Language

1. **fetus** is baby before it is born
2. **expecting:** pregnant
3. **pro-life:** against abortion
4. **pro-choice:** in favor of a woman´s right to have an abortion.

What is the legal position in your country regarding abortion?

Before you read the text, which of the following is closest to your own view of abortion?

a. I am deeply, morally against it.
b. I don't see anything wrong with it.
c. I don't feel strongly either way.
d. I think it depends on individual circumstances.

Do you know of any countries where abortion is illegal?

Reading

As you read about this young woman's experience, try to answer this question:
Was her decision a positive one or one she regrets?

Why I had an abortion

The reason I had an abortion was because I knew I was far too young to have a baby – it was the wrong stage of life. I could have taken care of a baby because teenagers do it all the time. But basically, I didn't want a baby. I wanted to wait until I was married so that my husband and t could give our baby all the love and care it needed. I don't think I was ready for all the responsibilities of motherhood. There were so many other things going on in my life at the time. It wouldn't have been fair to the baby if I couldn't be there for it. There was also a chance my boyfriend and I would break up and the baby would grow up without a father. And it wasn't fair on my mother who would have had to help bring the child up. I also had big plans to go away to university to train as a nurse. I knew that would be virtually impossible with a baby. I listened to my heart and after lots and lots of soul-searching, I knew abortion was the right answer for me. *(Fifteen-year-old girl)*

Discussion

Do you think the girl acted responsibly? Why / Why not?

Here is the opinion of a retired British doctor. She worked as a doctor both while abortion was illegal and for about 30 years after it was legalized.

"Before abortion was made legal, all my colleagues and I were in favor of it, but over the years my views have changed. I think it should still be legal, but young girls today are using it as another form of contraception. That is wrong and it was never the intention of the reformers that this should happen."

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How do you react to the doctor's view?

How do doctors in your country feel about this issue?

What about the father?

Read this short article. Do you think the man has a right to do what he has done?

A FATHER'S RIGHTS

A man has successfully managed to prevent his former girlfriend from having an abortion - at least for the time being. The clinic where the operation was due to take place agreed yesterday that they would not continue with the procedure until further medical enquiries had taken place. Stephen Curtis, 24, took legal action against the clinic, saying that the termination was against the Abortion Act rules because only one doctor was consulted instead of two, and other checks on the physical and psychological state of the woman had not taken place. Mr Curtis took the legal action because he is opposed to abortion. His victory is only temporary, however, as there is nothing to stop the woman going to another clinic. He hopes to be able to persuade her to change her mind.

Discussion

Work in pairs or small groups and decide whether you agree or disagree with the statements below:

1. It should be the woman's right to choose. Ultimately, it's her body and so it's her decision alone.
2. If you're mature enough to make a baby, then you're mature enough to take care of it.
3. A baby is still a person even before it is born.
4. Abortion is for the irresponsible.
5. I believe all life is sacred and so abortion is a criminal act to me.
6. With so many other options, like adoption, I don't see why an abortion is ever necessary.
7. I don't agree with late-term abortions, but I think the so-called 'morning-after pill' is basically OK.
8. I don't believe in abortion laws - it's usually men who make them.
9. If abortion is illegal, it only means more backstreet abortions will happen and that is dangerous for the women concerned.
10. Abortion is wrong and should be stopped at all costs, including bombing the clinics if necessary. One doctor from an abortion clinic was shot last month. He got what he deserved.

Finally, here are some arguments put forward by the Prolife Alliance in the UK:

Your life in your mother's womb started at conception. Your heart started to beat 3 weeks after conception. Your brain waves could be detected at 5 weeks. Your organs were all formed at 10 weeks. Your hearing was perfect at 16 weeks. Over 180,000 abortions are performed in Britain each year. Abortion is the most common surgical operation in the *UK.* ***97% are of healthy babies. 90% are for social rather than medical reasons.***

What is your reaction to these arguments?

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