

Answering the Hard Cases


Impact Report

JUSTICE FOR ALL

August 2023

BECAUSE ONE PERSON CAN...

In almost every conversation about abortion, we can expect people to ask about “hard cases” such as rape, incest, and life-threatening pregnancy complications. In this Impact Report, JFA trainer Kristina Massa beautifully illustrates JFA’s framework for addressing these questions. Through the story of a conversation from our April 2023 outreach at Colorado State University (CSU), Kristina describes step by step how she began with relational sensitivity and continued in that mode while also offering intellectually satisfying answers. Thank you for partnering with us so we can train more Christians and pro-life advocates to use this framework. It gives our strong case against elective abortion the best chance of being considered by skeptical listeners.

 - Steve Wagner, Executive Director

...CHANGE THE WORLD

I watched “Brad” have his first “aha” moment within a few minutes of starting our conversation. My team was set up at Colorado State University in the middle of the campus’s main plaza when I found Brad standing by the free speech board. He was staring pensively at the comments. “Do you have any thoughts on abortion?” I asked. He answered that since the unborn are not conscious, they do not have the same rights as born humans. To make sure I understood his view, I asked a few more questions and found common ground with him where I could. Eventually I felt like I had built enough rapport with him to challenge his perspective. Here is the gist of what followed:

Kristina: I agree there are many differences between the unborn and us. There are also many differences between you and me. I think the question we need to answer is whether these differences matter. For example, you have dark skin, I have light skin. You are taller than me, I have longer hair than you. I am older than you, you are probably smarter than me. It seems like in order to demand we should be treated equally, there has to be something the same or equal about us; something that adults and infants have, but animals do not. Since animals are also conscious, it seems like the quality that grounds our equal rights must be more fundamental.

That was when he had his first “aha” moment.

Brad: We’re all human beings.

Intellectually, he understood the pro-life position. Emotionally, there was still one roadblock hindering him from agreeing with it.

Brad: But what if a woman was raped? My mom was raped and became pregnant with my older sister. Do you think women should have a choice in a situation like that?

Brad asked me a *yes* or *no* question, but I was not going to give him a quick *yes* or *no* response. The scenario was personal to him, and I needed to meet him relationally before I could give him my answer.

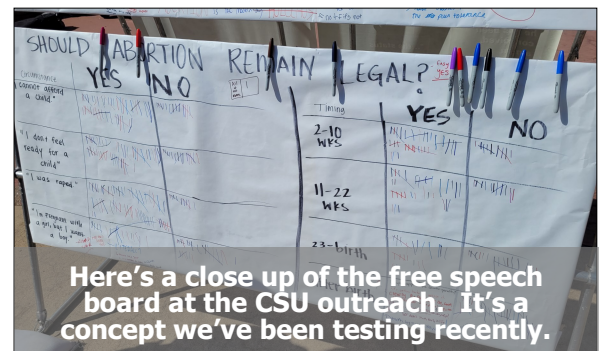
Kristina: I am so sorry your mom went through that. Rape is one of the most heinous crimes. How is she doing now?

Brad: Yeah, it was really hard on her. Thankfully she was already married to my dad, and he was very supportive of her through it. He told her that he would help her take care of my sister.

Rather than immediately answering his question, I slowed the conversation down by expressing concern for his mother. I focused on



Kristina (right) talks to another student during JFA’s Colorado State University (CSU) outreach in April 2023.



Here’s a close up of the free speech board at the CSU outreach. It’s a concept we’ve been testing recently.

meeting what we at JFA call “the relational challenge.” This answers the question, “What about the woman? Do pro-life people think the lives of women who have been raped matter?” After all, the woman we were discussing was not an abstract hypothetical character. For Brad, she was his mother.

Still, Brad wanted to know my answer to “the intellectual challenge:” Is abortion justified if the woman was raped? Should it be legal? To answer this, I used the dialogue tool *Trot Out the Toddler*. It went something like this:

Kristina: Can I share a scenario with you that’s related to your question?

Brad: Sure.

Kristina: Imagine a woman is raped, becomes pregnant, and gives birth to her baby. She’s hurting, and even looking at her baby overwhelms her with fear and pain because her child’s existence reminds her of her attack. This is a terrible and tragic scenario no one should ever have to face. But Brad, I am guessing you and I will agree on a few things about this situation: We both want this woman to heal. We also want her to have choices to go about her healing. But those choices are not unlimited. If she thought ending her infant’s life would be the most helpful way to heal her trauma, we would not let her go through with it. Would you say you share that conviction as well?

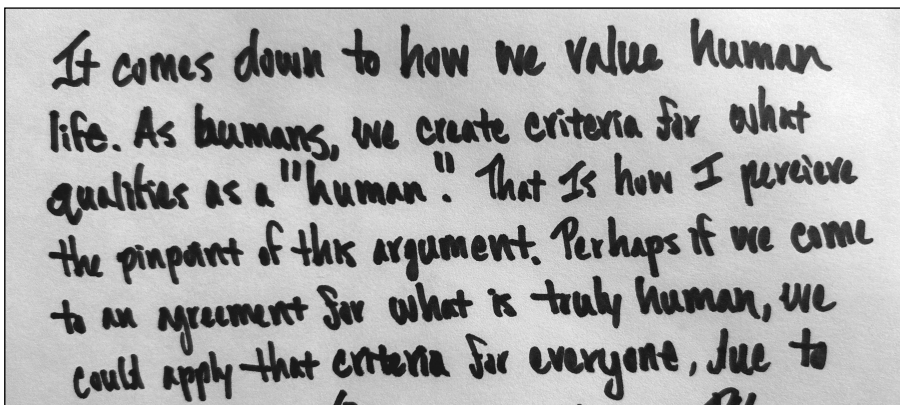
Brad: Yes, she cannot kill her baby. That’s a human being.

Kristina: I agree with you, and that is the significant thing. When we say she cannot kill her newborn, we are not saying, “I don’t care about your rape. I don’t care about your trauma. I don’t care about your child.” What we are saying is, “I care so much about you, and I want you to have choices. I just want you to have choices that will help both of you and don’t add violence to an already violent situation.” Since the unborn have a human nature like the infant in this circumstance, do you think it could make sense to protect the unborn in the same way we protect infants who were conceived in rape?

Brad paused to reflect. And then I watched him have his second “aha” moment.

Brad: I think you are right. Unborn human beings have the same basic rights we do, so they should be protected, too.

Then he walked back to the free speech board to write the following comment:



Text: It comes down to how we value human life. As humans, we create criteria for what qualifies as a “human.” That is how I perceive the pinpoint of this argument. Perhaps if we come to an agreement for what is truly human, we could apply that criteria for everyone...

Thank you for helping me make the abortion of all children – regardless of the circumstances that created them – unthinkable, one person at a time. In case no one has told you recently, your life matters, too!

- Kristina Massa, for the JFA Team

Note: Kristina originally sent the story in this letter to supporters in May 2023.

