



OLD  
ENOUGH TO  
KNOW  
BETTER

A pro-choice  
zine from an  
anti-abortion  
childhood



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"Thank god or the saints that while we knew we were right, we believed we were unholy."

-my pal Andrew, on growing up far-right, pro-life, and surrounded by violently authoritarian rhetoric

## Introduction: White Woman Grief

In the days since the Roe v. Wade leak, one refrain I've heard, over and over again is that "white cis women are centering themselves and their pain".

It's true. I'm doing it right now. This zine is all about *my* feelings, the flashbacks *I've* had, and the conversations *I've* engaged in. That's one of the almost necessary limits of a perzine, they center the author's experiences.

I expect that this isn't the only text you'll read on the matter. In fact, I'd prefer if it wasn't. I am one white cis woman who grew up pro-life and far right, and swung hard left in my college years. I may be the "brainwashed student" the right warns about, but I'm far from the only thing they fear. I encourage you to read into the work of non-white, non-cis people who've grappled with this issue, and I've included a further reading list at the end.

Take care of yourself while reading. This is a painful, difficult subject even for those of us who have never gotten an abortion, partially because of what it means for literally everything else in our lives. If you need to stop reading, or you find more solace in someone else's takes, I'm not offended. Do what you need to do to stay balanced and well.

Solidarity,  
Jax

# They're Not Stupid!

"Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity."

-Hanlon's Razor

"I guess we're living in Idiocracy now."

-some guy on the internet whenever Bad Shit happens

Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone barred Nancy Pelosi from communion within the diocese of San Francisco. He says he did this because of her support for abortion. Meanwhile, Pelosi is backing Henry Cuellar, an anti-abortion candidate, for a primary election.<sup>1</sup>

The US is currently in a formula shortage crisis, spurred on by recalls and supply chain issues<sup>2</sup>. While a bill has passed the federal House to ease some of the issues, Senate Republicans are yelling about how they shouldn't have to fund FDA inspectors to check the formula.<sup>3</sup> The market can fix this crisis, never mind that the recalls from the biggest formula producer in the country caused the shortage in the first place.

Alito's leaked opinion quotes a CDC article talking about a "domestic infant supply"<sup>4</sup>, suggesting that all unwanted pregnancies would easily find a home with adoptive parents in the US - never mind that it can cost up to \$45k to adopt a child<sup>5</sup> before the costs of diapers and babyproofing and furniture and education and nonexistent formula. That's if you want to adopt a baby, of course, which many people do - they want an adorable munchkin to make in their own image. A child with their own mind is not nearly as appealing - children under

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.cnbc.com/2022/05/20/catholic-bishop-bars-communion-to-nancy-pelosi-over-abortion.html>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/5/19/us-baby-formula-crisis-what-you-need-to-know>

<sup>3</sup><https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/3496316-baby-formula-bill-faces-rocky-terrain-in-senate/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.cbs8.com/article/news/verify/scotus-verify/supreme-court-justices-alito-barrett-domestic-supply-of-infants-adoption-fact-check/536-9b8c296f-b277-454d-8ca8-53fd4e601382>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.familyequality.org/resources/average-adoption-costs-in-the-united-states/>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2021/10/adopt-baby-cost-process-hard/620258/>

five account for *almost half* of all adoptions, while adopted teenagers represent less than ten percent<sup>7</sup>. Even more infuriating, the Supreme Court has made adoption much harder by setting precedent that agencies are allowed to deny couples for the simple fact of being not-straight<sup>8</sup>.

I'm tired. I'm tired because I see this every day. I see people in power, making moves like this to solidify their own power and views of the world. I see my friends say "don't they understand they're voting against their own interests? If they were really pro-life, they would support universal healthcare/make adoptions free and open/subsidize daycares/etc. What idiots! They don't understand their own ideology!"

They do, unnamed friends. They really do.

Logical consistency isn't the name of the game, not when you're trying to breed a disposable working class who are forced to beg for scraps at your table to survive. These are the same people who wanted nuclear war in the middle east to bring on the biblical apocalypse, who believe that children are "arrows in a quiver" to be used against a sinful world, and who believe that those very arrows are born in sin and need to be punished to learn the right way. Simultaneously, though, they cling to the image of The Child, its purity and innocence, to defend their atrocity - it's all for the future! It's to make things better for the future, with a white, cis, abled face!

Hanlon's Razor does not apply to political agendas like these. Hanlon's Razor is best applied to genial conversation, not to strategic political moves years in the making. The people who push a pro-life, pro-capitalist, anti-working-class agenda are not stupid. They are very educated, both in the world and their beliefs. They know what they want. The cruelty is the point.

*The cruelty is the point.*

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<sup>7</sup> <https://partnersforourchildren.org/blog/what-does-age-have-do-adoption-0>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/17/supreme-court-sides-with-catholic-adoption-agency-that-refuses-to-work-with-lgbt-couples.html>

I was raised to be pro-life. I never attended marches, my parents thought it would be too dangerous, but I devoured every book I could find on how abortion was bad. I didn't have to look far. The Catholic church I attended had a full library of pro-life literature. My youth group went to see movies like *Bella* and *Juno* because they showed "young women making the responsible choice."<sup>9</sup> I spent hours at pro-life conferences watching other people's children, barely a teenager myself, with no oversight. I remember being told at homeschool and pro-life conferences that I was the future, that it would be my generation that won the abortion wars.

Well, they weren't entirely wrong, were they?

It's weird, seeing that I got everything my young self wanted, now that I'm finally old enough to know better. Some fellow former pro-lifers have said they felt like they were fighting a losing battle, and were surprised when their former side won. I have never felt this way. I was pro-life with all the burning fervor of a crusader riding into the middle east, knowing that their cause was pure and righteous, knowing that their enemies were ontologically evil and would eventually fall before the might of the Lord. I knew this day would come.

I think I always knew it, even when I changed my views, first out of necessity, then realizing it was good praxis. It's a force powered by fanatics, every one of them believing they're creating a better, more Christian world, and enough children raised to believe that it is their job to win the culture war before the Book of Revelations begins. Their standard is the Child and their battle cry is "What if Beethoven was aborted?"

A note on the use of Idiocracy here: I understand why so many people use it as a point of reference whenever politics gets particularly egregious. It's an easy point. The average white

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<sup>9</sup> I am aware Elliot Page is not a woman, however his character was in this film. Diablo Cody has said she would not have written the film if she knew pro-lifers would glom onto it.



cis man is suddenly the most intelligent person in the world, who can see how everything has gone to shit around him. It's a tempting fantasy! But it's a libertarian one with a not-so-secret love of eugenics. Don't bring it up. We know what you're saying, you budding Malthusian. "Gosh, I wish everyone was just like me, the Only Sane Man!"

I'm so tired.

The word "stupid", in my experience, is overused. It's a thought-terminating cliché. It makes us think that we are Smart, and they are Stupid, and therefore we are both morally and objectively correct. It's a dangerous path to go down, especially when we don't actually mean "not-smart", but instead "cruel", "bigoted", "hateful", "fascist", "selfish", or any other term. Intelligence does not presuppose kindness by any means. Doctors believe in QAnon, and nurses support anti-vax propaganda, politicians decry abortion while making it difficult to raise children. They're not stupid, they've chosen a narrative that centers them over anyone else.

They're not stupid. They want capitalized bodies, resources to continue their Dominionist Christian war.

They're not stupid. They're dangerous, and strategic, and very, very intelligent. They want a tomorrow that conforms to their today, no matter how many have to suffer.

# It's Never Been About Children

"Our mouths must be full of blood, you see. It is about protecting our children."

-Lancaster Councilmember Ismail Smith-Wade-El

Never.

Never ever.

It has *never* been about actual children.

If it were about actual children, "more cops in schools" would mean something. Instead, cops stood by pissing themselves as a single man wearing a plate carrier with no body armor<sup>10</sup> inserted entered an elementary school and killed 19 children and 2 adults<sup>11</sup>. This was after shooting his grandmother, who appears to be still alive, but that's not what the coverage wants to focus on. She was someone's child once too.

If it were about actual children, the government would be doing everything in its power to end the formula shortage instead of quibbling about giving more money to the FDA. We'd be making sure that formula was safe to feed to those who need it, instead of risking more recalls. We wouldn't let companies like Abbott actively use the crisis as an excuse to price gouge.

If it were about actual children, we would realize that some children are queer. Some children are disabled. Some children aren't white. We'd know, as we know now, that these children deserve to understand their existence like anyone else, and that understanding does not appear magically with adulthood.

If it were about actual children, we'd teach them, openly and honestly, about how to recognize actual grooming and child abuse (not just CSA, even!) at the hands of "nice" people, the

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/05/25/uvalde-shooter-bought-gun-legally/>

<sup>11</sup> At last count.

people who are supposed to protect them. We would build a robust system of care and support for survivors, instead of simply spouting off violent rhetoric about "what we want to do to pedophiles, who don't deserve to be called human". Instead, we view a whiff of pedophilia, with no evidence, as a death sentence. It becomes another thought-terminating cliché, never mind what the survivors (if there are any) want.

It's never been about children, because children are as messy, complicated, and problematic as any other human. Children in their humanity don't make a good rallying point.

Children as potential, though, as futurity for the status quo? THAT'S a cause people can get excited about.

I went through the remembrances of the victims of the Texas shooting today. I read so much about what they wanted to be: about how they were on the honor roll, how they liked sports and could have been good professional players, how they were angels watching over their families now. I didn't read anything about what kind of dinosaurs they liked, their least favorite foods, their favorite movies and video games, how they felt about thunderstorms. They have become symbols, little lives tragically cut short, and now they can be weaponized.

In "The Future Is Kid Stuff", Professor Lee Edelman defines The Child as "the emblem of futurity's unquestioned value... the image of the Child, not to be confused with the lived experiences of any historical children, serves to regulate political discourse—to prescribe what will count as political discourse—by compelling such discourse to accede in advance to the reality of a collective future whose figurative status we are never permitted to acknowledge or address."

The Child, then, is allowed to be innocent and pure, while real children are so often denigrated as "predators" or "brats" or "innate sinners", specifically because the Child is the image of the society's status quo. Abortion is dangerous because it

stymies creation of The Child. Critical Race Theory and queer education are dangerous because they expose The Child to the sins of the father, and thus weaken its innocence. The formula shortage does not affect The Child, because The Child, with its obviously attentive birth mother, receives plenty of labor-free breast milk at all hours. The Child demands nothing but the continuation of its parents' views. The Child has parents who love and care for it in acceptable ways and is more afraid of social systems than any sort of abuse. The Child is how we perpetuate harmful systems - including systems that grind actual children to dust - because we must not harm this beautiful, white, cis, abled, neurotypical, middle class ideological construct.

I hate The Child. The Child has harmed me and thousands, millions of others. When is it our turn? When do we get the care and love so casually denied us at turns for being imperfect sinners? Why are we a disappointment for the privilege of growing up?

"The unborn" are a convenient group of people to advocate for. They never make demands of you; they are morally uncomplicated, unlike the incarcerated, addicted, or the chronically poor; they don't resent your condescension or complain that you are not politically correct; unlike widows, they don't ask you to question patriarchy; unlike orphans, they don't need money, education, or childcare; unlike aliens, they don't bring all that racial, cultural, and religious baggage that you dislike; they allow you to feel good about yourself without any work at creating or maintaining relationships; and when they are born, you can forget about them, because they cease to be unborn. You can love the unborn and advocate for them without substantially challenging your own wealth, power, or privilege, without re-imagining social structures, apologizing, or making reparations to anyone. They are, in short, the perfect people to love if you want to claim you love Jesus, but actually dislike people who breathe. Prisoners? Immigrants? The sick? The poor? Widows? Orphans? All the groups that are specifically mentioned in the Bible? They all get thrown under the bus for the unborn."

-Reverend David Barnhart

## Roe, The Real, And Me

"Whoever attempts to submit to the moral law" Lacan informs us, "sees the demands of his superego grow increasingly meticulous and increasingly cruel....The political regime of futurism, unable to escape what it abjects, negates it as the negation of meaning, of the Child, and of the future the Child portends. Attempting to evade the insistent Real always surging in its blood, it lovingly rocks the cradle of life to the drumbeat of the endless blows it aims at sinthomosexuals. Somewhere, someone else will be savagely beaten and left to die—sacrificed to a future whose beat goes on, like a pulse or a heart—and another corpse will be left like a mangled scarecrow to frighten the birds who are gathering now, who are beating their wings, and who, like the drive, keep on coming."  
-Lee Edelman, No Future

I sit in the tub, my naked body covered by slowly draining bubbles and lukewarm water. I don't want to get up. I don't want to see my body straight down. I don't want to see the little pout my uterus makes as it pushes against my abs. I don't want to think about it.

I do it anyway.

I tell my partners I was sitting in the bath brooding, like Marat. I tell them I need a hot centrist femme to come stab me, my own Charlotte Corday. I make the low-burning fire, the static of inevitability, inside me into a joke. I am not helpless, but I am not a hero.

I've made a habit of making my body inhospitable to the growth of other sentient life. I took monthly pills, then quarterly, then when even that wouldn't prevent me from breakthrough bleeding, quarterly shots. I don't mind the shots. I like the nurses who give them to me. They tell me I take it like a champ. They joke with me about not wanting babies, about being patient, easy to work with.

This is the exchange. I smile at the nurses. I don't tell them that an injection is a small price to pay for a lifetime of freedom, of being a hedonist, a slut, the opposite of everything my child self wanted to be. Edelman calls this the sinthomosexual, the queer who resists any symbolic meaning, the Other who does not serve the political image of the Child. Even Edelman, one of the most anti-Child theorists in existence, acknowledges that actual human children have nothing to do with the Child, the image of cis het white abled innocence that we sacrifice love and comfort and jouissance NOW for. Many of my friends and loved ones have children. I don't begrudge them that. Those children will grow up and no longer be part of the Child -- Edelman wryly points out that many children grow up to be what we try to protect the children from: queers, disabled people, poor. Some of us are all three, and more.

On the outside, I am a "respectable" queer. I have a spouse, a house, a car, a government job. I want to get a dog with my spouse. I want to have a garden. There are parts of me that enjoy nurturing and building.

I have been told that I would make a good mother. I profoundly disagree. When someone tells me to imagine what children I could bring into the world, my brain freezes.

I do not begrudge my loved ones for having children. That would be foolish. I, however, cannot willingly bring a child into this world, not when it's almost impossible to parent myself through the multitude of apocalypses we're living in. I don't want to attach meaning to my life beyond my own personal integrity and creative style. Why should I try to do it to another sentient human who doesn't have the same ground knowledge I do? That's a hideous responsibility for me. I don't want it.

And yet, even that sounds selfish. Saying "I don't want children, I don't want them to have to deal with me or this

world" sounds like I'm casting aspersions on my loved ones with children. No matter how many times I tell myself that, it becomes a moral statement when it hits the air, rather than a statement of personal feeling, or a realistic assessment of what I can handle.

My doctor tells me that if I ever return a positive pregnancy test, she'll get me in touch with someone who can perform an abortion. She doesn't say "perform an abortion", she says "handle it". Abortion is a dirty word, but we both know what she means. My Depo shot should slowly sterilize me, and with the way my body takes it so well, it shouldn't harm my bones or cervix. That's the biggest warning on Depo -- it can weaken your bones. My doctor tells me that's unusual, but putting "this product can sterilize you" on the vial isn't something the producers want.

I understand. I would give anything to be completely sterile, but sterilization was fucked (deliberate choice of words) by eugenicists, who, in the service of The Child, nonconsensually took away the ability to procreate from the "unworthy" as recently as the 1970s. Now Depo says it hurts your bones as a scare tactic, rather than slowly killing off the thing that frightens me most about my own body right now. I will never have to have my tubes tied or my uterus removed (unless it gets damaged or ill) and I will still have a full supply of estrogen. I'm lucky, in my own eyes. I'm lost in others.

I was supposed to be the Child.

I remember going through my church's library, reading about the cruelty of abortion supporters, picturing inhuman green faces staring down at their victims. I went on pro-life marches and babysat for pro-life conferences, children parenting children. I first told my parents I never wanted kids at the age of 10. They told me I would change my mind.



I had my first pregnancy scare at the age of 19. I still wasn't sure if I could get an abortion even then, but I knew I didn't want it. I've never been pregnant, luckily, but every time I get scared, I get a little more pro-choice.

This leaked ruling put so much of my luck into perspective. As a cis woman with a uterus being gently assisted into early retirement, I have never been forced to carry anything against my will. I live in a state that handles all birth control copays and has codified Roe into state law. I have never had to assume the dreaded title of "mother". I can take Zofran when I feel nauseous without having to worry about even minimal fetal side effects. I don't have to listen to people give me childrearing advice or look at a baby bump as though it's their personal treasure.

And yet.

And yet I didn't want to look at the little hillock my uterus makes in my (actually extremely cute) abdomen, because I know someone, somewhere, is FURIOUS that I have chosen to be queer and childless and slutty and kinky and purely unconcerned with my reproductive future. To them, my distaste for the Child (and all the horseshit conspiracy theories that come with it, that wind up harming actual children, including me) is a personal betrayal, a refusal to care for THEIR future. No community-building, no protest work, no Food Not Bombs meals, no amount of domestic skill or breadwinning ability I could possibly perform excuses the fact that I am not bearing the symbol of reproductive futurity. I am not "nurturing human capital".

I will not. I refuse. I conscientiously object. I can barely parent myself, those parts of me stuck in states of fear and helplessness, that I have to remind that even as the world collapses, I am here.

It doesn't mean much. It may not mean anything.

Does this have anything to do with abortion? I think it does! I have been on many different sides of the argument, and this is what I come down on: I need it. You need it. We need that choice like we need the choice to refuse or engage in any other form of lifesaving healthcare, the Child and human capital be damned. Would pregnancy physically kill me? Probably not, I'm white and in a state that's actively working to decrease maternal morbidity. But it would forever change how I relate to the world in a way I am unwilling to accept. It would destroy something within me, something I'm not sure I can name while writing this, and I don't want that.

If this isn't making sense, don't worry. I've been reading Lee Edelman and Baedan all afternoon, and I'm not sure I'm capable of being sensible. My brain sometimes floats up into the stratosphere to escape global and personal trauma, and the best way to slowly come back to the world is theory and nonsense and words like "cathexis" and "sinthomosexuality" and "death drive". It feels safe. It feels like home. Even sentences I can only process emotionally and not intellectually have their place.

I've considered getting some variation of "For queerness can never define an identity, it can only ever disrupt one" tattooed on me. Maybe right above my ass. Baedan talks about "Capitalism, the Family, and the Anus" and Edelman loves talking about "anality". I have IBS and hate anal sex, but that has to count for something, right?

Maybe this is what Lacan calls The Real.

## **Further Reading**

How To Give Yourself An Abortion:

<https://haters.noblogs.org/files/2021/11/JC-Abortion-imposed.pdf>

How To Have A Safe Self-Managed Abortion:

<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/how-have-safe-self-managed-abortion>

No Future by Lee Edelman (includes The Future Is Kid Stuff):

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/lee-edelman-no-future>

Justice Alito's Opinion on Dobbs v. Jackson:

<https://tinyurl.com/4h484jba>

Mothering Against Motherhood by Sophie Lewis:

<https://haters.noblogs.org/files/2022/03/Mothering-Against.pdf>

My Journey From Condemning To Protecting Abortion Rights by Lydia Holm:

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/iowa-view/2020/09/19/pro-life-pro-choice-what-changed-how-viewed-abortion/5824027002/>

Abortion Clinic Violence as Terrorism by Michele Wilson and John Lynxwiler:

<https://tinyurl.com/4m5a4jfy>

Caliban And The Witch by Silvia Federici:

<https://files.libcom.org/files/Caliban%20and%20the%20Witch.pdf>