

CCBR: Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform

Making Abortion Unthinkable

January 2008

The power of imagery is that it crosses all language barriers.

Dear Friends,

Since last year, Jojo and I have been participating in monthly teleconferences where we dialogue with other CBR affiliates and associates from **all over the world!** You are part of something much larger than one country's efforts to make abortion unthinkable. You are part of a world-wide movement to save lives by exposing the injustice of abortion. Here is a look at the profound impact images have had beyond our border:

Togo, Africa

In his October 2007 report, pro-life activist Albert said that **4 women decided not to have abortions** after being shown the truth of what it does to the unborn.



▲ A GAP sign Russian pro-lifers translated and redesigned for usage in their country.

Slovakia

In September 2007, pro-lifers placed 500 graphic abortion billboards across Slovakia and 100 posters in the Bratislava transportation network. These showed the 11-week aborted baby, just like the one on the side of our pro-life truck driven here in Canada. Shortly thereafter, the Health Ministry in Slovakia rescinded a law proposal that was to force all hospitals to provide abortions. **Even the Slovak branch of Planned Parenthood attributed the government's decision to the pro-lifers' graphic campaign.**

Not only that, but the pro-lifers' initiative caused a huge public debate—**print and television media showed the images** and reported about the campaign. Media even invited the pro-lifers to talk shows. As

their representative, Jana, said, “CBR became a major opponent of the IPPF [International Planned Parenthood Federation] and by that a leader of the pro-life debate in Slovakia.”

To see the Slovakian pro-lifers' website, go here: www.pravonazivot.sk

Russia

In October 2007, pro-lifer Vadim reported the following:

“**We have lead our first three exhibitions of the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP) in Russia.** We travelled to the city, Great Novgorod, and displayed the signs at the Novgorod Humanitarian University, the Novgorod Medical Institute, and the Novgorod State University... We have a set of tremendous testimonies from students and benevolent responses from the mass-media.”

The display can be found on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9m7fZgbpJBQ To see the Russian pro-lifers' website, go here: www.abortu.net

Macedonia

In November 2007, Gregg Cunningham, the director of CBR US, received this message from a pro-lifer in Macedonia:

“In Macedonia, abortion is legal in almost every situation. Until the 3rd month of pregnancy a woman can go to the hospital to have an abortion as though she were going to the dentist—no questions asked. After the third month there is a commission that almost always approves abortion. ...I frequently discussed with my friends that abortion is not right, etc., but those conversations were always amongst us. Then, we were surfing the internet and came to your site [abortionNO.org] and we decided that we should do something. Then we started the campaign: We created a poster, leaflet, stickers, and a blog. In our material we point to your website and we use the picture of the gloved hand holding an aborted fetus on one side, next

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to a healthy good-looking girl on the other side, with the slogan “Abortion is Murder.” Then we flooded Skopje ...with that material. On the blog scene there is big debate on this issue and it seems that we are winning.”

The courage of these Macedonian pro-lifers is much-needed. By circulating CBR’s website and images, they are saving lives. In fact, CBR recently received an e-mail from a Macedonian man who said that when his wife got pregnant, they considered abortion. But when he saw abortion on CBR’s website, they changed their minds. **Last November, their baby girl was born!**

Sweden

In October 2007, Mats, the director of CBR Sweden and the chair of CBR International, gave this exciting report:

“Two weeks ago, a young Latino man contacted me. His girlfriend was pregnant and she had made up her mind to have an abortion. He was totally devastated and wanted his child. I showed him a fetal-development video and [CBR’s graphic abortion film] “Choice Blues.” I asked him to show it to his girlfriend, which he did. **And as a direct result of watching ‘Choice Blues’ she changed her mind and decided to have her baby.**”

To learn more about CBR Sweden, go here: www.abortnej.se

We at CCBR are encouraged by the amazing things happening throughout the world. And other pro-lifers in turn are encouraged by our work, which you help make possible. In fact, last summer Varro, who is doing pro-life work in Estonia and Finland, e-mailed me this message: **“Keep up the great work in Canada. I just learned about you and your wonderful efforts at the end of last week. And other people in Estonia are inspired by your example—my wife included.”**

Thank you for helping us help others. Happy new year,

Stephanie

Stephanie Gray, on behalf of the CCBR team

P.S., You’ll notice an enclosure with this month’s newsletter. We decided that every few months it would be good to not only report on the fruits of our work, but to also *equip* you with information you can bring to conversations.



▲ L–R: Jojo, Hannah, Stephanie, and Brendan in December at a Calgary bowling alley—part of Staff Fun Day. ☺
▼ Shortly after that excursion, we hired Josh Nugent. He is interning as the RCC Director and is pictured below driving the truck (with Jojo as passenger).



Note: Quotations may have been edited for grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and/or length. Boldface font represents added emphasis unless specified as being in original text.

Other pro-life initiatives that use CBR’s graphic visuals:

Czech Republic: www.svobodovolby.cz

Finland: www.lopettakaatappaminen.tk

Mexico City: www.sialavida.org

Norway: www.abort.no

Poland: www.nieaborcji.pl

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Kites, Abortion, and Redemption

Friendship. Omission. Betrayal. Redemption.

These are just a few words that capture the heart of Khaled Hosseini's novel, The Kite Runner.

This story, like any good tale, serves at least two purposes. First, it *interests* the reader with its constant turns, its suspense, and the unexpected. It also interests the reader with the relationships and emotions experienced by the characters; the reader is able to relate to these. Second, it *instructs* the reader by conveying the psychology of human behaviour. It illustrates that in life there exists both truth and lies, right and wrong (and that consequences flow from each). It teaches about the reality of life: how some things are fair while others are unfair, and that there is both struggle and triumph.

For those who wish to enjoy reading Hosseini's book, rest assured: I won't reveal the plot of The Kite Runner here. This essay is designed to address the second purpose of stories, that of instruction. In particular, I will use it to shed light on abortion. That may seem like a stretch: How is a tale about two Afghani boys related to abortion? Well, it's not. But the universal lessons behind it are:

Lesson #1: When we do wrong, we tend to blame the reminder of our misdeed rather than ourselves.

In The Kite Runner, the reader learns of a character's shocking act of betraying a friend. The guilty party is overcome with remorse, haunted by images and memories. He feels as though his life is being drained out of him. He desperately wants relief. But he refuses to verbalize what he has done. He refuses to repent to the victim. He refuses to seek help with healing.

Every day he is burdened by his dark, dirty secret. The weight of the memory of his mistake feels like it is suffocating him, so he tries to forget it; he tries to go on living like it didn't happen. But it *did* happen. And his friend's presence is a reminder of that. So he hurts his friend, hoping his friend will hurt him back—hoping his friend will give him the punishment that his innate sense of justice craves. But his friend doesn't, and his pain grows all the more. Yet again, he lashes out at his friend. Why? If he regrets what he did in the first place, why add insult to injury? For this reason: his friend's innocence is an *agonizing* reminder of his own guilt.

When we are surrounded by darkness, we close our eyes at exposure to light.

So it is with abortion. How often do we live in misery, silently suffering with regret and pain? Whether our guilt is direct (we committed abortion) or indirect (we *permitted* abortion), we know, intuitively, that we have done something terribly wrong. We have violated our humanity. But we're convinced that, if we admit to this wrongdoing, ensuing pain will be unbearable.

How often, then, do we refuse to take ownership of our guilt in order to make the pain go away? If someone, or something, reminds us of what we've done, the pain resurfaces. Therefore, having found some semblance of comfort in denial, we blame our pain not on our past choices but on their reminders. That may give temporary relief, but the source of our pain remains.

It doesn't have to be this way, as the final lesson reveals.

Lesson #2: In trying to win the approval of another, we may harm the innocent around us.

The jacket of Hosseini's novel mentions this facet of his story: "Twelve-year-old Amir is desperate to win the approval of his father." The choices Amir makes in life are driven by that yearning. Amir, like most of us, has good intentions. But isn't it possible to long for one thing and, in the process, harm another?

Think of a pregnant teenager who seeks her boyfriend's love; or a college student who desperately desires her parents' approval; or a wife who craves her husband's affections. In any of these situations, an unexpected pregnancy might seem disastrous, and abortion may be viewed as the means to maintain, or even achieve, one's relationship goal. Does this legitimize wrong behaviour? Certainly not. Having particular hopes does not justify killing innocent children who appear to interfere with those desires; however, this understanding does shed light on why people behave as they do: Most people make wrong choices not because they desire evil, but because they want one thing and, in the process of gaining it, commit wrong behaviour.

Lesson #3: Doing what's right often isn't easy, but do it anyways.

The Kite Runner illustrates this principle by showing a person who behaves wrongly because of the difficulty of doing what is right. Later, it shows a person who does what is right, knowing it will be very difficult. What follows from the former is short-term gain coupled with long-term pain. What follows from the latter is short-term *pain* coupled with long-term *gain*.

How often, with abortion, is someone choosing a procedure that seems *easier* than carrying through with a pregnancy, only to be filled with a lifetime of regret? Even if no regret is felt, an innocent life is nonetheless taken.

When deciding what to do in a crisis pregnancy, one mustn't ask what seems easiest; instead, one must ask what *is right*. Only with that question will the unborn be guaranteed protection.

Lesson #4: No matter what we've done, there is hope: We *can* change for the better.

In The Kite Runner, a wise old mentor, knowing of another man's dark past, offers this insight: "There is a way to be good again."

So it is with abortion: there *is* a way to be good again. Whether we had an abortion, or helped a friend obtain one; whether we referred for abortion, or remained silent when a human being's life was on the line; whether we performed abortions or promoted them—we were wrong. We cannot change the past, but we *can* change the present and the future through how we deal with that past. Denial or acknowledgement? Lies or truth? Suppression or release? Long-term pain or lasting peace? There is a way to be good again.

What we do now is obviously too late for the victims of abortion, but it is *not* too late for those who remain living. We don't help the living by staying in denial. We help the living by doing for them that which, deep down, we wish we had done for those in our past.

In the final days of his life, the mentor in The Kite Runner shares this wisdom: "[T]his is what I want you to understand, that good, *real* good, was born out of... remorse... [T]rue redemption is... when guilt leads to good."

With every act of betrayal, with every moment of inaction that should have been action, with each occasion to speak that was replaced with silence, with every mistake, there is before us an opportunity—to find the redemption that awaits us.

*Written by Stephanie Gray, Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform
January 2008*