

ADOPTION - THE HEROIC CHOICE

*By Steven M. Kirsh, Attorney**

Women who make adoption plans for their children are heroes. In fact, they may be among the most heroic people in our society. Few people place the needs of others so far ahead of their own needs. A birth mother, who makes an adoption plan for her child, makes, if not the ultimate sacrifice for her child, certainly one which few of us would have the courage to make. A birth mother makes an adoption plan because she loves her baby and wants to provide more for her baby than she herself can provide. This is not because she is a bad person or an unfit parent, far from it. In fact, because she realizes the limitations of what she can realistically provide for her child, she makes the most difficult decision of her life by allowing another person the opportunity to parent her child, to love her child, and to have a relationship with her child about which she knows that she can only dream.

Unfortunately, in our society, women who choose to abort their babies receive more support and encouragement than those who make an adoption plan. Fully one half of the American public believes that a woman has an absolute right to abort her child. In fact, many of those same people would use force, if necessary, to insure that a woman has a right to abort her child. They would campaign against a political figure who did not support abortion and would try to block appointments to the United States Supreme Court or even lobby against cabinet nominees, if they believed that the person might try to curtail abortion in our country.

In the twenty years in which I have been practicing adoption law, I have not seen any public sentiment nearly as forceful and demonstrative supporting a woman's right to choose an adoption plan for her child.

Women who choose adoption are portrayed as women who do not love their children, women who do not care about their children, or women who want to shirk their responsibility of being parents. Are women who choose abortion portrayed in the same way? The answer is definitely not. At least in our society, a woman has a *right* to have an abortion.

The fact of the matter is that a woman who chooses an adoption plan for her child should be seen as the most unselfish, courageous, loving person in our society. She is putting the needs of her child above her own emotional and psychological well-being. She wants her child to have a life and a future that she does not feel that she can provide herself. At the same time, she is creating an opportunity for an infertile couple to have the child about which they could only dream.

Women who choose adoption plans for their babies must be given encouragement, love, and support. Most of all, they must be recognized for the true heroism and altruism which they display.

Both the pro-choice and pro-life movements in our country are too well entrenched and have too much invested in their own positions to ever give into the other side. However, the reality is that if adoption were portrayed as a more positive option, if women who chose adoption plans were recognized as heroes in our society, many more women might choose adoption plans for their unborn babies rather than abortion. Not even the most fervent supporters of abortion would argue that abortion should be encouraged for the sake of increasing the number of abortions in our country.

If more women with unplanned pregnancies chose adoption, the number of abortions would decline. The only way for this to happen is for birth mothers who choose adoption to be exalted and revered and not criticized.

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