

Abortion and Slavery

By Alan Keys

In a speech delivered in San Francisco on March 3rd, 2000, Alan Keys the former presidential candidate spoke about why he is so relentless in advancing the cause of the unborn and his utter contempt for abortion. His words powerfully declare what this nation has forgotten. Below are his comments on this, the defining issue of our age.



You see, people wonder why it is Alan, everywhere he goes, he always brings up this issue of abortion and I never go anywhere without mentioning it. Why? Because abortion is to our time what slavery was to the 19th Century. And if anyone of conscience went anywhere in the 19th Century and did not confront the American people with the evil of slavery, then they were not doing what statesmanship required.

Slavery was what discarded and rejected and denied the fundamental principle of right and justice in America. And what was done in the name of slavery then is done for the sake of abortion now. And the paradigm of it is quite clear. What is this argument made in favor of abortion? You can see it in Roe versus Wade and everything else. It's a privacy argument, and privacy based on what? Well, this is the woman's body and she has the right to decide what goes on with it. You start from that. And this child, this babe, this fetus in the womb, what is it? Well, it's a part of her body utterly dependent on her body, not viable apart from her body. She has, therefore, absolute power over this being, and given that absolute power she has the absolute right to dispose of it according to her will.

We don't recognize what that is saying? It is saying that power makes for right. Might makes for right. Therefore, if I have you in my power, I may dispose of you and your life according to my will. And if that argument is now accepted, and we have embraced it as a fundamental principle of law, then we have rejected the right principle. For if our right, our most basic right, the right to life itself comes to us not from God but from our mother's choice, then there is no human right that transcends in its claim, human choice and human power.

Abortion is the paradigm, the ultimate paradigm of despotism, tyranny, oppression, slavery, holocaust. And I see this all the time. I was down in South Carolina not long ago and a young lady came up to me after I had given a talk just like this, and she says "I was listening to your speech and I want to know how come you can prefer the rights of potential persons to those of actual persons." I'll never forget that moment because she was the very paradigm--if you want to think of some little slip of the thing that projected the very wonderful wholesome air of American womanhood. And she was speaking to me in what?-- in the chilling language of holocaust and atrocity. And she didn't even know what she was doing. I looked at her and I said, "You know, I have a 17-year-old son. How old are you?" And she said, "Nineteen." And I said, "You know, you make a very rash assumption in what you ask me there." She looked at me quizzically, and I said, "Because given my experience with my 17-year-old son, I have to tell you there are many days on which I am not entirely sure that people of your age are actual persons at all." And then to drive the point home even further, I looked at her and I said, "I hope you don't think that I will hear those words and forget that 120, 130 odd years ago Frederick Douglass had to go in front of audiences with a speech entitled "That the Negro is a Man." To prove that he and others like me were actual persons."

Why do people forget this? They speak this cold-blooded language to people like myself as if we're too stupid to remember that the day before yesterday we were not considered actual persons. And that if today we deny the principle on which we stood in order to demand respect for our humanity, if we deny it to those human beings in the womb, it will be denied once again to us and to others. Because then it just becomes a matter of who you can get on your side to draw the line between humanity and non-humanity, personhood and non-personhood, and then the majority can oppress and the powerful can abuse. And those who end up on the wrong side have nothing.