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Abortion Leads to Emotional Damage for Men, Too

By: Kathryn Lopez

You might have heard about a "Roe v. Wade for men" by now. It's a despicable matter, but may also be an unintentional opportunity.

On March 9, the National Center for Men filed a lawsuit in a Michigan court on behalf of their headline-maker in a 25-year-old computer programmer, Matthew Dubay, who doesn't want to pay child support to his ex-girlfriend for the baby he says she chose to have. He didn't want a kid, and he wasn't kidding. He wants the "right to choose," too.

The Center argues: "More than three decades ago Roe v. Wade gave women control of their reproductive lives, but nothing in the law changed for men. Women can now have sexual intimacy without sacrificing reproductive choice. ... But men are routinely forced to give up control, forced to be financially responsible for choices only women are permitted to make, forced to relinquish reproductive choice as the price of intimacy."

A "Roe v. Wade for men," however, will only make a messed-up world worse. Dubay and his ex-girlfriend, of course, made a reproductive choice when they engaged in sexual activity.

I'm reminded of a controversial laugh line from comedian Chris Rock: "Abortion, it's beautiful, it's beautiful abortion is legal. I love going to an abortion rally to pick up women, cause you know they are f." The National Center for Men wants that "beautiful" life, no strings attached. Do I really have to offer up courses in Morality 101 and Remedial Maturity for you to know where I'm going with this?

But save for the press guy at the National Center for Men -- and the group's acolytes who subscribed to this illogic -- there is absolutely nothing beautiful about abortion. Aside from the tragedy of a poor child who will someday read terrible headlines about a father who went to great lengths to make clear he wanted nothing to do with her, talk of Roe and men highlights something under the national radar: abortion and its effect on men.

"Roe v. Wade not only takes the life of the unborn child, but it also tempts the natural father to kill off his instinct to protect and provide for his children," says Kevin Burke, associate director of Rachel's Vineyard, a post-abortion-healing ministry of Priests

For Life. "Beneath the legal arguments, we have to ask this man, 'regardless of the circumstances of her conception, your daughter now lives, breathes and walks this Earth. How can you still reject her, and withhold your love and support?'"

That's a personal matter, not a legal argument. But it's also a state of mind the culture of Roe has given birth to. "Because of Roe," as Burke puts it, "children are disposable, the gift of their lives is reduced to a 'legal issue' to be debated and decided."

And it's also a lie.

As Burke puts it: "beneath the detached exterior, men often are suffering from their participation in abortion, and need to grieve the loss of their children."

"Man's innate role as defender/protector/provider to his children -- which I would argue is as biologically intrinsic as that of a mother's need to nurture her child -- is gravely violated by participation in abortion," Burke tells me. "Men do not always recognize the symptoms they experience as having their roots in an abortion decision -- but scratch the surface and you will see it. ... They may struggle to make commitments, to be emotionally present to their current wives and children, to embrace their role as spiritual and moral leader in the home ... deep down they know they compromised that authority when they aborted their son or daughter in the past."

As Burke works with men, though, he's optimistic. "The good news is that with healing men can grow to fully embrace their manhood/fatherhood in a life-giving way that is a blessing to families and communities. When you begin to peel away the layers of the effects of Roe v. Wade on women and men, couples, families ... you see that this is really a community mental-health concern."

None of Burke's talk is meant to hand anyone a victim card, but rather than looking for new ways to put a cultural imprimatur on irresponsibility, now's as good a time as any to step back and take a look at what 33 years of legal abortion has done to the lives it's touched (never mind ended).

In recent years, groups have popped out from under Roe to address the pain women feel in the wake of abortions. One of them, Feminists for Life, says that "women deserve better" than abortion. But -- and here's where Dubay's nonsense narrowly comes in handy -- abortion is not just a women's issue. It's a human issue -- touching women, men and, of course, children. We all deserve better than abortion. And the last thing we need is more Roe-ing.

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