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as I see it;
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The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Neonaticide is murdering your baby within 24 hours of birth. Can you imagine anything more horrible? How could a mother simply murder her child, sometimes throwing "it" in a dumpster? Why do these mothers not avail themselves of the safe and legal option of leaving the baby at a safe haven location? All 50 states now have safe haven laws allowing an individual to leave a newborn at designated locations, usually without any legal consequences.

Neonaticide is explainable, even if not forgivable. Surprisingly, it has been a part of human existence for millennia. Greece, Rome, the Vikings, the Phoenicians; all openly practiced neonaticide. How could a society condone murdering a newborn? Psychologists suggest neonaticide is a part of our biological design, a part of what we are, a prior necessity for survival. Anthropologists studying hunter-gatherer tribes found fascinating information about neonaticide. Women let their newborn die when its prospects for survival to adulthood were poor. They made the decision based on the perceived health of the baby or their personal and societal circumstances – she had too many older children, their society was at war or suffering a famine, and the like. The mother had to triage her offspring, "cut her losses."

Anthropologists learned that women saw the baby's death as unavoidable, as a tragedy. This, even though they were the ones murdering the child. They remembered the child and mourned its death the rest of their lives. These mothers were not hardened, not callous. In fact, they continued to be loving mothers to their existing children and to children they had in the future. They saw murdering their newborn as a decision that had to be made, a fact of life.

In contrast, women who commit neonaticide today are usually young, poor, unmarried, socially isolated, and

the father is not involved. They are of all ethnicities and usually still live with their parents. They often psychologically deny the pregnancy entirely, even while giving birth. Is that possible? Until an emergency room experience many years ago, I would not have believed so. A teenager presented to the emergency room where I then practiced, complaining of abdominal pain. She and her mother were appalled when I asked when her last menses was and if she could be pregnant, the questions prompted by the size of her abdomen and the rhythmic abdominal pain. She and her mother screamed that she had never been sexually active and informed me my questions were unacceptable. The denial continued while I delivered the baby. I showed them the baby while mother and daughter continued to call me a liar. Denial can exist to a tremendous degree, a powerful protective emotion.

Neonaticide today is not the same as in the past. Today, an "unwanted pregnancy" is the reason over 80% of the time. Since the young woman or girl cannot grasp the fact she is pregnant, neither abortion nor adoption are an option. She usually goes through labor and delivery alone, often at home, quietly, and without discovery. She is exhausted, bloody, panicked, and needs to "get rid of the problem." Reason and good decision making are not available to her in these circumstances. In her near psychotic emotional state she cannot reasonably decide to calmly go to a safe haven location to leave the baby. Her emotional and physical exhaustion leave her only one option – murder the baby.

Psychologists explain that these women are unable to see the newborn as a person. In fact, they point out there are many cultural practices that still distance a mother's emotional attachment until the newborn's survival is assured. Neither christening nor the

Jewish bris are done at birth. They are done later and grant "personhood" to the newborn. Psychologists also suggest the process of bonding is not immediate. Rather, according to Steven Pinker, currently a Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, it evolves and grows over time with the "increasing biological value of the child (the chance it will live to survive to produce grandchildren)." All this helps explain the mothers committing neonaticide viewing their newborn as lacking "personhood."

The neonaticide of the past is understandable, even if unforgivable. Drawing a distinction, those committing neonaticide today are more likely to be mentally ill teenagers unable to accept the reality of pregnancy and therefore cannot ask for help.

Psychologists and philosophers explain neonaticide was considered historically acceptable because they believed the newborn had not attained "personhood." Value and "personhood" come with time. Wait a minute. Isn't that precisely how they are justifying abortion today? They claim the fetus has not yet attained "personhood" or "value" as a human being and therefore can be aborted.

My older brother suggested life is a continuum from conception to death; birth just another event along that continuum, not particularly defining anything unique. Perhaps the only difference between abortion and neonaticide is timing. Perhaps abortion is nothing more than pre-birth neonaticide.

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