Sexual Assault, Maternal Health, and Fetal Conditions

Michelle Buenrostro · Maria Ault · Robert N. Rust

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Robert N. Rust
Let's deal with the question of difficult medical cases. The ethical framework of secular life, how does it address pregnancies involving rape or serious threats to maternal health or life-limiting fetal conditions? Where do you distinguish your personal moral conclusions from what public law should or should not require?

Michelle Buenrostro
Yeah. At Secular Pro-Life, we don't have an official stance on rape. We know that pro-lifers on both sides of the aisle have strong feelings about it. Some say that the moral, one's moral worth should not depend on the circumstances of their conception, and others feel that it's more about bodily integrity and understanding the gravity of sexual assault and being a survivor. So as an organization, we remain neutral and invite both kinds of pro-lifers to continue the conversation.

Michelle Buenrostro
Regarding maternal health, pro-lifers generally do not object to procedures, medications, and medical care to preserve a woman's life. A good example is ectopic pregnancy. Even in states with complete abortion bans, you can still be treated for an ectopic pregnancy.

Michelle Buenrostro
And then for life-limiting fetal conditions, we should resist ableist narratives on who deserves to live or what is a valuable life, and instead direct support towards families caring for children that have medically complex needs. Regarding what public law should be, at the bare minimum, I believe that the law should be there to preserve life.

Multiple speakers
Maria, I wanna give you a chance to speak to this question, 'cause you had to deal with it personally. Yeah. So, it was horrific. So the rape was horrific, and it happened not once, but twice in the same night. Because when I actually fought, moved around enough for him to come out, he went back in and finished the job.

Maria Ault
Well, he ended up getting arrested, and I was transported from one hospital to another. I was in the hospital for a total of 20 hours. I had to go through the rape kit, and then I had to prepare for jury. This happened in City Hall of Philadelphia, so I had to go before a jury.

Maria Ault
I would love to talk to women who have been in the position where they're raped and they want to get an abortion because to kill the baby, I'm telling you, it will never take away what happened to the woman. Could I have gotten pregnant? I may have had I not taken the pill that the nurse told me to when I was in the hospital.

Maria Ault

Looking back now, I would never have done that. So I don't know what that would have meant. And I didn't fully understand. So on the importance of coercion, I think that health care should have explained my options and not immediately went to, "Here, take this pill and you won't get pregnant."

Maria Ault

So in terms of I know what it's like to go through court, I know what it's like to — so this is, I'm talking now 28 years later. It will never go away. So to think that killing a baby because you might not want to look at it because you're carrying part of that person, it's always a reminder.

Maria Ault

Again, what I cannot stress enough is that the life inside the woman, that's a separate life than what happened to the woman. When you were saying, Michelle, that support services need to be provided for the women, it's in this case as well, in cases of rape. And so we need to help these women who do get pregnant with the rape.

Maria Ault

She needs intense therapy or help just to deal with the rape and then to carry that. But also to kill an unborn baby, fetus, life — I wanna say life. To kill an unborn life will never justify the rape of the woman. And so that's what my stance is, and that's why I really want to help women who've been raped and to get that out there to people, because in my opinion, it's pro-life or you're pro-murder in my opinion.

Multiple speakers

Maria, thank you for that very heartfelt and very personal testimony. And thank you for speaking up as well and sharing your story. It means a lot to other teenagers. It does. It's not easy at all. It takes a lot of courage. Thank you.

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