U of Calgary Campus Pro-Life (CPL) get-together where there had been much joy and laughter during the dinner conversation. Sean had come to the event because he saw the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP) in the spring and fall of this year. He decided to get involved with the club.

On October 16 and 17, CCBR helped CPL do GAP and saw, yet again, tremendous results. What was impressed upon me most was the impact that *time* has in moving people’s hearts to the truth.

Sean said he spent at least three hours at both the March and October GAPs. He said he listened to debates between GAP volunteers and inquisitive students. He later wrote this:

**...after listening for an hour to various debates [it became clear] that the pro-choice front is riddled with fallacy.** They often used arguments that directly avoided or weakly attempted to deflect the SLED arguments. The fallacies that were so evident in their arguments are indicative of a very narrow and underdeveloped stance, which is therefore a symptom of an individual’s selfish feelings being hastily and carelessly



▲ Brendan (right) debates with an unconvinced young woman at the March 2006 GAP. Sean (middle) listens to their interaction.



▲ Day 1: Jojo (centre) debates with three young women as his father, Pastor Amor Ruba (far left), listens in and volunteers by recording debates.

rationalized. This, I think, is a very good indicator that **pro-life is morally, emotionally and rationally superior to the pro-choice stance and that most pro-choice proponents are merely in denial of what they know and feel to be morally right.**

Praise God for Sean’s new convictions!

Back in March 2005, CPL had stood with GAP signs off campus (because the university, at the time, was censoring them). A student who had seen that demonstration came by this most recent GAP. What were her thoughts one and a half years later? She told GAP volunteer Josh that she had thought a lot about abortion in the almost two years since first seeing the signs. She said, “Before I would have just said I was pro-choice.”

Josh asked if she understood the comparisons being made and she responded, **“Now I totally understand. I didn’t get it before. That is a very valid argument and I totally understand why you’re doing that.** I think you’re doing a good job of portraying that.” Then he inquired about her thoughts on abortion and she shared, **“Before I probably would have considered abortion for myself, but now I don’t think I would consider that as an option.** I might not be able to impose my will on others though.” This young woman is most certainly thinking. She has moved closer to pro-life convictions and

we are confident that the truth, over time, will continue to beckon her deeper.

Our intern, Michéla, had an encounter with yet another person who had seen GAP in the past. Michéla's warmth, empathy, and good listening skills made her a perfect candidate to interact with the wounded woman.

The woman, whom we'll call "Carrie", approached Michéla at the end of day two. She began by asking all the common questions, with a particular focus on children being born into difficult circumstances. Several times throughout the conversation, she remarked, "Okay, I understand. It's just hard." She said, "I'm a lesbian, and I had an abortion four years ago. I understand where you're coming from, and you're right, but I also understand where they," pointing to the pro-abortion protesters, "are coming from." She explained, **"My boyfriend threatened to push me down the stairs and kill the baby if I didn't have an abortion."**

She began to cry. "All my life, all I wanted was to get married and have kids, and now I'll never have that chance." Carrie saw the GAP display last year and said she felt that she needed to approach us this year. "It's been four years, and I'm reminded of it every day and regret it. **No one understands the pain, not even my [pro-abortion protester] friends over there. It hurts.** I remember every detail about that day [of the abortion]. It was my child." Amid more tears she added, "I'm glad you came, but it's hard." Michéla asked if she was handling things okay and Carrie responded, "Most of the time, no." Carrie recognized that she needs closure and healing, but said she isn't ready yet to



▲ Day 1: Jojo and Michéla debate with a student (right).

obtain it. Please pray for her.

Later in the day I spoke with "Melissa," a pro-abortion protester wearing a sash that said "pro-choice." She motioned for me to come to the area of the fence she was standing at. Then she began to cry and said, "This is really difficult. It's hard to see this display." She explained that she was a very empathetic person and cared about everyone and felt bad that people like her, who were pro-choice, were being portrayed as supporters of slavery. I explained that our message was *not* that pro-abortion people support slavery; instead, it is that the mentality which dehumanizes one group of people to justify mistreating them, as with slavery, is comparable to the mentality that dehumanizes the unborn to justify *killing* them.



▲ Day 2: I (centre in pink toque) talk to a crowd.

We spoke for a while and I refuted every point she made. She said, for example, that she didn't want to force her views on others. I pointed out that she "forces her views" on people all the time when she declares that things like rape and beating toddlers are wrong.

A man, "Bill", was quietly listening to our exchange so Melissa looked at him and said, "What do you think about all of this?" He replied, "I agree with them; I'm opposed to abortion." She asked why and he said he didn't think it was right to take a human life simply because it's inconvenient to someone.

She raised similar points with him that she had raised with me. He said to her "If my neighbor decided that it was okay to kill me, I sure hope my other neighbors would speak out for me!" As Melissa's dialogue moved from me to Bill, I left the discussion. A short while later Brendan spoke with the two of them. When he saw

Melissa's "pro-choice" sash he said, "I guess I don't need to ask your position." She responded, **"Actually, I'm kind of digesting things right now."**

After speaking with them for a short while Brendan was interrupted by a student. Brendan began to answer his questions, addressing his responses to the student as well as to Melissa and Bill. Just as Sean had listened to discussions at the March GAP, Melissa and Bill listened to Brendan expose this student's flimsy and constantly shifting justification for abortion. We hope the impact on Melissa is as powerful as that on Sean.



▲ Day 1: Matt (in blue on right) debates with students.

CPL President Matt spoke with a young woman who asked about rape and other issues. By the end of the conversation she said, **"I have to go home, and give this some serious thought—to sit down with my boyfriend and talk about 'what-if?'"**

Jojo spoke with a student who, after asking sincere questions, determined that our arguments made sense. Jojo also spoke with two people who had very different reactions to the comparisons between abortion and historical atrocities. A man from Rwanda agreed with the comparisons. A Jewish student, however, was angered by them. He was a cultural relativist—he believed that no culture was any better or worse than the next. He abandoned that view pretty quickly, however, when Jojo pointed out that someone can't be a cultural relativist *and* say that the Nazi culture was wrong.

Josh spoke with a student named "Peter." After half an hour of discussion, Peter said, "You are taking flames for two days. I commend you guys for taking the heat, being here, and standing up." Later on, he came back, **"I just went for lunch, and I couldn't stop thinking about what you**

**said, and the pictures, and you're right.** I commend you guys for being here, and standing up for what you believe in, even when it isn't easy."

The conditions GAP volunteers were prepared to endure for the sake of their message spoke volumes to students. People couldn't help but notice that these pro-lifers had to be *really* committed to stand for long hours in freezing temperatures, with snow falling, while being subjected to verbal abuse from some students. In fact, a young man who had listened in to several discussions told me, **"I want to say I really respect you guys."**

Josh had a conversation with several young men for almost two hours. They missed a class in order to talk to him! While they left still "pro-choice," they most certainly were provoked to deep thought. In fact, they rebuked pro-abortion demonstrators who were getting students to sign a petition to get GAP removed from campus. One of the guys said, "Tell them what your petition actually says! It doesn't say you think their display is ugly and gross, because they think the same thing—they [the pro-lifers] don't love these pictures either....it [the petition] says you want the display to be taken down and removed! They have every bit as much right to be here as your group does."

I briefly spoke with two of these guys as they were leaving and they said, **"I just want to thank you. You've been putting up with suck for two days and that can't be very enjoyable. I respect you for standing up for your beliefs. We need more people that are like that."**

I recently read a great quote about respect from one of my favourite authors, Matthew Kelly:



▲ Day 2: Josh (left) talks with a group of young men.

...I have constantly asked myself: *What do I respect?* And at a deep level, I think there is only one thing I truly and deeply respect over and over again in time, and that is virtue. **I respect virtue.** Virtue inspires me. Virtue in other people challenges me. Virtue raises me up. Virtue allows me to catch a glimpse of what is possible. Virtue gives me hope for the future of humanity.

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Our culture has reduced all virtue to the universal virtue of niceness, which is no virtue at all. People comment, 'Oh, she is such a nice woman' or 'He is such a nice man,' which in essence very often means that this man or woman never says or does anything to upset the person making the comment, never ruffles any feathers, never challenges anyone to rise to greater virtue. In a way this person is a nonperson who is admired for being so—for not getting in the way. I hope nobody who knows me ever describes me as 'nice' in this context. I hope to upset the people around me occasionally, to rattle them from time to time, **to challenge them in ways that make them feel uneasy...**

**Love makes demands upon us. To love someone means that from time to time you will be required by that love to tell someone something that they would rather not hear.**

And sometimes that love will compel us to *show* someone something they would rather not see. When Michéla asked a student walking by GAP what she thought about abortion the woman replied, "**I don't know now that I've seen this.**"

In time, people will come around. Past experience reveals that. Our job is to start the thinking process. On that note, it is fitting to leave you with a prayer by Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero that my sister e-mailed me months ago. Here it is, in part:

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete,

which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. ... No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about:

- We plant seeds that one day will grow.
- We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
- We lay foundations that will need further development.
- We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.
- We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen to that. Blessings upon you and your families as you celebrate the birth of *the* Messiah. Merry Christmas!

*Stephanie*

Stephanie Gray

*Jojo*

Jojo Ruba

*Brendan*

Brendan Huang

*Michéla*

Michéla Barter



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