

A Popsicle Poll

Training thousands to make abortion unthinkable for millions...

Impact Report

JUSTICE FOR ALL

January 2017

I'm eager to share this Impact Report with you. Written by 20-year JFA veteran Tammy Cook, it allows you to see a model conversation unfold, nurtured through Tammy's skillful choice of questions and information. You get to watch a student rethink his position on abortion, and you get to see the JFA poll table, a stalwart conversation tool we've used since 2001, in a new twist that JFA trainers Jon Wagner and Paul Kulas came up with during a late-night run to Walmart. The "popsicle poll" was one of the tools we used along with our large *Art of Life* Exhibit to start conversations about abortion at Oklahoma State University in November 2016. Go to www.jfaweb.org/photos to see these tools in action, as well as two other new twists on classic JFA conversation tools. We turned one free speech board into a straw poll on the presidential election (we couldn't help ourselves—it was election day), and we used another to ask people which particular abortions they thought should be legal, in terms of timing and circumstances.

Sm - Steve Wagner, Executive Director

...one person at a time.

Having conducted many campus outreach events in unpredictable weather, the JFA team has learned to make quick adjustments on the fly. Our latest challenge? How to keep poll table notebooks dry in the rain. The notebooks allow students to sign *Yes* or *No* for our poll question, *Should Abortion Remain Legal?* The poll is one of our best tools for starting conversations, so when it was raining at Oklahoma State University (OSU) in November, our team got creative. Popsicle sticks and Styrofoam to the rescue! Students could now vote by signing a popsicle stick and putting it in either the *Yes* side or the *No* side.



During the lunch hour, "Hudson" stopped by to vote. He placed a popsicle stick on the *Yes* side. I thanked him for voting, introduced myself, and started a conversation:

Tammy: I'm curious—do you think abortion should be legal through all nine months of pregnancy?

Hudson: Well, I don't know, but I don't think the government should be in people's lives.

Tammy: I would like to better understand your view. Can you give me an example?

Hudson: I don't think the government should make a law that says a woman can't have an abortion.

Tammy: Ah. So basically you're saying that you don't want the government to tell you what you can or can't do?

Hudson: Yes.

Tammy: I can see that. I agree that there are times when the government shouldn't interfere with our choices. For example, I think people should be able to choose if they want to go to college. I do think, though, that the government should make laws that protect our citizens. Would you agree with the laws that stop people from driving 100 miles per hour on the freeway while intoxicated?

Hudson: Yes.

Tammy: Why?

Hudson: Because that's not safe, and it would risk harming or killing other people.

Tammy: I agree. So, do you agree with the current laws that prohibit rape, murder, and theft?



Tammy Cook interacts with a student near JFA's experimental "popsicle poll" at OSU in November.

Hudson: Yes, I agree with those laws. But when it comes to taking away choice, I don't agree with the government taking away a woman's choice.

Tammy: Got it. Let's take a moment to talk about human beings and look at biological development. When do you think we become human?

Hudson: I'm not sure... maybe in the third trimester?

Tammy: Okay. So, do you agree with me that this is a human being? *[I pointed to the third-trimester fetus on page three of our brochure, pictured right.]*

Hudson: Yes.

Tammy: Okay. Let's look at earlier stages of human development. *[I pointed to the first seven circles on page three.]* Would you agree that if the unborn is growing, it must be alive? And if it has human parents, it can only be human? And living humans like you and me—we're valuable, aren't we?

Hudson: Hmmm... *[seriously contemplating what I've shown to him]*

Tammy: And did you know that from the point of fertilization, all that is added to the embryo is adequate nutrition and a proper environment? Nothing essential is injected along the way to make an embryo into an organism. So, if you and I are whole organisms now, the embryo must also be a whole organism at fertilization. Would you agree?

Hudson: Maybe so, but I still think abortion should be a woman's choice because abortion *is* legal.

Tammy: Okay, so it sounds like legality is important to you. Let's look at slavery, which used to be legal. Should our country have kept slavery legal?

Hudson: No.

Tammy: I agree. We should restrict people from choosing to own a slave because that is a violation of human rights. For the same reason, don't we also have an obligation to restrict people from choosing abortion?

Hudson: *[pausing to think]*

Tammy: And I think it could aid our discussion if we include images of abortion. Are you willing to view them?

Hudson: Sure.

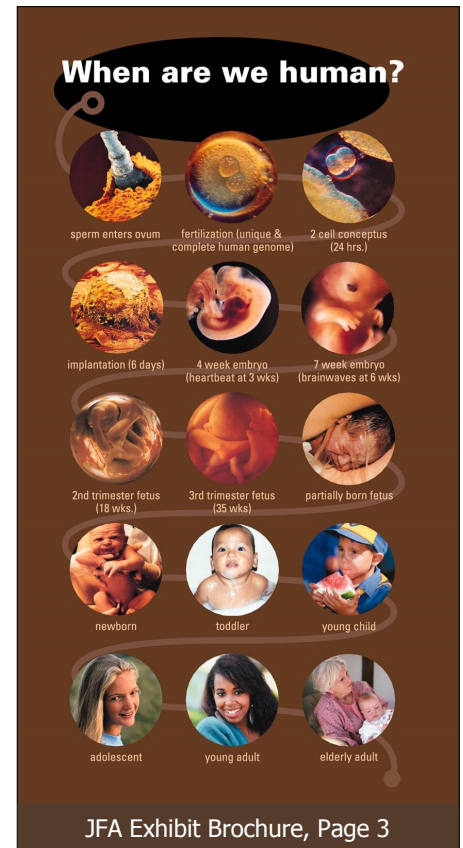
Tammy: This is what abortion looks like. *[I showed him an abortion image on page five of the JFA Exhibit Brochure.]*

Hudson: Wow, you've given me a lot to think about. I see it a little differently now. The slavery comparison was really helpful. I've never thought about it that way before. I need to go think about this. I feel like I want to break the popsicle stick in half and put half in the *Yes* side and half in the *No* side. Can I have one of those brochures?

Tammy: Yes, absolutely. Thanks for taking time to talk.

Our team had two wonderful days of outreach at OSU, even despite the rain. And the popsicle poll brought a great response. There were 190 people who voted *Yes* (abortion should remain legal) and 120 who voted *No* (abortion should not remain legal). I spoke to about 25 pro-choice students over two days, and I saw more than half of those students rethinking their views like Hudson did. Some even had a complete change of heart and agreed that abortion should not be legal.

- Tammy Cook, for the JFA Team



Access the JFA Exhibit Brochure on Your Smartphone or Get a Paper Copy:

www.jfaweb.org/brochure

