

## Why I Am Not Voting for Senator Obama *Dan Avila Oct. 31, 2008*

My political concerns extend to all the threats to human well-being. Unjust war, poverty, abandonment and oppression offend my conscience. That is why I cannot vote for Senator Barack Obama for President.

“At the heart” of Senator Obama’s political program is his guarantee of protection for the so called “freedom” of choice to kill an innocent segment of our population, the “unwanted” unborn.<sup>1</sup> He vows that “On this fundamental issue, I will not yield.”<sup>2</sup> He will nominate only judges who agree to uphold “the right to privacy,” the basis on which the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand throughout the full nine months of pregnancy in its 1973 Roe v. Wade decision.<sup>3</sup> His record is one of unmitigated support for choosing to end human life at any time up to and even after birth.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Senator Obama espouses a policy that tears at the seamless garment of human dignity in numerous places. He admits that “abortion is never a good thing”<sup>5</sup> but nonetheless endorses free access to a practice that turns its prenatal victims into war casualties. Abortion creates the most abject form of poverty there is by causing death. It prevents its victims from receiving essential healthcare and all other social services, treats them as if they were illegal aliens to be expelled, and prefers over their human rights the interests of those empowered to exercise abortion rights.

Guaranteeing abortion access will make it impossible for Senator Obama to end war, help the poor, and welcome immigrants because abortion is the most unjust form of war, it hurts the poorest of the poor, and it is the severest means of deportation. I cannot in good conscience, through my vote, be made a party to a candidate’s plan that so wrongly threatens all the children in our community and nation who are deprived, vulnerable, alienated, powerless and innocent.

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<sup>1</sup> “Well, look, in my mind reproductive care [read: abortion] is essential care, basic care so it is at the center, the heart of the plan that I propose.” Barack Obama, Address and responses to questions during appearance before Planned Parenthood Action Fund, Inc., July 17, 2007 (hereinafter Obama, Planned Parenthood Address), available online at <http://www.imoneinamillion.com/> (video) and <http://lauraetch.googlepages.com/barackobamabeforeplannedparenthoodaction> (transcript).

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> “[WOLF] BLITZER: Let’s go down the whole panel, and if you could give me a short yes or no, would you insist on a Supreme Court nominee supporting abortion? . . . OBAMA: I would not appoint somebody who doesn’t believe in the right to privacy.” Transcript, CNN Democratic Debate in Las Vegas, Nov. 15, 2007, available online at <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/071115/se.02.html>.

<sup>4</sup> The non-partisan Annenberg Political “Fact Check” project verified that Senator Obama, applying his radical interpretation of the already extreme Roe v. Wade case that legalized abortion, opposed and voted against legislation while serving in the Illinois state senate that would have protected children born alive after an abortion. The legislation was proposed after reports surfaced in Illinois indicating that infants who survived abortions were denied medical care and left to die. See FactCheck.org, “Obama and ‘Infanticide,’” Aug. 25, 2008, online at [http://www.factcheck.org/elections-2008/obama\\_and\\_infanticide.html](http://www.factcheck.org/elections-2008/obama_and_infanticide.html). He has a 100% voting record in favor of abortion rights, and supports restoring access even to partial birth abortion. See NARAL Pro-Choice America, “Sen. Barack Obama’s Record on Choice,” available online at <http://www.prochoiceamerica.org/elections/statements/obama.html>. For an excellent one page comparison of positions on the life issues between Senator Obama and Senator John McCain from the perspective of the National Right to Life, see NRLC PAC, “Where Do the Candidates Stand on Abortion?,” available online at <http://www.nrlpac.org/pdf/comparisonpiece.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Barack Obama, quoted at an April 11, 2008 news conference in Indianapolis, IN, as reported by Jim Kuhnhenn, Associated Press, “Obama: Public Finance System ‘Creaky,’” April 11, 2008, available online at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2008/04/11/politics/p075255D97.DTL>.

Hope is not hope if it does not give all people the opportunity to hope. Change is not change if it embraces the continued dehumanization of the most vulnerable. Compassion cannot coexist with destruction—such utter contradiction poisons every good intention. Senator Obama’s eloquent appeal to help one’s neighbor is robbed of its force when paired with a priority that puts some of the most defenseless of our neighbors beyond all neighborly care. My conscience rebels against becoming complicit in such misguided and confused political aims.

Should I mark my ballot for Senator Obama another factor would deepen my culpability. He wants to repeal the current ban on federal Medicaid dollars being used for elective abortions.<sup>6</sup> Senator Obama also vows that “the first thing that I’d do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act,”<sup>7</sup> which does not ensure any freedoms for the unborn child or for those healthcare providers conscientiously opposed to abortion, but rather would strip away all legal limits on abortion and abortion funding.<sup>8</sup>

If carried out, these promises would result in my tax dollars being commandeered to enlarge the theatre of war against innocent human life, thereby dramatically increasing abortion rates.<sup>9</sup> Every time that any money would be extracted by the IRS from my income to be put to such use, I would become a direct financial accomplice.

Almost 49 million abortions were reported as occurring in the United States between 1973 and 2004 and the scourge continues for reasons that range from desperation to convenience, with at least 4,000 more lives of our unborn brothers and sisters eliminated each passing day.<sup>10</sup> I want to be part of the solution and not a coerced contributor to this calamity.

Some argue that Senator Obama offers a better way to reduce abortions, not by making our laws pro-life, but by ensuring access to prenatal and postnatal care, as well as contraception. However, the Freedom of Choice Act that Senator Obama is committed to signing would forbid federal and state policies from preferring life, and it would globally mandate access to free abortions.<sup>11</sup> One

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<sup>6</sup> RH Reality Check: Information and Analysis for Reproductive Health, “Sen. Barack Obama’s RH Issues Questionnaire,” Dec. 21, 2007 (hereinafter RH Reality Check Obama Questionnaire), available online at <http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/blog/2007/12/21/sen-barack-obamas-reproductive-health-questionnaire> (noting answers of Sen. Obama campaign staff, indicating his opposition to the Hyde Amendment, banning Medicaid funding for abortions except when the life of the mother is at stake or in cases involving rape or incest).

<sup>7</sup> Obama, Planned Parenthood Address supra note 1.

<sup>8</sup> National Organization for Women, “Freedom of Choice Act Would Guarantee *Roe* Protections in U.S. Statutes: Measure Would Sweep Away Hundreds of Anti-Abortion Laws and Policies,” April 30, 2007 (hereinafter NOW FOCA Analysis), available online at <http://www.now.org/issues/abortion/070430foca.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Abortions could as much as double in number. “A study by The Guttmacher Institute shows that Medicaid-eligible women in states that exclude abortion coverage have abortion rates of about half of those in states that fund abortion care with their own dollars.” NARAL Pro-Choice America, “Discriminatory Restrictions on Abortion Funding Threatens Women’s Health” (Dec. 1, 2007), (citing Rachel K. Jones et al., “Patterns in the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortions in 2000-2001,” *Perspectives on Sexual & Reproductive Health* 34 (2002)), available online at <http://www.prochoiceamerica.org/assets/files/Abortion-Access-to-Abortion-Women-Government-Discriminatory-Restrictions.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Abortion figures are based on the National Right to Life Committee’s summary of reports from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Planned Parenthood’s affiliate, the Alan Guttmacher Institute, available online at National Right to Life, “Abortion in the United States: Statistics and Trends,” available online at <http://www.nrlc.org/ABORTION/facts/abortionstats.html>.

<sup>11</sup> NOW FOCA Analysis, supra note 8; see also Office of General Counsel, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Memorandum (Aug. 15, 2008) (providing legal analysis of the Freedom of Choice Act), available online at <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/FOCA/analysis.pdf>.

does not reduce abortions by guaranteeing free access and one does not increase respect for the belief that “sexuality is sacred”<sup>12</sup> by handing out free contraceptives.<sup>13</sup> My conscience is not comforted.<sup>14</sup>

A related argument is that pro-life laws will not work in reducing abortions. Yet if that is the case, then why do advocates for abortion rights so adamantly oppose them? They do work.<sup>15</sup> But they are not the only tool in the campaign to grow a culture of life.

The pro-life movement, which I proudly back because it is the binding thread of my seamless garment respect for human dignity, is motivated by the conviction that we should “love them both,” child *and* mother. Pro-lifers created and now run the greatest non-governmental care net in the history of this country to help mothers and families cope with pregnancy and social needs after birth. Senator Obama opposes giving these compassionate centers any federal support.<sup>16</sup>

Others argue that Senator Obama’s positions on issues other than abortion make his candidacy worth supporting and that his personal qualities are exemplary. But some day, when I die, I may face all the children whose lives were taken by abortion as a result of the sort of abortion policies that Senator Obama advocates. I am at an utter loss as to how I could explain to them that a vote for a better economy or for a nice guy was more important than their fate. Moreover, in this and any other election I am not voting for congeniality. I am voting for peace, wellbeing and justice. A candidate’s plan that includes abortion as a priority is not a plan for peace, wellbeing or justice.

Still others say that voting for a Republican is unthinkable. I am not persuaded that Senator Obama deserves my vote simply because he is a Democrat. There is no compelling reason that I can see for voting for Senator Obama that outweighs the harm that he proposes to do. Besides, no one and no law is forcing me to vote. I still have the choice either to not vote at all or else to vote for any one of his opponents. If there truly are no other candidates that merit my support, then I will decline to vote rather than mark my ballot in a way that makes me complicit in a gravely defective plan.

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<sup>12</sup> Barack Obama, The Third McCain-Obama Presidential Debate, Oct. 15, 2008, transcript available online at <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2008d.html>.

<sup>13</sup> “I support legislation to expand access to contraception, health information and preventative services to help reduce unintended pregnancies. That is why I co-sponsored the Prevention First Act of 2007, which will increase funding for family planning and comprehensive sex education that teaches both abstinence and safe sex methods.” Barack Obama, Statement Submitted on NARAL Pro-Choice America’s Request, May 14, 2007, “Sen. Barack Obama’s Record on Choice,” supra note 4.

<sup>14</sup> “If someone recommended fighting crime by subsidizing criminals, or cleaning the environment by eliminating anti-pollution regulations, or improving airline safety by making metal detectors optional, we would have good reason to be skeptical. . . . Funding abortion, radically de-regulating abortion, and crushing any conscientious objection to abortion; all this amounts to wholesale promotion of abortion. This is hardly a common sense way to reduce the number of abortions.” Thomas Grenchick, Office of Pro-Life Activities, “Reducing Abortions by Promoting Abortions?,” Sept. 5, 2008, available online at <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/publicat/lifeissues/090508.shtml>

<sup>15</sup> See the excellent analysis by Michael J. New, “Pro-Life Politicians Have Made a Difference; Pro-Life Laws Work,” The Public Discourse, Oct. 24, 2008, , available online at [http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/viewarticle.php?selectedarticle=2008.10.24\\_New\\_Michael%20J.\\_Pro-Life%20Politicians%20Have%20Made%20a%20Difference,%20Pro-Life%20Laws%20Work\\_.xml](http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/viewarticle.php?selectedarticle=2008.10.24_New_Michael%20J._Pro-Life%20Politicians%20Have%20Made%20a%20Difference,%20Pro-Life%20Laws%20Work_.xml) and Michael J. New, “Pro-Life Laws Work,” Oct. 30, 2008, National Review Online, available at <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=YjIxNzhmOGEyZjY4OTYyZTAyOWJhZjQyNDg1YzY1NmQ=.>

<sup>16</sup> RH Reality Check Obama Questionnaire supra note 6.

My conscience fails to be impressed by the argument that the Democrat, no matter what his positions are, should get my support because his main opponent is a Republican.

I will vote in the presidential election, God willing. Senator John McCain will get my vote, and not because he's a Republican. I am officially registered in my state as an "unenrolled" independent voter, with no declared party affiliation. I vote for candidates, not parties.

Senator McCain passes a threshold test that Senator Obama fails. He and his running mate Gov. Sarah Palin have a record of supporting pro-life laws and policies. They disagree with Senator Obama's belief that the constitution protects the right to kill innocent human life.<sup>17</sup>

Though a proven respect for innocent human life is a necessary condition for any office seeker to earn my consideration, I am not a single issue voter. To be truly pro-life is to be pro-life for the whole of life.<sup>18</sup> Yet a vote for Senator Obama offers no clear advantage over Senator McCain on other important issues.

Senator Obama joins Senator McCain in supporting war when he deems it necessary to national security,<sup>19</sup> in supporting embryonic stem cell research,<sup>20</sup> in supporting the death penalty,<sup>21</sup> in opposing torture,<sup>22</sup> in proposing similar immigration policies,<sup>23</sup> and in addressing global warming,<sup>24</sup> The candidates differ on same-sex marriage,<sup>25</sup> healthcare, welfare, and education reform<sup>26</sup> but again, not in a manner that, in my opinion, overcomes Sen. Obama's threshold failing.

Senator Obama vows to dismantle current pro-life advances and to increase government support for abortion access. Thus he would deny life, healthcare, food, housing, education and security to a larger, undefended portion of the human family. This pledge disqualifies him from my consideration.

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<sup>17</sup> See NRLC PAC, "Where Do the Candidates Stand on Abortion," supra note 4.

<sup>18</sup> This phraseology comes from Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS). Linda Feldman, "Sen. Brownback touts 'Pro Life, Whole Life' Message for '08," Christian Science Monitor, April 26, 2007, available online at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0426/p25s01-usmb.html>.

<sup>19</sup> "Let me begin by saying that although this has been billed as an anti-war rally, I stand before you as someone who is not opposed to war in all circumstances. . . . I don't oppose all wars." "Remarks of Illinois State Sen. Barack Obama Against Going to War with Iraq," Oct. 2, 2002, available online at <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/warspeech.pdf>. For Sen. McCain's position on war, see "Remarks by John McCain to the Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)," April 7, 2008, at <http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/News/Speeches/3d837545-5ac8-4124-929c-33c3f0ee9fe5.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> See Obama-McCain Comparisons at <http://www.obama-mccain.info/compare-obama-mccain-stem-cells.php>.

<sup>21</sup> See Obama-McCain Comparisons at <http://www.obama-mccain.info/compare-obama-mccain-capital-punishment.php>.

<sup>22</sup> See Obama-McCain Comparisons at <http://www.obama-mccain.info/compare-obama-mccain-guantanamo.php>.

<sup>23</sup> See Obama-McCain Comparisons at <http://www.obama-mccain.info/compare-obama-mccain-immigration.php>.

<sup>24</sup> See Obama-McCain Comparisons at <http://www.obama-mccain.info/compare-obama-mccain-environment.php>.

<sup>25</sup> Sen. Obama opposes any constitutional amendment, state or federal, that defines marriage as the union of man and woman and supports the repeal of a federal law ("Defense of Marriage Act" or DOMA) that requires marriage to be similarly defined when used in federal statutes and regulations. Letter to the Alice B. Toklas LGBT Democratic Club in San Francisco from Sen. Barack Obama (July 1, 2008), republished in John Wildermuth, "Obama Opposes Proposed Ban on Gay Marriage," San Francisco Chronicle, July 2, 2008, available online at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/07/01/MN8J11I731.DTL>. Sen. McCain supports such measures at the state level, and at the federal level only if the federal courts force states to recognize same-sex marriage. He voted in favor of DOMA. William R. Kapfer, "McCain's Gay Q & A," Washington Blade, Oct. 1, 2008, available online at [http://www.washblade.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog\\_id=21367](http://www.washblade.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog_id=21367).

<sup>26</sup> See generally Obama-McCain Comparisons at <http://obama-mccain.info/index-obama-mccain.php>.