

My Potluck, My Choice

By Francesca Grossberg

Should we be able to make personal decisions about our bodies, or should others be able to decide for us? Should a woman have the right to terminate a pregnancy?

In the mid-1970s, women were granted the right to make an important choice about their bodies: whether or not to have an abortion. Since then, abortion has been legalized in all fifty states. However, certain states have made access to abortion more challenging. Controversy continues over the right to choose.

Our nation has been divided for many years on the topic of abortion. The issue of choice is also an issue of equality between men and women. Nobody is placing restrictions on medical procedures for men. So, is it fair to restrict a common medical procedure for women? According to The Guttmacher Institute, one in four women in the U.S. will have an abortion, showing how necessary it is to have access to this service. Unfortunately, women who are socioeconomically disadvantaged—often women of color—may not have the ability to obtain contraception. If a woman cannot plan her pregnancy and have the option to terminate that pregnancy, she may lose important education or employment opportunities. Women faced with unplanned, unwanted, dangerous, or forced pregnancies should be able to determine their next steps. People who feel that abortion is immoral can choose not to abort but should not be able to impose their views on others.

Having a lively potluck dinner to discuss abortion, including people who support the pro-choice perspective and those who support the pro-life, or anti-abortion, perspective, may help build consensus. In the YES! Magazine article “Cooking Stirs the Pot for Social Change,” Korsha Wilson states, “Everyone puts down their guard over a good meal, and in that space, change is possible.”

At this potluck, there will be no restrictions on food choice. People can bring and eat any type of food they wish. This could lead to 10 pans of macaroni and cheese. But, I feel that as a community, the value of personal freedom is greater than the negative consequence of too much mac and cheese. If people are gluten-free, vegetarian, or keep kosher, they may bring their own food. Someone who chooses unhealthy foods also has the right to make their own decisions about their bodies. My dish will be tapas, a traditional Spanish appetizer platter. There will be sizzling garlic shrimp, zesty fried squid rings, and empanadas bursting with spinach

and cheese. Multiple small dishes like tapas will give my guests the ability to choose what they want to eat.

I would invite people who would have a lasting impact on the conversation and, perhaps, help the group reach an agreement. To represent the pro-choice perspective, I would invite the strong and wise Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Cecile Richards, the former director of Planned Parenthood, an organization that provides comprehensive health services and sex education. To represent the pro-life perspective, I would invite Vice President Mike Pence and Senator Mitch McConnell, who both believe that abortion is murder. For an on-the-ground perspective, a woman who has had an abortion, along with Dr. Willie Parker, who is an abortion provider, outspoken Christian, and reproductive justice advocate in the South would share their personal experiences related to abortion. Perhaps without terminating her pregnancy, this woman would not have been able to get a good job, complete an education, or care for her other children. Stories about women whose lives have changed for the better because they had a choice may encourage Vice President Pence and Senator McConnell to reconsider their opinions.

The right to abortion is not only one of the most controversial issues in our nation, but also relates to other topics, such as gender and economic equality. As a young woman with an extensive reproductive health education, my opinion is crucial to the conversation. I feel strongly about these topics because they impact the health of young women like me. People may maintain the right to their personal beliefs on abortion, but restrictions should not be placed on the reproductive rights of women. Barring access to abortion is a violation of human rights.