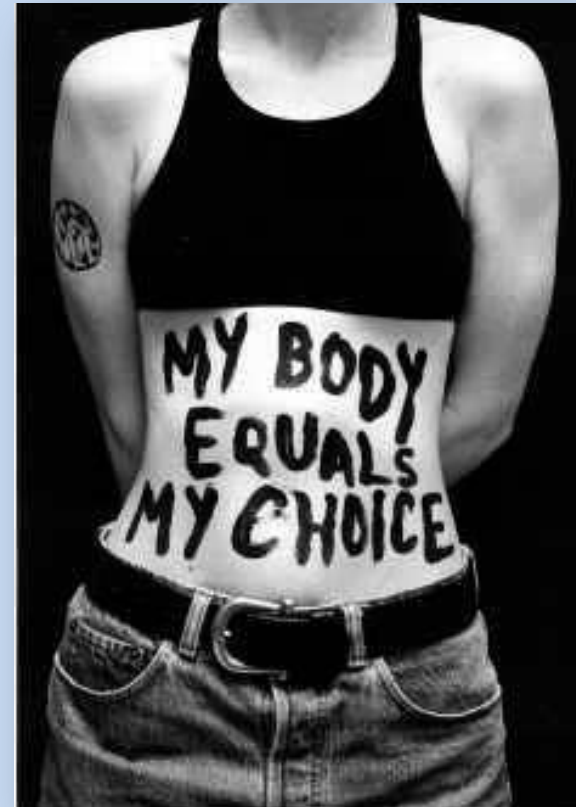


# Are you PRO-CHOICE?



by Shannon Jeffries

# PRO-CHOICE NOT PRO-ABORTION

## What is PRO-CHOICE?

Being PRO-CHOICE does not mean that you are automatically PRO-ABORTION. Being PRO-CHOICE means that you believe that women should have the right to choose for themselves whether or not they want to have an abortion, their method of contraceptives, management of miscarriages, and fertility issues. PRO-CHOICE allows a woman to make these decisions, not the government. These rights have been at stake for many years and continue to be argued at protests as well as in legislature.

Women have been seriously injured and have died because of botched abortions. This has happened in the United States, most typically before abortion was legalized in 1973, but also occurs in countries where abortion is still not legalized. Some women travel great distances to obtain an abortion. Women in Canada would travel to Great Britain or the United States in

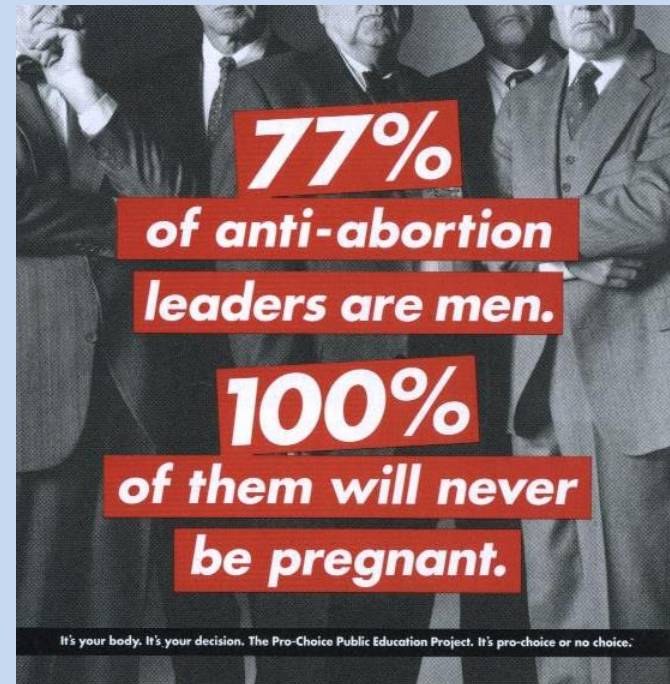
order to receive abortion services because services were so scarce there.

Here in the United States we've had the right to choose for over 40 years, even though it's still a battle that we're fighting.



## What did Roe v. Wade do for us?

On January 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court made a landmark decision. The court ruled 7-2 that a right to privacy under the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment gave the rights to women to have an abortion. This right must be balanced against the state's interests in regulating abortions: protecting women's health and protecting the potential of human life.



## Who is your new Vice President?

Our newly elected Vice President, Mike Pence, has been on a crusade for years to shut down Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood provides contraceptives and abortion services to women. Mike Pence has also cosponsored "personhood" legislation in Congress that could interfere with medical decisions relating to birth control, access to fertility treatment, management of a miscarriage, and access to safe and legal abortion. Great choice America!

## What It Was Like by Catherine Klatzker

The world was always a place of silence, of congenital shame — even before those days in 1967, four years before you met your love. Your strength grew belatedly, fertilized as it was in the knowledge that you were nothing. Your life did not matter to anyone, except to hurt you.

~

Every time you awake in your hospital bed men in white say, *What did you do? Tell us what you did! Did you try to abort?* Every time for five hemorrhaging days, you say you didn't do anything. *I did nothing*, you protest.

You deny the criminal abortion. A policeman stands guard at your door. Surreal. Angry doctors shout at you, demand your statement of guilt. You are bleeding out in a Sacramento public hospital. Transfusions of living blood finally drip into your veins, saving you for the confession they expect, to have you arrested.

*Don't tell. Never tell.* The fallback admonition learned in your father's house—now useful again. Dime-sized white tissue passes, and a D&C can be done. An angry medical resident scrapes your uterus, no medication: *You don't deserve meds.* You agree. You are nothing. You feel nothing.

You go into the wall. Surreal. Voices and images of other women and girls billow from the walls around you and you know them, their voices are your own, sharing something you cannot name, and you claim them: your witnesses, your delusions. Thirty years later, in the nineties, you blurt out to your partner that *I almost died one*

*time, from a criminal abortion.* Watchful, you study his face for the disappointment you expect, the judgment, just like the men in white, that you are the lowest of the low, not worth the life of a zygote.

The silence between you stalls and ripens. His voice chokes when he at last speaks, *You must have been so alone*, he says, and you wish you had known him then — impossible, but all the same. He has always seen you. His innocence didn't need your protection. You didn't need your old shame. It is safe to stand up and speak.



**Catherine Klatzker's** essays and stories may be seen in *The Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine*, *Emrys Journal*, *Tiferet Journal*, (2014 nonfiction winner,) *Lime Hawk Journal*, *The Examined Life Journal*, a short-short in River Teeth's *Beautiful Things*, and in two mental health anthologies: from In Fact Books, and from Lime Hawk Literary Arts Collective. Her work-in-progress, *Reunion*, was shortlisted for the 2015 Mary Roberts Rinehart Nonfiction prize from Stillhouse Press. Catherine is a member of The Authors Guild, AWP, NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), and ISSTD, (the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation). *WHAT IT WAS LIKE* shines a spotlight on a few days of her 1967 illegal abortion.