

What If We Can

985 Words

JoAnna Muenks

1st Place Winner

10th Grade

What If We Can

“What” and “if” are two words that when separated are merely meaningless. However, when simply placed together they take on a frightening significance. What if Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered before he took his first breath? Would there have been anyone as bold and as willing to take charge against racism? What if Helen Keller’s mother knew of her disabilities before her birth and never gave Helen the opportunity to prove herself to the world? Without Keller’s experience, how many disabled people would have never felt inspired or hopeful to live out a fulfilled life? What if Mother Theresa had never seen the light of day? How many thousands of people’s lives would never have been saved physically or spiritually without her? What if Abraham Lincoln was never given the chance to lead the combat against slavery? How much longer would African Americans have to wait for the freedom they deserve? What if my own mom had never given me the chance to come to know the unconditional kindness of a best friend or the gentle yet stern love of my father? What if *you* weren’t given the chance to experience the joys of life; taking your first step, falling in love, and having your first child? Abortion not only murders a life, it also destroys the discoveries, opportunities, and joy that those lives could have brought to our world.

Excuses are easy to find and easy to believe. However, when it comes to abortion, there are no excuses; there are only the facts. On the very first day of conception, all human chromosomes are present and the child begins its own unique and individual life. Twenty-two days later, the unborn child’s heart beats with its own blood that usually differs from the mother’s. By the sixth week, the child has begun developing eyes, legs, hands, and a mouth. Fast forward two weeks and the baby has

every organ in place, he or she can kick, and the child is already forming his or her own distinct fingerprints. Just twelve short weeks past conception, the child has vocal chords, can hiccup, and most significantly, has every component necessary to experience pain (Naval Research Laboratory). Thus, when unborn children are aborted past this twelve-week stage, they can feel every last poke and prod—clearly making abortion a horrific and inhumane procedure. In some states, abortions are legal up to twenty-eight weeks old. By this time and earlier, children born prematurely at this stage can routinely survive outside of the womb. These are real children with real personalities that are alive in every sense of the word. The assumption that unborn babies are just a meager glob of DNA that are not capable of experiencing their own individual feelings and pain is absurd. People are entitled to their own opinions, but the truth is the truth and there is no escaping the facts.

“I’ve noticed that everyone who is for abortion is already born.” This quote from Ronald Reagan has a clear message. How can people support this monstrosity when they themselves were fortunate enough to have been born? By making excuses such as the following: “I’m not ready to raise a child;” “This wasn’t supposed to happen to me;” and “It was only a one night stand,” our society is condemning helpless babies that cannot fight for their lives. The ability to carry life is a pure honor, a miracle in itself, and yet potential parents consider it a burden that will hold them back in their own life. However, to terminate a life just so we can proceed exactly as planned without even a gracious interruption of a precious child is inconceivably selfish. Not only does this infer that we think our lives are more important than others, but it also says that we believe that we have the right to decide who deserves to survive and who should cease

to exist. Not even our president holds this much power, and that's for a good reason. If we all had this mentality, the world we know would come crashing down around us. Mother Teresa once said, "We must not be surprised when we hear of murders, killings, of wars, or of hatred...If a mother can kill her own child, what is left but for us to kill each other?" Our merciful God has sent precious life to us, and to say that we have better judgment than the one who created us is agreeably ignorant.

Forty-two million abortions occur worldwide every year—the equivalent of the entire population of both California and Missouri combined (Guttmacher). If terrorists were to invade and annihilate both of these states, the amount of utter devastation would be overwhelming. Yet because of abortion, this same amount of life is taken away from us every year with little notice. This enormous amount of life has so much to offer. Could one of these abortion victims have possessed the intelligence to cure cancer? The leadership skills to be our next president? Or a kind heart to bring inspiration and faith to others? Each and every life is a unique puzzle piece that completes the big picture of life. When one goes missing, the masterpiece will never reach its full potential. Instead, there will be an empty hole left in its place that can never be filled. Unfortunately, the lives we've lost cannot be replaced, but we can advocate respect for life and prevent the further loss of innocent children by eliminating abortion clinics, offering support, and most importantly educating future parents on not only the significance of life, but also the brutality of abortion.

What if we could save lives? What if we could end abortion? What if innocent children no longer had to be victim's of abortion? There's no longer room for "what if's" because *we can*. *We can* change the world and our world can and should respect life.

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Behind the Eyes of a Child

929 words

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2nd Place Winner

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Grade: 11

Behind the Eyes of a child

Tears uncontrollably fall from 6-year-old Sarah's innocent face while her bruised and battered body trembles in fear and discomfort. She has just been taken away by a man in uniform while her mother has been put in the back of an all too familiar squad car. As the car pulls into the unfamiliar parking lot the tears come rushing back because Sarah doesn't understand what she did to get taken away. After many hours of crying and screaming, the little office that she is sitting in is finally quiet while the men and women make calls to numerous people. Sarah awakes to the smell of stale cigarettes and when she looks up she sees a family of four grabbing her few belongings to take her to their home. This tragic story is a frightening reality not only for the children in Missouri but also the adolescents of rural communities such as Osage County. As a community I believe it should be our mission to be aware of the prevalence of these abusive conditions.

According to the Missouri Department of Social Services, April 2010 statistics showed that Osage County had nine incidents reported for that month and fifteen children were taken out of the home. Looking at the region in Missouri where Osage County is located, which includes twenty seven other counties, the numbers increase immensely. The Northeast region reported 926 cases and 1,338 children were taken from their household for that same month. Having the experience to live with two beautiful foster children has enabled me to witness these statistics first hand. They taught me the real meaning of family and I am happy to say that they brought joy into our lives and we did the same for them. I will never forget the look on their faces, broken and scared as they walked into a stranger's home not knowing what was going to happen. Bringing kids in and giving them a safe place that they can come to really shows me how important it is for children to have a healthy family. The time we spent with the children is unforgettable but it saddens me to see that they are only two of the 5,318 children that were taken away from their parents in the state of Missouri in just one month.

After taking him/her out of the home the stresses for the young one does not cease. The strenuous conditions there after make things more complicated for the children involved. Family is irreplaceable and that means finding a right fit of foster parents is a very critical part of transitioning children into a new environment. The number one priority is to accommodate to the needs of the people involved. Caseworkers also have to adhere to the specific guidelines of the department of social services to make sure things go smoothly. Most of the time a young one will be sent to what is called an emergency foster home which is able to take in someone 24 hours a day until the social services can figure out a more long term solution. Another short-term placement is with a family member if any can be contacted. The young kids that we took in were well behaved but we noticed right away that the situation had caused a lot of stress for them. Until a proper home can be found, often times children go from home to home which can cause emotional distress. In 2009 a study of Missouri foster homes showed that the average age of a child in foster care was just below the age of ten and they stayed in an alternative home for an average of twenty four months. During that time, a child's life can be impacted majorly causing behavioral issues later in life.

The most critical point in an abusive situation is to stop it before it gets too far. The only way to do that is to know the warning signs and what actions to take when the signs are present. If only a few signs are present, one should not assume that it is child abuse. Look farther into the situation and take note of reoccurring signs. What to be looking for if you suspect harm is sudden change in behavior and in performance at school, has not received help for physical and medical signs that have been brought up to the parent, always watchful as if something bad is going to happen, and is over compliant or withdrawn. Also, behavior of the parents should be observed. If they show little concern, deny an existence of learning problems, and see the child as worthless or burdensome, take a further look in the family situation. If any of the signs are reoccurring and some or all of them have been portrayed, contact a teacher or department of social services and explain what you have seen. Reporting abuse is a very

bold and courageous thing to do and many people are too scared to accuse someone of that. But if they would stop and think of the children that are possibly being abused, one would realize that they are trying to better a child's life by reaching out to someone for help.

A child's well-being is a very important aspect in their lives, but in an abusive home the importance is lost. It is an essential part of life to notice and care about the people around us, more specifically the children. So, step out of your shoes and look behind the eyes of a child.

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