



**Karen Hartman, Arizona State Leader**

**“The pain of my abortion caused me to hate myself. ... My children suffered as well. My college-age daughter had nightmares after I told her.”**

Silence was my companion for nearly 14 years until I found the courage to face the truth. Flashbacks to the day of the abortion filled my heart and mind. I was in a daze. I was not a scared teenager but an ignorant 40-year old married adult. I did not want to be there, but I rationalized that it must be okay because it was legal. Fear overtook reason. I was told that I might die in childbirth. How could we afford a child with one in college, and what about retirement? All the reasons were selfish.

At the abortion facility, I cried tears that came from deep within and that would not cease. I was asked, “Why are you crying?” My sobbing kept me from answering, but I wondered why they didn’t know. “Is it the protestors?” “The police?” “The needle?” Each time I nodded “no.” Finally, they asked, “Is it the termination?” They never used the word “abortion.” I nodded “yes.” They replied, “We are here to help you,” but they never asked me, Are you sure you want to go through with this?”

Later, I realized the abortion did not solve anything; rather it created new and long-lasting problems that will always be with me. The pain of my abortion caused me to hate myself. I felt alone, crying inside, wanting to seek help but not knowing where to find it. I was angry at myself, the media, the government, the church, and the relatives who had fed me lies that abortion was a safe and easy answer to an unplanned pregnancy. The worst was that I believed a lie and allowed the unthinkable, the most unnatural thing for a mother to do. I allowed my child to be ripped from the protection of my womb. As I saw my baby’s remains being carried away in a

cold metal container, I realized with horror it was too late. I could never reverse this “choice.”

Abortion will be with me forever. I am still reaping the consequences of this decision. My children suffered as well. My college-age daughter had nightmares after I told her. I, too, suffered nightmares. My second daughter found out without my knowledge several years later when she was in college. She was angry and asked with tears streaming down her cheeks, “Why did you kill my brother?” We, of course, did not know the sex of the child, but I think of him as a son and named him Adam James. The pain of explaining an abortion to a daughter is indescribable.

I have a third daughter who is now 13, born four years after my abortion to fill my “empty arms.” Some call her an “atonement child.” I call her a gift from God. Abortion not only kills a child, it hurts the mother, the family, and in turn hurts our society. For this reason, I can no longer be silent. I must be a voice for the voiceless. Please help me to drown out the lies by speaking the truth.

*Karen is a volunteer at Wickenburg Pregnancy Resource Center and president of Wickenburg Right To Life. She is a mother of three daughters and has three grandchildren. She enjoys horse riding in the desert that surrounds her home with her border collie who alerts her to rattlesnakes. She is a member of Calvary Baptist Church.*



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