

24 COMMENTS ABOUT WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND FREEDOM TO CONTROL THEIR OWN BODIES, BY FAMOUS PATRIOTS AND POLITICAL FIGURES

“As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of government to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government hath to do therewith. . . I fully and conscientiously believe that it is the will of the Almighty that there should be a diversity of religious opinions among us.” *Thomas Paine*

“It behooves every man who values liberty of conscience for himself to resist invasions of it in the case of others.” *Thomas Jefferson*

In no instance have... the churches been guardians of the liberties of the people. . . Religion and government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together.” James Madison

“If the liberties of the American people are ever destroyed, they will fall by the hands of the clergy.” *Marquis de Lafayette*

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. . . . He has compelled her to submit to laws in the formatikon of which she had no voice. He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty. . . He has endeavored. . . to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.” *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, early women's rights advocate.

“It was we, the people, not we,, the white male citizens. . . but we, the whole people, who formed the union. . . . No man is good enough to govern any woman without her consent. *Susan B. Anthony*, leader in the campaign for women's voting rights.

"No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother. . . . She goes through the vale of death alone, each time a babe is born. As it is the right neither of man nor the state to coerce her into this ordeal, so it is her right to decide whether she will endure it. . . . When motherhood becomes the fruit of a deep yearning, not the result of ignorance or accident, its children will become the foundation of a new race." " *Family planning pioneer Margaret Sanger*

“Religious factions. . . are trying to force government leaders into following their position 100 percent. . . . I'm frankly sick and tired of the political preachers across this country telling me as a citizen that if I want to be a moral person, I must believe in 'A,' 'B,' 'C,' and 'D.' . . . I will fight them every step of the way if they try to

**dictate their moral convictions to all Americans in the name of ‘conservatism.’
*Barry Goldwater, who was called “Mr. Conservative.”***

**“I believe a woman has a right to an abortion. That’s a decision that’s up to a pregnant woman, not up to the pope or some do-gooders on the religious right.”
Senator Barry Goldwater**

“We knew family planning could relieve a great deal of human suffering, Barry Goldwater’s wife Peggy, who was co-founder of Arizona Planned Parenthood in 1937.

“I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute – where no Catholic prelate would tell the President (should he be Catholic) how to act and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote – where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference. . . where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches, or any other ecclesiastical source --- where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials – and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.” John F. Kennedy

"The search for human freedom can never be complete without freedom for women. . . . Any woman should have the right to a safe and legal abortion.” *First Lady Betty Ford*

“In this Land of the Free, it is right, and by nature it ought to be, that all men and all women are equal before the law.” *Gerald R. Ford*

"The religious right wants to tell people how to live . . . I hate what the fundamentalist fanatics are doing to our country. . . I have a strong belief that you are in charge of your body, whether male or female. It’s the house you are living in for your entire existence – your temple, as the more religious might say.” Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura

**“There can be no question that women should have equal rights with men.” . . .
"Women should have free access to every field of labor which they care to enter, and when their work is as valuable as that of a man it should be paid as highly. . . . As regards the laws relating to marriage there should be the most absolute equality between the two sexes. I do not think the woman should assume the man's name."
*Theodore Roosevelt***

“Too often the great decisions are originated and given form in bodies made up wholly of men, or so completely dominated by them that whatever of special value women have to offer is shunted aside without expression.” *Eleanor Roosevelt*

‘To label family planning and legal abortion programs "genocide" is male rhetoric, for male ears. . . Women know, and so do many men, that two or three children who are wanted, prepared for, reared amid love and stability, and educated to the limit of their ability will mean more for the future of the black and brown races from which they come than any number of neglected, hungry, ill-housed and ill-clothed youngsters. Pride in one's race, as well as simple humanity, supports this view.’
Black Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm

At the very heart of the abortion debate are conflicting religious views about when "personhood" begins -- a dispute that has engaged theologians for centuries. . . Any law passed to restrict abortion would impose a religious view held by some citizens, and in effect, prevent all other citizens from freely practicing their own religions. . . . The abortion debate in America is not a conflict between the 'God-fearing' and the 'Godless' but is instead a struggle between those determined to undermine religious freedom and those determined to preserve it. . . "Every woman must have the right to consider all options when she faces a problem pregnancy and the freedom to allow her to come to a decision that is in harmony with her own moral and religious values--without government intrusion."' *The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (a nationwide alliance of more than forty mainstream Jewish, Protestant, and other religious groups)*

“Pro-choice means that the Government respects the individual, and isn’t that really what our country is all about?” *Senator Barbara Boxer*

Being pro-choice is trusting the individual to make the right decision for herself and her family, and not entrusting that decision to anyone wearing the authority of government in any regard.” *Secretary of State Hillary Clinton*

In 1964 Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower served together as bipartisan honorary co-chairs of Planned Parenthood. In stark contrast to presidential hopeful Mitt Romney’s declaration in March of 2012, “Planned Parenthood, we’re going to get rid of that.”

“A woman’s ability to decide how many children to have, and when, without interference from the government, is one of the most fundamental rights we possess. It is not just an issue of choice, but equality and opportunity for all women.” *Barack Obama*

“Women should not need a permission slip from government to take care of their own reproductive health.” *Ohio state senator Nina Turner*, who in response to recent bills that would restrict women’s health services and contraception, authored a bill requiring men to see a sex therapist before they could get a prescription for Viagra.

“I’m completely in favor of the separation of Church and State. My idea is that these two institutions screw us up enough on their own, so both of them together is certain death.” *Humorist George Carlin*

Believe it or not, many authors of bills that take away women's reproductive rights and restrict their health care options hypocritically mouth comments about "freedom!" Apparently they mean their own freedom to tell others how to live. . . . *A key element of religious imperialism is an attempt to forge laws and political institutions that constrain others in ways that promote the beliefs and practices of one's own sect. . . .* Stripped to its bare bones, the Radical Wrong's reproductive agenda appears to be to crush such independence and autonomy as women have attained, and throw the advances women have made toward equal of status and opportunity into the garbage can. . . . A national tidal wave of bills like Turner's, with exciting variations such as in Texas requiring sonograms and X-rays of the penis and testicles before prescribing drugs to stiffen drooping male organs, would seem a fitting response to the recent wave of male-authored bills that force government to take away women's rights and their sovereignty over their own bodies. It's time to get the government's and some religions' iron hands out of women's underwear!

For the record, Jesus Christ was silent on both contraception and abortion, taking no position about either. Jesus did not advocate the slightest bit of Papal or extremist Evangelical agenda toward women. He was a friend and defender of women in his own time. He strongly opposed every attitude and every action that would lead toward unnecessary suffering. By contrast, . . . the right wing extremist outlook appears to be, "We don't care if they suffer, as long as we get our ideology written into law."

SOLUTIONS:

- *Return to the founding fathers' clear, succinct principle of separation of church and state.*
 - *Strike down all the authoritarian and anti-libertarian laws that give any branch or agency of local, state, or federal government any authority over a woman's body and pregnancy.*
 - *Any and all government deliberation and policymaking related to women's bodies should be made by councils that consist entirely of women members.*
- Ensure that the government does not impose on the people any law or policy based on sectarian wishes, perspectives, or policies.*

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Victor Daniels, Ph.D.

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