

JUSTICE FOR ALL

Training Thousands to
Make Abortion Unthinkable for Millions,
One Person at a Time

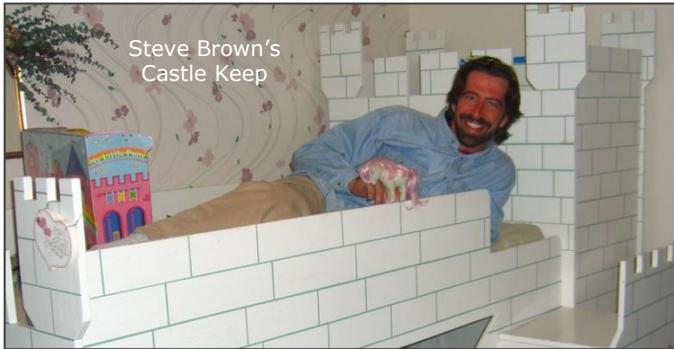
John Michener

Oklahoma & North Texas

Newsletter

February 2011

We just returned from Arizona where we taught six seat work seminars—four at private high schools, and two community seminars in Phoenix and Tucson. We followed that with feet work training at Arizona State University (ASU) and the University of Arizona (UA). Stories from our trainees will likely pour in for weeks, and I will share some highlights from those as they become available. In the meantime, here are some of my experiences.



First, I would like to thank my delightful hosts Steve and Dawn Brown who put me up during our time in the Phoenix area. Their daughters Elizabeth and Tricia are all grown up now, but their father's handcrafted bunk beds are still in service and very comfy.

Grace and Larry Schnakgenberg were my gracious hosts in Tucson. Grace is a registered nurse and was able to quickly nurse me back to health after I arrived feeling under the weather that first day.

Lori marched right up to me where I was sitting behind the barricade. She wore a nose ring and a hardened countenance. She was visibly upset as she launched into me. The first thing she proclaimed was that she had been raped and had had an abortion. She then began flooding me with different reasons and circumstances where abortion would be justified. The barricade between us loomed large. When she stopped to take a breath, I said, "I'm sorry, but I didn't hear anything you just said. I couldn't hear past the part where you said you were raped. Was your rapist punished, what happened, and how are you doing?" Lori is now twenty-one, but she was sixteen when she was raped. She spent some time in a much

"I'm so sorry," I said, "I know it's been hard."
"Thanks for listening," she responded.
The barricade was down.

calmer fashion telling me her story, and when she was finished, I reached my hand across the barricade to introduce myself. She took my hand, and that is when I learned her name. "I'm so sorry," I said, "I know it's been hard." "Thanks for listening," she responded. The barricade was down. We talked a little more about how circumstances make some moral decisions more difficult. I do not remember ever getting back on the topic of abortion, and then she was off to class. As pro-life advocates, we spend a lot of time defending the proposition that the unborn are fully human, but sometimes it is more important to show that *we* are human and that we care about the wounds of others.

Kaitlynn must have been tall because I remember easily looking at her eye to eye. She was thin like a string bean, and her hair was black and straight. The sun was shining in a clear blue desert sky. "So what do you think about abortion?" I began the conversation. She explained that her mother was Lutheran and pro-life, but she was basically pro-choice because there are so many difficult



situations. But do those situations justify abortion? As we began to dissect the issues, the wind picked up, and heavy looking, dark clouds appeared on the horizon. The clouds barreled down on us until Kaitlynn finally said she guessed we were right that abortion was pretty much always wrong, but "What about rape? Surely, that is the exception, right?" she concluded. Before answering her question, I had to ask another very tough question: "Have you had any personal experience with rape?" You see, the question of rape poses two distinct problems—one relational and one rational. As you can see from Lori's story above, sometimes it is not possible to progress past the relational aspects of the issue in the limited time we have.

Thank goodness Kaitlynn answered no, so I felt safe in moving on. I opened a large umbrella as the rain began coming down. Kaitlynn stepped under the umbrella with me as I shared this scenario with her. Suppose a married woman is raped and conceives. Because there is doubt who the father is, the doctor performs a DNA test and discovers that the fetus is that of the husband. Relieved, the woman keeps the child and bears a son. Three months after his birth, the doctor calls to explain that there was a mix-up with the test results. The baby was actually fa-



thered by the rapist. “No problem,” says the woman, “It was an honest mistake. I’ll just bring him by your office and you can euthanize him.” Kaitlynn’s eyes looked like they were going to pop out of her head. “I never thought about it like that before.” As if on cue, the weather followed the course of our conversation. The sun came back out, and just like the sky, our conversation ended with warmth and clarity.

Dr. Peter Foley is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies. He was just named head of the new Institute for Religious and Cultural Studies at UA. During our conversation he kept saying abortion was “a moral issue,” but would not condemn the choice as basically immoral. He seemed to think that difficult circumstances made it a foggy area. I think the foggy area for most people is in their thinking.

Tony Brady is a middle-aged Hispanic looking gentleman who works in property management at ASU. Tuesday afternoon was slow around the exhibit while classes were in session, and no one seemed to be around. This is when I noticed Tony walking slowly around the exhibit. He spent his afternoon break visiting with me. He was touched by our exhibit and thanked us for bringing it and our volunteers to campus to dialogue with students. His grandson, MarcAnthony, was in his fifth month of gestation when he was diagnosed with a fatal birth defect known as *fetal acrania*. Tony’s daughter Jennifer was repeatedly encouraged to terminate her pregnancy by her doctor who explained that MarcAnthony would not live long after birth. On 8 August 2006 MarcAnthony was welcomed by his family. Despite his severe disabilities, MarcAnthony had a strong heart and was eager to eat. He lived only seven months, but he was loved deeply by the

Kaitlynn’s eyes looked like they were going to pop out of her head. “I never thought about it like that before.”

whole family. You can read their whole story and testimony at marcanthonyforlifeforlifenetwork.webs.com.

Darrin* and his friend approached the exhibit and began blasting away verbally at my colleague Trent. Many of you received my emergency email from UA regarding Darrin. He went through several mood changes during the hours that he stayed engaged in dialogue with our volunteers and staff. In fact, our efforts made a visible and transformational impact on Darrin as he processed his anger over the impact of the abortion pictures on him. He eventually talked about his mother’s abortion decision in the past. Then, he finally revealed the immediate decision that he and his girlfriend had made to abort their child. We counseled all we could on the spot and gave Darrin our contact information, but to date we have not heard back from him. Darrin aptly represents how our mission can become urgent. Please pray for Darrin, his girlfriend, their baby, and their families. *name changed

Ome stood a good ways back from the crowd taking in the exhibit. She said she was undecided on the issue, so we began working through her concerns. She was intellectually honest and open, and our dialogue seemed to enlighten each of us. After a while I invited a volunteer to enter the conversation, and I excused myself to start another one. The next day I noticed a girl talking to my



colleague Jacob. As she turned her head, I recognized the black curls of Ome. “Hey, you!” she exclaimed as she gave me a hug as if we were long lost cousins. She had just been handing a response card to Jacob. She said that what we were saying and doing made perfect sense and that she not only agreed with us now, but wanted to join the campus pro-life club. As our mission says . . . “One person at a time.”

-John Michener