

# Trump, Cuomo, Kavanaugh, and “It’s Her Body”



A Reflection from JFA’s Executive Director, Steve Wagner

**Introduction to “It’s Her Body” Series — July 10, 2018**

Dear Friend,

Even before President Trump nominated Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court yesterday, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo was signing pre-emptive orders aimed at protecting women’s “constitutional legal protection to control their own bodies” after *Roe v. Wade* is overturned.

There’s nothing like the feeling that the legal right to abortion might be in jeopardy to motivate people to start talking about abortion again. Indeed, the “Should Abortion Remain Legal?” poll question is our most reliable tool for causing pro-choice advocates to stop and share their opinions with us. In one sense, that’s unfortunate, because many haven’t ever thought much about whether or not the unborn is a human being and whether or not abortion is wrong. Without these prior questions resolved, the discussion of the law is premature. Still, it does make people stop.

The increased buzz about abortion because of the Kavanaugh nomination will likely make people more willing to share their opinions about abortion. Beyond buzz and discussion, though, I think it’s difficult to say what a more conservative Supreme Court might do with *Roe v. Wade* and its progeny if a case were to come before it in the next few years. Hadley Arkes has voiced some serious concerns about whether even the justices who seem most conservative are willing to make the moral arguments that are essential to protecting unborn children. (See “Another Pro-Life Victory?” and “The Moral Turn” in *First Things*.) So, having conservative justices and a case to rule on may be only half that battle. If the Court strikes down *Roe* but not for the reason that abortion kills a human being, it’s true that many states would likely outlaw abortion, but those with the most abortions (such as California and New York), if allowed to make whatever law seems best to them, would likely keep legal abortion alive (irony intended). This underscores how we cannot hope to protect unborn children for the long-term through the Court alone, apart from another key strategy: seeking to change the hearts and minds of the strong majority that is tolerant of legal abortion.

In any case, we can hope the Supreme Court drama will make it less awkward to discuss unintended pregnancy and abortion with people in our churches, the parents of our kids’ friends, and teens just entering college. I predict many of these will follow the same familiar path Andrew Cuomo just trod. We’ll hear “it’s her body” and its variants not only from those who think abortion is morally neutral, but also from those who say they are strongly against abortion...for themselves. (Indeed, isn’t “I’m against abortion, but I think it should be legal” the most common pro-choice position?)

In the enclosed letter and the accompanying blog posts, I outline a timely approach to these “it’s her body” arguments. My approach might surprise you. It may seem to you to be too sympathetic at a time when we need firm, even strident, proclaiming of truth. *Here’s what I’m up to:* It doesn’t hurt our case against abortion one bit to find common ground with “it’s her body” statements as much as we honestly can. Once you read my letter, I hope you’ll agree this approach is not only morally good but also has the best chance of helping those who disagree become receptive to the truth of our position, clearly and confidently presented at the appropriate time. Because “it’s her body” statements require careful attention to relational complexity, intellectual complexity, and the meaning that a person is intending, the P.S. of the enclosed letter includes links to blog posts that fill out our approach and give you a good start at being ready to discuss “it’s her body” statements when they are surely to come up in the coming months.

This approach is part of JFA’s attempt to integrate love and truth in every moment of every conversation. Just as we shouldn’t “love” the woman at the expense of the child, we also shouldn’t “love” the child without concern for the woman. We aim instead to love every human being. This includes the person with whom we’re speaking.

I hope you find this letter and the accompanying blog posts helpful. I’d love to hear your thoughts!

Steve Wagner



# It's Her Body

A Reflection from JFA's Executive Director, Steve Wagner



**Part I in a Series — July 2018**

Dear Friend,

I was in the middle of a conversation with a few young women who had stopped to sign our “Should Abortion Remain Legal?” poll at Colorado State University in April. They were putting their mark on the “Yes” side. I asked a few questions, and each began to explain the limitations she would put on abortion at different times and in different circumstances of pregnancy.

Another young woman stopped and interjected, “It should be legal up until birth.” Without much prompting, she gave her reason: “I have a right to do what I want with my body.”

At this moment, I wanted to launch into a precision set of questions and counter-arguments to show this woman and those standing nearby that her right to her body doesn't entail a right to kill another human by abortion. I have been thinking, writing, and teaching about appeals to bodily rights for more than 15 years. I was ready.

But as I looked at this woman, I hesitated. I stuttered and said something not too tidy, struck afresh by the fact that this topic affects this *person* very *personally*. Reflecting on it later, I was a little embarrassed that I hadn't had more to say, but then I realized there was something quite right about the approach into which I had fallen. Rather than saying something intellectual, I think I said something more along the lines of sympathy and concern, a little like this:

“I don't know if I can fully understand what it's like for matters so personal as your body and your right to do what you want with your body to be brought up on your campus. I don't know what it feels like to consider the possibility of being pregnant or to think about the government placing restrictions on your ability to control everything about your body. These things are very heavy to think about. Your right to your body is important.”

I don't want the conversation about a woman's right to her body to end there, but I think it needs to start there. Indeed, my conversation with two of the women who heard this exchange was very productive, I think due in part to the moment in which I chose sympathy over argument. But the conversation can't end with sympathy for the woman only, because this woman's view that abortion should be legal until birth also affects an unborn *person* very *personally* (and not just one unborn child, but thousands each day). If we focus on the unborn, though, without first seeking to understand the woman's concern for her body, we not only will make practical success in the conversation much more unlikely, failing to build a bridge when we could, but we'll also fail to accurately describe what's true. For what we're discussing is a *person* with equal value to the unborn person, and yes, she has a right to her body that we should be the first to champion. I mean “right to her body” not in the controversial sense of abortion but in the uncontroversial sense that she should be protected from harm, terror, assault, and oppression. She should be valued as an equal. In general,



**Some of JFA's recent outreach exhibit panel designs feature images like this one in order to communicate concern for women and sympathy for their experiences of pregnancy. See the *Stop and Think* Exhibit page ([www.jfaweb.org/stop-and-think](http://www.jfaweb.org/stop-and-think)) for exhibit designs and commentary.**



individuals and the government should leave her to be free, unless she is causing harm to someone else.

At JFA we've been making the point for more than a decade that when discussing abortion in the case of rape, those who are defending unborn children must meet the "relational challenge" first, focusing on the horror of rape and showing sympathy for the woman who has been assaulted, even if this means that we set aside for the moment our agenda of changing a mind about whether abortion should be legal in the case of rape (the "intellectual challenge"). This is primarily because it is good and right to communicate love, concern, and sympathy for women who have been violated by an evil act of rape. It also turns out that it's practically essential. People are much more likely to listen to our argument against abortion in the case of rape (or any other case) if they can tell that we are genuinely concerned about the evil that occurred in that act.

I've realized that anytime a woman defends abortion by referring to her right to her body, we confront essentially the same two challenges. There's a relational challenge ("Do you care about the woman's bodily rights?") and an intellectual challenge ("Do the woman's bodily rights include the right to abortion?"). Let's say you are a woman claiming you have a right to your body that includes the right to abortion, and I am responding to your claim. Even though you and I are not discussing assault, *per se*, we *are* talking about whether the government should restrict your freedom to do something that you think affects *only* your body, and so that idea of government intrusion may very well feel similar to assault for you. Many men will view this in the same way, through the prism of concern for their sisters, mothers, and female friends. We would do well to consider bodily rights claims through this same prism, letting the beginning of our response be guided by a realization: we are talking about *somebody's body*.

## **It's Still *Her* Body, Even if it's Not the *Only* Body Involved.**

Now, perhaps you are longing at this point, as I am, for there to be a balancing of the scales, a revealing of the truth about the unborn child alongside this sympathy and concern we've been showing towards the woman. We who consider the unborn an equal human being know there is much else to say that brings this "prism of concern for somebody's body" into proper light. (See the P.S. below.) There's a reason, though, other than limits of word and page count, that I emphasized the woman's bodily rights in this letter and stopped short of saying other important things about the topic: *we pro-life advocates are sometimes too quick to gloss over the woman*. At times we only give lip service to her value (if we mention her at all), and then we proceed with our arguments as if she is (for the most part) not even there. Let this letter's singular focus on the woman be a reminder of the need to pause and the need to let every statement about the value of the unborn that follows be colored by the truth that the woman's body is still *her* body, even if it's not the *only* body involved.

In Christ,



Steve Wagner  
Executive Director

PS: See [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights) to access a series of additional thoughts this letter brought to the surface for me. I consider these posts to be equally important to this letter, and they are meant to be read in conjunction with it:

- *It's Her Body (Part I in a Series on Bodily Rights Defenses for Abortion) – This Letter*
- *How Important Is Your Body to You? (Part II)*
- *Focusing Only on the Woman for a Time Is Not Compromise (Part III)*
- *Practical Suggestions for Concern and Common Ground Regarding Bodily Rights (Part IV)*
- *Is "It's Her Body" a Statement about Biology? Ask a Question to Find Out. (Part V)*
- *From a Foundation of Love for Women and Children, We Respond Intellectually to Bodily Rights (Part VI)*
- *A Few Additional Thoughts on Bodily Rights (Part VII)*

# How Important Is Your Body to You?



A Reflection from JFA's Executive Director, Steve Wagner

**Part 2 in a Series — July 2018**

I want to ask you a question: How important is your body...to you?

How important is it to you that you're healthy? If you go to the doctor because you are in pain, and she does some tests, and you're not sure what the diagnosis will be, well... Maybe there's nothing wrong with you, but maybe something is really wrong. Do you worry? Having a healthy body is pretty important to you, isn't it? You don't even have to think about it to answer.

Do you care about your body? Even in the best circumstances, when everyone and everything in one's presence is trusted and safe, each of us has a basic concern about what happens to his or her body. But when our bodies are in the presence of something which feels unsafe or someone we don't trust, we are especially aware of our bodies and our concern for them.

What about laws and the government? How important is it to you that the government and laws "stay away" from your body? Do you want the government to refrain from putting unnecessary limitations or restrictions on your body? Do you want to be protected from the government putting you in prison without justification or restricting your basic rights? We all care deeply about our ability to move around, to assemble with others, and to speak freely.

Still, I think most people believe in a few reasonable restrictions on peoples' bodies. As one person in Oklahoma said to me, "My rights end where your rights begin. There's a civil rights bubble around each of us." I think a lot of people believe that, but even still, most of us don't want the government putting a lot of unjustified restrictions on our bodies. We definitely don't want the government forcing us to do things with our bodies that we don't want to do.

In light of this, consider these defenses of legal abortion: "It's her body," "She can do what she wants with her body," "The unborn is a part of her body," "The unborn is in her body," and "The unborn is dependent on her body." What word pair is common to all of these? *Her body*. And the most common abortion defense of all only makes this emphasis more personal: "My *body*, my choice."

What's the common word in all of these statements? *Body*. *Her body*. *My body*.

In future posts in this series, I'm going to outline JFA's approach to these bodily rights statements, including seeking to clarify what the person means by her argument (Part V) and sharing analogies that help point out the truth about the limits to a woman's bodily rights (Part VI). But this intellectual approach is only part of the puzzle, and as important as philosophy surely is, I am now realizing that as we make our arguments we must continue to express great sympathy and understanding for the woman's concern for her body.

I suggest that regularly in the midst of the discussion, we pause to reflect: *Remember how important your body is to you.*

Then, remember that this dear person to whom we are speaking, if she's a woman, has one of those bodies we're discussing. She can't disassociate herself from her concern about her own body, at least not without purposeful effort. But all of us can understand that right? Even a man can understand the feeling of caring about one's own body.

See [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights) to read more posts in this series.



# Focusing Only on the Woman for a Time Is Not Compromise



A Reflection from JFA's Executive Director, Steve Wagner

**Part 3 in a Series — July 2018**

I've now written two posts in this series focused on the woman's right to her body and the value she has as a person. I've made the point that discussing what her right to her body entails must be accompanied by a sort of healthy recognition that we're talking about somebody's body.

You may worry that making this recognition somehow chips away at or cheapens our concern for the unborn child. No, I'm *not* forgetting the unborn child. Don't worry. But I *am* attempting to take seriously what it means to have a body and to have another person's body inside one's body.

Focus on the woman or focus on the unborn child? It doesn't have to be one or the other. But I am arguing that in order to show concern for the woman's real right to her body, in order to communicate to the pro-choice advocate the real value we believe the woman has, we might have to be okay with not mentioning the unborn for a moment. This is a small concession, and I don't think it's a compromise. Currently, the typical pro-choice advocate sees most pro-life advocacy as only about the baby. There is truth in their perceptions, even though I think this characterization of us as mostly anti-woman is wildly off the mark.

I've been working for years to respond to arguments about the woman's body, and I have rarely, if ever, paused to reflect on the *person* I'm in fact discussing. Without much fanfare, I've been discussing the physical organism, the body, to which she is more deeply connected than she is connected even to the unborn child inside of her. For, of course, she isn't connected to her own body through a placenta or umbilical cord or by "sharing space." She is *directly* connected to her body as her *own*.

With that reality in mind, I can no longer simply proceed as if this discussion of what her real bodily rights entail is a purely theoretical argument. I can no longer proceed as if we simply need to get to the right answer about that argument, as important as that is. Questions such as, "What rights and responsibilities does she have?" and "What limits can be legitimately made by law upon the actions of her body?" and "What is right?" are all important, to be sure. Concern for the woman's body doesn't erase these other concerns. We can't love the woman and be sympathetic about her experience and simply ignore the question at hand, "Can you ask a doctor to kill the unborn child in her body?" We must find a way to love both as equal human beings.

I'm not arguing here for focusing on the woman to the exclusion of the unborn child. I'm saying that I can no longer in good conscience simply think about, teach about, and respond to the statements and arguments regarding a "woman's right to her body," without giving some reflection and time to the fact that she has a special connection to her body, and all of our discussion affects her in a way it doesn't affect us who don't have her body. I'm arguing that giving focus to the woman will gain us a hearing for our thoughts not only about her, but also about the unborn child. Both the woman and the child are often forgotten in these conversations.

Remember how important your body is to you. This is not only about the woman, of course, but it is at least about the woman. It would be a great progress for the woman to whom we are speaking to feel clearly the value we believe she has. If we hope to kindle affection for unborn children as valuable human beings, one necessary (though not sufficient) step is to kindle affection for the woman experiencing unintended pregnancy.

See [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights) for more posts in this series.



**JUSTICE FOR ALL** - TRAINING THOUSANDS TO MAKE ABORTION UNTHINKABLE FOR MILLIONS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

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# Practical Suggestions for Concern and Common Ground Regarding Bodily Rights



A Reflection from JFA's Executive Director, Steve Wagner

Part 4 in a Series — July 2018

I've made the point in the previous posts in this series, that when someone defends abortion by saying, "It's her body," the first thing we should do is find common ground and show concern for the woman and the uncontroversial aspects of her real right to her body. Here are a few additional practical suggestions for finding common ground and showing concern for the woman when her bodily rights are the topic of conversation:

- "How does it feel for you to discuss this topic? I'm not sure I can understand what it's like to discuss this, but I'd like to try."
- "Is it difficult to be open-minded, considering what's at stake for you? Can you describe for me what you feel is at stake with your legal right to abortion? How does this discussion affect you?"
- "This is a really difficult experience we're talking about, and one that the woman understands in a way I cannot as a man. She has a body that has the ability to have another body inside of her. And then she sees all of these people arguing about what she can do or not do. She feels conflicted, perhaps, about what is inside of her when she is pregnant. She may feel conflicted about the circumstances in which she got pregnant and the man who contributed to her becoming pregnant. But now here she is, pregnant...and in a very real sense, she feels alone with her body and what's happening within her body."
- "There are many different ways in which women are oppressed and their bodies are not respected. The last thing I want, as a proponent of human rights, is for her real right to self-determination to be unnecessarily or unjustly restricted. I think we need more advocacy and action against rape and domestic violence and other forms of assault against women. These ways of treating women must be stopped. I am committed to giving my time and money to being a part of the solution."

Here's another thought you should consider: When someone says, "I have a right to my body," there's a possibility that the person is not really intending to make an argument. The person may be intending to say something more emotive, something more like a desperate cry of self-preservation.

I think the same is true, by the way, with many statements that seem to us to be justifications of abortion, but which pro-choice advocates are intending more along the lines of shows of sympathetic concern. Sometimes when people mention poverty or single parents or other situations in which it's understandable that a woman wouldn't want to be pregnant, I think the person is really just processing and emoting with language, and is not really intending to give reasons in the sense of argument and logic.

*So it may be with the statement, "It's her body."* We can't assume an argument is intended by those words. Sure, an argument is definitely lurking in the shadows, even if its not intended, and we need to be ready for it. I think the communication that's intended, though, is something simpler: "Her body is affected by pregnancy a lot, and I care about her." We can surely agree with those sentiments. Let's pause, then, to hear the heart, and only move forward to clarify and respond to the intellectual arguments once that concern has been laid as a foundation stone in the conversation.

See [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights) for more posts in this series.



# Is “It’s Her Body” a Statement about Biology? Ask a Question to Find Out.



A Reflection from JFA’s Executive Director, Steve Wagner

**Part 5 in a Series — July 2018**

Look at some of the most common defenses for legal abortion:

- “It’s her body.”
- “The unborn is a part of the woman’s body.”
- “The unborn is in her body.”
- “She should be able to do what she wants with her body.”
- “My body, my choice.”
- “The unborn is totally dependent on her body.”
- “She has a right to her body.”

In this series, I’ve been issuing a wake-up call to help us remember our common sense when we hear these statements. There is a person behind the statements, a *somebody* who has a *body*, and we must give some time and reflection to how this topic personally affects the women whose rights we’re discussing. I’ve pointed out that we need only think about how important our own bodies are to us, and I’ve given some practical suggestions for ways to communicate our concern for women in discussions about abortion.

I’ve also pointed out, though, that the same concern for human beings that motivates us to care for the woman also motivates us to speak up for unborn children. Justifications for abortion based around claims about the woman’s body and her bodily rights don’t only present the relational challenge of “Do you care about a woman’s bodily rights?” These justifications also present an intellectual challenge comprised of questions such as “What do the woman’s bodily rights entail?” and “Does her right to her body include the right to kill another human by abortion?”

So, keeping in mind that we not only need to show concern for women at the beginning of a discussion about a woman’s right to her body, but also throughout that discussion, let’s think together about the intellectual challenge: “Does a woman’s right to her body entail the right to abortion?”

When we hear the statements above, we are immediately confronted with a problem. What are they? Are they philosophical arguments, statements of feeling, vague sentiments, or some combination of these? In my experience, I have found that many people don’t really know how they intend these statements. But when we launch into a response as if they meant these as a full-fledged argument, many are surprised. Sure, they may be surprised that their favorite slogan didn’t “silence all opposition” as it might have the last time they used it. I think, though, that some of the surprise is due to the fact that the person is not intending to be philosophical at all. Still, these statements have the structure of arguments, so we should gently respond.

When I hear a defense for legal abortion that references the woman’s body, my first questions are aimed at determining which of the following arguments the person is intending:

1. Because the unborn is in the woman’s body, dependent on it, connected to it, or “part of it” in some sense, then the unborn is not a human being. (“The unborn is not a human organism biologically.”)
2. Because the unborn is in the woman’s body, dependent on it, connected to it, or “part of it” in some sense, the unborn does not have equal value or an equal right to life. It is deficient and therefore it is not a person with equal rights and value. (“The unborn doesn’t have equal intrinsic value or rights.”)



3. Because the unborn is in the woman's body, dependent on it, connected to it, or "part of it" in some sense, the woman should be allowed to kill the unborn through abortion because of her bodily rights, even though the unborn is a human being with equal value and rights. ("The unborn does have an equal right to life, but the woman's bodily rights trump the unborn's right to life.")

So, to determine which of these arguments is intended, we ask a single question:

**"When you mention the unborn's connection to the woman's body, do you mean that the unborn is not a human being with equal value, or do you mean that even though the unborn is a human being with equal value, the woman can still kill it through abortion because of bodily rights?"**

The point here is that we shouldn't assume it's a bodily rights argument straight off just because it refers to the "body," nor should we assume it's an argument against the biological status or value of the unborn straight off just because it seems to downplay the existence of the unborn's own "body." We have to ask questions to know for sure.

Here's an example of this problem. You might have seen an image passed around on social media which pictures a pregnant woman with an arrow pointing to her saying, "Your body," and an arrow pointing to the unborn child visible in her belly, saying, "Not your body." My friend Timothy Brahm at the Equal Rights Institute responded to this recently (<https://blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/stop-sharing-straw-man-meme>).

I agree with the point of Tim's post, and I encourage you to read it. I'll add a comment or two here. Although there is truth in this meme (the unborn child does have her own body with her own bodily rights, after all), this image doesn't really communicate any of the understanding and concern for the woman that I have been emphasizing in this series. That's perhaps the most serious problem with it. The image also assumes that defenses for abortion referring to the woman's body simply get the facts wrong about the number of bodies involved. The image essentially takes all "it's her body" statements to be claiming that, as a matter of biology, the unborn is simply a functional part of the mother's body. Tim calls this the "scientifically ignorant" position, and while he agrees that some people who make "it's her body" (and similar) statements do hold the "scientifically ignorant" position, he points out that in many cases, the person is intending a bodily rights argument instead. (As you can see from my questions above, I think there's another possibility, too, that the person is making an argument against the value of the unborn.)

In my experience, many people who talk about the woman's right to her body don't have a clear idea of what they're saying. They are still working it out. Once you ask the question I suggested above, you can help the person determine what he or she is trying to get at. Some aren't clear on biology. They think that the unborn is less than an organism (a mere mass of tissue). Some agree that the unborn is biologically a human organism, but they think it's not the sort of human organism with rights because it's dependent on another body. This is a different argument. And many are intending to make the claim that whatever the unborn might be, the woman's right to her body takes precedence.

In any case, sharing the meme probably does more harm than good. (Indeed, Tim's stronger admonition to never share it is good advice.) I'd prefer to share a different image that communicates better our concern for women and our understanding that in many cases, the person who says, "It's her body," is making a bodily rights argument, contending that the woman should be allowed to get an abortion even though there are two bodies involved. This argument deserves our careful attention, and simplistic memes and dismissals which miss the point won't help us dismantle it.

See [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights) to read all of the posts in this series.





# From a Foundation of Love for Women and Children, We Respond Intellectually to Bodily Rights Arguments



A Reflection from JFA's Executive Director, Steve Wagner

**Part 6 in a Series — July 2018**

How should we respond to defenses of abortion that refer to the woman's body? Let's review the steps I've outlined so far in this series and complete the process by preparing to respond intellectually:

1. **Show concern for the woman.** I described how important this is in Part I of this series and elaborated on the concept in a series of follow-up blog posts. I suggested that we remember our concern for our own bodies (Part II), realize that it's not compromise to focus on the woman and not the unborn for a time (Part III), and find common ground about seeking to stop violations of a woman's right to her body, such as rape, that we can all agree should be stopped (Part IV). Read each part of the series at [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights).
2. **Ask a clarification question** to determine if the statement referencing the woman's body is arguing against the idea that the unborn is a human being with equal value (biologically not a human organism or lacking equal rights to the rest of us) or is intended to make a bodily rights argument (Part V).
3. If the person is fuzzy on biology, **be ready to clarify the facts that show that the unborn is a living, human organism** (see [www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#biology](http://www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#biology)).
4. If the person is fuzzy on the equal rights of the unborn, **be ready to make an argument for those equal rights** (see [www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#equal-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#equal-rights)).
5. If the person is crystal clear that the unborn is a human being with equal rights but thinks abortion is justified anyway because of bodily rights, **you know you're discussing a bodily rights argument, but still you need to ask for more clarification.** When the person says, "The woman has a right to her body," and intends a bodily rights argument, perhaps she means, "The woman can do anything she wants with anything in her body." Trent Horn has called this the "Sovereign Zone" view.
6. **Be prepared to respond to the Sovereign Zone view.** This view makes a very strong claim. Timothy Brahm's "Autumn in the Sovereign Zone" essay ([www.EqualRightsInstitute.com/SZ](http://www.EqualRightsInstitute.com/SZ)) will give you a good model for responding. See also JFA's *Abortion: From Debate to Dialogue—The Interactive Guide, Activity 6* for a scripted dialogue that will help you learn to respond ([www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#bodily-rights)).
7. When the person says, "The woman has a right to her body," she may mean, on the other hand, "the woman cannot be forced to use her body to sustain the life of the unborn." Trent Horn has called this the "Right to Refuse" view. This view makes a weaker claim, and it can come in very sophisticated forms. Use our post, "A Response to the Strongest Violinist" ([www.jfaweb.org/DFG](http://www.jfaweb.org/DFG)) to **understand the "Right to Refuse" argument and learn to respond.** This post includes a link to a paper JFA helped produce which attempted to put this argument in its strongest form and respectfully show where the argument fails.
8. **In all of the above steps, remember the woman.** When you are discussing the woman's right to her body and whether it entails the right to legal abortion, there is a person whose body and life you are discussing. In the same way, when you discuss the woman's right to her body, **you also must work to remember the unborn child,** contrary to the spirit of the age. Both the woman and the child are persons for whom these arguments are not mere intellectual exercises, but rather are matters intensely practical and intimate.

See [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights) to read all of the posts in this series and access the internet links above.



**JUSTICE FOR ALL** - TRAINING THOUSANDS TO MAKE ABORTION UNTHINKABLE FOR MILLIONS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

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# A Few Additional Thoughts on Bodily Rights and Abortion



A Reflection from JFA's Executive Director, Steve Wagner

**Part 7 in a Series — July 2018**

To wrap up this series for now, here are a few additional thoughts about bodily rights defenses of abortion:

*Bodily Rights Arguments Commonly Come in Combo:*

- When someone says some version of “it’s her body,” many times it’s not as simple as identifying her argument as being in one of three distinct categories. It’s not as simple as, “She’s either arguing that the unborn is not a human organism biologically, or arguing that the unborn is not equal in rights and value, or agreeing that the unborn is a fully valuable human being but that abortion should be allowed because of the woman’s bodily rights.” Many times, the person holds more than one of these positions simultaneously. In other words, many times bodily rights arguments come in combination with other arguments.
- For example, a person may refer to the fact that the unborn is “in her body” and may be fuzzy on the biology, fuzzy on equal rights for the unborn, and may also be intending to make a sort of bodily rights argument.
- I suggest peeling the arguments apart and seeing if you can get agreement on the biology first, then see if you can gain agreement about the equal rights of the unborn, then tackle the bodily rights argument once these foundation stones are laid in the conversation.

*For Those Who Don’t Believe the Woman’s Body Is Her Body:*

- Someone may respond to my series by saying that “we are not our own” so “we don’t own our bodies.” I assume that someone with this view would be consistent and say that even he himself doesn’t own his body. This person might say, “in some philosophical or metaphysical sense, no one owns his or her body.” Even if you believe this, this particular point won’t be very helpful when someone makes a bodily rights argument in a discussion of unintended pregnancy and abortion. The question is this: Can you agree that among all human beings (and all collectives, such as governments), the person who is closest to having ownership of the woman’s body is the woman herself? Even if you’re right in your philosophical point, shouldn’t we treat her as if she owns her body?

*More Resources on Bodily Rights ([www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#bodily-rights))*

- JFA’s *Interactive Guide, Activity 6*. If you read nothing else, this entry-level material will at least help you ask the right questions to determine if you’re encountering a bodily rights argument.
- “A Response to the Strongest Violinist” - JFA “De Facto Guardian” paper and other links.
- Trent Horn and David Boonin debate. Both are experts on bodily rights arguments.
- Bodily Rights Resources from Equal Rights Institute (ERI)
- ERI President Josh Brahm teaches on bodily rights (video/audio).
- Find additional resources on bodily rights available at the link above.





# Loving Every Human Being with JFA

## Resource Bulletin – July 2018



**PRAY FOR CONVERSATIONS**

*Pray for Recent and Upcoming Events (Partial List):* Pray for wisdom for the team members who plan JFA’s event schedule. Pray for the health of our trainers that they might keep active in the field. Pray for each person we train and each person with whom we converse at outreach, that God will kindle new affection in their hearts for women in distress and for the smallest humans on earth.

- July 18 (David City, NE): Interactive Workshop – Aquinas High School
- July 19, 21 (Columbus, NE): Interactive Workshops – St. Bonaventure Catholic Church
- July 28 (Washington, DC): Interactive Seminar – SFLA Regional Coordinators
- August 18 (Wichita, KS): Interactive Seminar – St. Mary’s Cathedral
- August 27-28 (Wichita, KS): Outreach Events – Wichita State University (WSU)
- August 27-29: Georgia Events – See link below for details.
- September: VA, KS, CO, and OK Events – Details TBA
- October/November: OK, KS, and TX Events – Details TBA

See More Recent and Upcoming Events, including Photos: [www.jfaweb.org/calendar](http://www.jfaweb.org/calendar)

**PREPARE FOR CONVERSATIONS**

*Featured Resource for Equipping Yourself:* Read Steve Wagner’s recent article, “It’s Her Body,” and the accompanying series of blog posts to prepare for defenses of abortion that refer to the woman’s body, such as “my body, my choice” and “she can do what she wants with her body” and “the unborn is part of her body.” Even after 15 years of engaging bodily rights arguments, Steve recently realized he’s been missing something very obvious and very important. Through Steve’s reflection on a recent campus conversation, you’ll gain a new way of seeing these arguments and a step-by-step framework (including links to in-depth resources) for meeting the relational and intellectual challenges present in every discussion of bodily rights and abortion.

Read “It’s Her Body” or Download a Printable Version: [www.jfaweb.org/its-her-body](http://www.jfaweb.org/its-her-body)  
See Other Blog Posts in This Series: [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights)

**START CONVERSATIONS**

*Featured Conversation Starter:* Use the recent JFA blog post, “Her Experience Matters,” to start a conversation with common ground. This post features a JFA exhibit panel that uses Paul Simon song lyrics to give expression to the feelings of many women facing unplanned pregnancy. In every conversation about abortion, you can find common ground on the importance of women and their bodies, and this post will help you do this in a natural way. It will also help you to develop empathy for women facing unplanned pregnancies, and it will help you gently pose thought-provoking questions about those difficult experiences.

Share the Post Via Twitter: [www.twitter.com/7conversations](https://www.twitter.com/7conversations)  
Share the Post Via the JFA Blog: [www.jfaweb.org/start-the-conversation](http://www.jfaweb.org/start-the-conversation)

What can I do to love every human involved in unwanted pregnancy?

### About the *Loving Every Human Being with JFA* Resource Bulletin

Friends of JFA ask, “What can I do to love every human involved in unwanted pregnancy?” This resource bulletin offers some answers. Supporting JFA financially enables JFA’s trainers and volunteers to create conversations that kindle affection for unborn children and their parents, but beyond that, you can **PRAY** for conversations the JFA community is creating, **PREPARE** for conversations, and **START** conversations.

Pray for conversations. Prepare for conversations. Start conversations.



# Loving Every Human Being with JFA

## Resource Bulletin – August 2018



**PRAY FOR CONVERSATIONS**

*Pray for Recent and Upcoming Events (Partial List):* Pray for wisdom for the team members who plan JFA’s event schedule. Pray for the health of our trainers that they might keep active in the field. Pray for each person we train and each person with whom we converse at outreach, that God will kindle new affection in their hearts for women in distress and for the smallest humans on earth.

- August 18 (Wichita, KS): Interactive Seminar – St. Mary’s Cathedral
- August 19 (Wichita, KS): Interactive Workshop – The Mission Church
- August 27-28 (Wichita, KS): Kiosk Outreach – Wichita State University (WSU)
- August 26 (Kennesaw, GA): Interactive Seminar – Ratio Christi at Kennesaw State
- August 27-29 (Kennesaw, GA): Kiosk Outreach – Kennesaw State University
- August 29 (Kennesaw, GA): Presentation and Open Forum – Ratio Christi
- September: KS, CO, and OK Events – See link below for details.
- October: VA, OK, KS, and TX Events – See link below for details.
- November: OK, KS, and TX Events – See link below for details.

See More Recent and Upcoming Events, including Photos: [www.jfaweb.org/calendar](http://www.jfaweb.org/calendar)

**PREPARE FOR CONVERSATIONS**

*Featured Resource for Equipping Yourself:* Last month we featured “It’s Her Body,” Part I of Steve Wagner’s series focused on defenses of abortion which refer to the woman’s body. This month we’re featuring Part VI of that series (“From a Foundation of Love for Women and Children, We Respond Intellectually to Bodily Rights Arguments”). In Part VI, Steve outlines a thoughtful response in eight steps, and he includes links to help you prepare for each step of the conversation.

Read Part VI or Download a Printable Version: [www.jfaweb.org/its-her-body-part-6](http://www.jfaweb.org/its-her-body-part-6)

Read the Series or Download a Printable Version: [www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights](http://www.jfaweb.org/blog/bodily-rights)

**START CONVERSATIONS**

*Featured Conversation Starter:* Use the recent post, “I Don’t Have the Money,” to start a conversation about unintended pregnancy in a natural way. This post features a picture and quotation from an *Exposures Project* on-the-street interview. You can easily begin your conversation with common ground by expressing sympathy for this woman’s situation. Most share that sympathy. Indeed, not having enough money is one of the most common reasons women give for having an abortion. (For tips on moving the conversation forward from there, see [www.jfaweb.org/tott](http://www.jfaweb.org/tott).)

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Share the Post Via the JFA Blog: [www.jfaweb.org/start-the-conversation](http://www.jfaweb.org/start-the-conversation)

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