

I'm LK, 77 y.o., a 50 year resident of Maine, I worked as a therapist and clinical social worker. I'm married and we have 2 children, I have been pregnant 3 times. I joined GRR about 6 years ago because I could see the writing on the wall as to where reproductive freedom was going, and I am talking to you today about an intensely private matter in this very public way because I want to help other people avoid what my family and I went through in 1966.

I was 19 in 1966 and a city college sophomore. I got pregnant while using a birth control method with my boyfriend. I did not want to continue that pregnancy and knew I would do anything to end it, even if it meant dying to make that happen. It was an infuriating, helpless, desperate, humiliating awareness that my body did not belong to me but to Judges and Politicians.

I did know that organized crime was involved with many illegal abortions, that often women got septic infections from unsanitary conditions, and that they were frequently sexually assaulted before the procedures and told never to return. As horrifying as this was, I was still grateful when I got a name of someone 3 hours away in another state and made an appointment. We were told to enter the office building through a side entrance literally in a back alley. We found our way to the second floor to a dentist office in the dark. They did not want anyone to know the building was being used after hours. The person who performed my abortion was an orderly in a hospital. I was lucky, he was not cruel, I was not raped, and I survived. And was able to finish school, to reorganize myself, find someone I loved and wanted to have children with. None of which would have been possible if I had had a child at 19.

If you know about trauma you know that supportive witnesses during or afterward can lighten a traumatic experience. I can share this story, while some of the 1 in 4 women who have abortions cannot, because I had that support. But the secrecy, isolation, stigma and terror take a toll on all of us.

My father was a 4 year veteran of WW2. In his 90s, he started having intrusive memories of the war and talking about them for the first time. I asked him how he managed his fear and these are his words: "I was not afraid for myself. The most afraid I've ever been was when we went for that abortion you had". It is still devastating to me to know he had to live with that fear and that sense of being unable to protect his family. Several years later Roe v. Wade was passed. The trauma we went through was completely unnecessary.

Personal reproductive decisions have no place in state legislatures. Our elected representatives should never be orchestrating their constituents' reproductive lives. It is crazy but that is what is happening in states all over our country. And every year those who believe in reproductive justice and freedom have to fight attempts to make abortion illegal again. It is a huge distraction from addressing the important issues we face as a state and as a nation.

This bill would make a clear statement. Mainers deserve the chance to vote and settle this issue, so those who work here can address the real work of governing.

Respectfully,

Lisa Kushner

Belfast, ME