



Rebecca's Reflections



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In Their Own Words: UNL Students React to JFA

Thanks to many of you, Justice For All (JFA) recently brought our nationally-acclaimed training to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln!

The third day of JFA's Exhibit outreach on UNL's campus, their student newspaper, *The Daily Nebraskan*, printed the following article:

FISCHER: Graphic pro-life display reveals truth about abortion

Wednesday, September 15, 2010

If you walked through campus in the last few days, odds are you saw the giant graphic posters of mutilated unborn children displayed in the Union Plaza and the Green Space. The posters were put up by the group Justice for All, a pro-life group that travels around the country putting up displays and talking to students, as well as holding training sessions to teach pro-life advocates how to support their cause in a reasonable, empirical and non-argumentative way.

I made a point of walking through the plaza each day and had a chance to talk to students and some of the individuals who were part of Justice for All. Although I was a little skeptical at first, I ended up being very impressed by what I saw. The Justice for All missionaries were dynamic without being abrasive. They seemed to engage students and really try to get to the heart of the abortion issue. I was especially impressed by their use of philosophy, psychology and biology in their dialogue.

However, most of those watching seemed disturbed by their presence.

One of the things I heard over and over from bystanders was that they felt Justice for All was

using their signs simply for "shock value." I had a chance to talk with Kyle Pesek, for example, who was in the Plaza representing Students for Sexual Health and who told me he thought the use of the signs failed to "bring to light real concerns" and that in putting up such graphic signs, the group was "just trying to gain attention, not win over people's minds."

I also had a conversation with Alexa Weeks, another student, who was circulating small sheets of paper encouraging students to e-mail student affairs asking them to force Justice for All to at least remove the signs. Alexa (who, regardless of my opinion of her cause, I must commend for her independent efforts to actually do something when she had a problem) agreed with Kyle's view that



the signs were for shock value and explained that, "it's not what they're saying, but how they're saying it" with which she took issue.

These are only a few examples, but several other students expressed these same concerns, and while I understand where these students are coming from, I think their feelings display a profound misunderstanding of the context in which groups like Justice for All function.

While the signs were disturbingly graphic, there are some situations where such images are appropriate. When I asked Rebecca Haschke, an intern with Justice for All about why the group used such graphic images, she referenced the Emmett Till murder. In her view, this was a similar situation in which the use of graphic images forced an entire nation to confront a very serious issue.

If you're not aware of the [Emmett Till story](#) you should take some time to look it up. But, in brief, Till was a 14-year-old African-American boy who was brutally lynched by a white mob after he supposedly whistled at a white woman.

our Plaza, but we have to remember that they are photographs that depict real events and show something that is really happening in our world thousands of times each day. It ought to make us uncomfortable to see something so disturbing, but to say that these images are just for shock and awe and that they don't create dialogue is simply untrue.

Over the past few days, the Justice for All displays have provoked discussion and gotten people to think. They may also have offended or distressed some, but that is a small price to pay for getting such an important and life-changing issue out in the open.

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After the murder, his mother insisted that his funeral be open casket, and the pictures of his disfigured body taken at the funeral played a huge role in sparking the Civil Rights movement. Rosa Parks for example, was famously [quoted](#) as saying it was the story of Emmett Till that inspired her not to give up her seat on the bus in Montgomery, Ala.

It might be true that in the case of the Emmett Till murder, the images were used for shock value, but in Haschke's words, "Emmett Till put a face on racism." She went on to argue that, "we're putting a face on abortion."

According to Haschke, "the images are meant to show truth," and "people need to see what abortion looks like, before it happens, before they make a choice."

I find myself agreeing whole-heartedly with Haschke. It is true that the images put up by Justice for All shock and disturb, but their graphic nature does not mean they cannot provoke meaningful discussion. Sometimes people need to see to really understand.

Emmett Till was not the first African-American to be brutalized or murdered, but he was the first to have a picture of his mutilated body circulated on the national stage. It was the image, the picture of his disfigured body, that finally began to force the issue of racism out into the open. It's unfortunate that such graphic pictures stand in

Just as in the case of Emmett Till, images like this force people to face an unpleasant reality, but one that must be faced. If we are ever to truly understand abortion, we need to see what it really looks like.

If there were people in the union showing graphic pictures of people being murdered in an African genocide or of children being abused in a religious cult, we wouldn't complain; we'd say they were raising awareness. Thus I am led to believe it is the fact that the images Justice for All show hit close to home, that they make us confront an ugly truth that is so personal, that makes us so uncomfortable.

It took a lot of courage for Emmett Till's mother to show the world how ugly racism really was, and it takes a lot of courage for the people from Justice for All to show these images, to stand by them and leave themselves open to criticism. But by doing so, they are creating dialogue and making people think. And that is always a good thing.

-Written by Luke Ficsher

Thank you for your prayers and support which allow me to continue to reach folks like Luke!

Defending Life Together,

Rebecca J. Haschke