Two Conversations, Two Very Different Results

On our recent trip to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), I was reminded that even though our conversations won't impact everybody in exactly the way we want, there are always people who are open to understanding what abortion truly is and what is so wrong with it.

I began talking to Cynthia, and soon after another woman, Morgan, stopped as she was passing by and joined in too. During the whole conversation, I was using the Three Essential Skills that we teach: listening, asking questions, and finding common ground. However, Cynthia and Morgan were not using these skills. The two of them talked and talked and barely let me get a word in. I tried to speak but within a few seconds they would interrupt and go on talking again.

In conversation with Cynthia and Morgan

They were feeding off of each other and becoming quite upset, even though earlier in the conversation, when I was talking alone with Cynthia, we were having a productive conversation and she wasn't upset at all. As they spoke, they just tried to one-up each other as they expressed how outraged they were.

> **Cynthia:** At UCLA most students have a totally opposite view from yours. Your opinion is not welcome here and it causes distress.
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> **Morgan:** I walked to class feeling really upset this morning.
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> **Cynthia:** This is about people who are being oppressed and who's rights are being taken away. I think you should think about the social impact more than you think about the value of human life, as you call it, because this human life idea that you're talking about is not something that is tangible, while there is tangible harm that is being done to women.
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> **Morgan:** You being here to discuss the fact that human life is valuable does not justify the harm you are doing to other people. How long are you staying here? I want to make sure I don't come to campus while you are here. Please tell me so I can avoid campus entirely until you leave.
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> **Cynthia:** I don't know if you noticed the number of people that have walked by here with distress and disgust at what you are doing.

Eventually they left and I quickly started talking to Joe. Joe just asked me questions about my position and what the other side thinks about this issue. He would ask a question, I would answer, and then he would think about it for a little while before asking his next question. After we had talked for a little while, he said "I am going to sit down over there and process this, then I might have some more questions."

About 15 minutes later he came up to me again with

Three days of outreach at UCLA allowed us to reach many students and hopefully change many minds!

some more questions about the practical aspects of passing laws against abortion. After I answered those questions, he seemed pretty excited, and he said:

> **Joe:** I have never really thought about this issue before. That's why I just wanted to ask you questions. You are making a really powerful argument. I want to go and tell all my friends about it!
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> **Jeremy:** That would be great. I think it all comes down to whether we want to treat all human beings equally or whether we want to value some less than others. I don't think there is a justification for that.
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> **Joe:** I agree. That's the world I want to live in! One where everybody is valued equally because they are a human being and one where we all take care of the children we bring into this world.
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> **Jeremy:** Well if you and I help spread the word by having conversations like this one, I think we can help create that world together.

I was pretty discouraged after my conversation with Cynthia and Morgan. In fact, I felt like giving up on conversations for the day. But my conversation with Joe encouraged me. This is a lesson we all need to learn. Despite our best efforts, we won't always see the results we want. However, it is likely that someone else will respond to us in a different way. In order to be effective, we must persevere. For every Cynthia and Morgan, there is a Joe nearby who wants to hear our perspective and honestly consider it.

This is even more critical as the Supreme Court considers overturning Roe vs. Wade. There will be many people who disagree no matter how the court rules, and some may be angry. Regardless, we need to keep having conversations with people that disagree with us. Some will reconsider their view, some won't. But our job is to persevere and do the work necessary to change hearts and minds, one person at a time. That has always been Justice For All's mission and it will continue to be until abortion is ended in this country once and for all.