

When I was 19 years old, a sweet innocent virgin, I was raped by an older man who I could not fight off and I became pregnant. I was on my way to Alaska to earn money for college when I found out. I was raised Catholic and respected my body and sexuality and was saving myself for my true love. At a naive 19 years of life I made the hardest decision of my life- I decided to abort so I could finish college, get my education and be able to be a mature and responsible and financially independent mother someday. Being raped and feeling like I would never recover and reclaim myself was awful. Being pregnant by a rapist (he had done this to other young girls) made it a debilitating experience. Having the choice to have an abortion was life changing. I think back to how immature and helpless and uneducated I was back then. If I was unable to have an abortion, I would be sharing custody of a 10 yr old child with a rapist who is a dead beat dad currently and I would be dependent on government assistance, uneducated and powerless. Having the procedure was worse than being raped. It was the most painful experience- physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. NO ONE WOULD CHOSE ABORTION IF THEY HAD OTHER OPTIONS. Having an insensitive doctor stick a vacuum up your most intimate body cavity and suck a potential life out you is fucking traumatic. Women need to have access to abortion but first women need to have access to birth control and sexual violence needs to STOP NOW! so this isn't even an issue

Dear Governor Blanco, I can only hope that I can begin to tell you how being raped has devastated my life. It was over 15 years ago that my ex-fiancé first raped me and took away my life as I knew it. The man that I loved and trusted raped me through my protests -- and from that violence, I became pregnant. In complete agony I wandered through the

days and nights, not knowing what to do. My whole life was ahead of me and though I loved him and couldn't leave him at that point, I was afraid to marry someone who could use me and hurt me so carelessly. After much prayer, I realized that I could not live every day, looking at a child that was born of such a horrendous act, and knowing that that child's heartless father would forever be in my and my child's life. I also could not live with knowing that I had given up my own child to possibly be thrown into foster home after foster home as so many children are, or to possibly be raised by parents who would not care for him or her as they should. Nor could I live with people staring and whispering, condemning me for unmarried and pregnant. There was no way that I was emotionally able to raise a child alone -- especially the one who would remind me each and every day that I had been brutalized in the most horrible way by someone whom I had loved more than anyone in the world. The rape still effects me and my adult relationships -- my ability to trust and to open up. Deciding whether or not to have an abortion was the worst decision I have ever had to make. And though I am still dealing with the trauma of having the abortion, feeling the guilt and the sorrow, I know that it was the decision that needed to be made to save myself. I beg you to please not enact any law that will limit a woman's choice in something that will change her life so drastically and the lives of those around her. Abortion is a tragedy but not nearly a tragedy as much as unwanted children suffering their entire lives at the hands of those who cannot give them the life that they deserve. A woman's choice is between her and God. Only He knows the full truth of the matter and He will judge when the time comes. Thank you for your time.

I was brutally raped at the age of 19 by an ex-boyfriend. I got pregnant as a result and had an abortion. If I had been forced to carry the child to term, I definitely would have committed suicide. To make a rape victim carry the child of her rapist is unbelievably cruel and certainly not "Christian".

As a survivor of rape and someone who has had an abortion, I can only imagine what my life would have been like had I been forced to carry my rapist's child. Lawmakers who think they have a right to rule what happens to anyone's body, but specifically a woman's or child's pregnant from rape or incest do not deserve the positions of responsibility and respect they occupy. I would never wish an act of violence on someone, but maybe that is what it would take on someone they love to realize how horrible this law is. I would suggest that some have loved ones who are victims, but have never come forward for whatever reasons. If the lawmakers haven't thought about the right for a woman to have control over her own body, let's look at the financial cost to the state? Have the lawmakers thought about who is going to take care of these children of rape/incest victims? Have they thought about the cost of medical care for both the mother and child? What about adoption, foster care, childcare, etc.? If they won't look at women's rights, maybe they'll look at money. Please do not sign this bill.

Dear Governor Blanco, I am a sexual assault nurse and recently I saw a 15 year old girl who was assaulted by her mother's boyfriend. She was a few weeks pregnant. During the course of my interview with the girl and her mother it was discovered that her mother was also pregnant by the same man. You can imagine how devastating the news of an assault

can be but to compound that with the knowledge that mother and daughter are pregnant by the same man is almost unimaginable. My role was to collect evidence for prosecution and to do some family and crisis interventions. I don't know if this family chose abortion as an option but I do know they had a choice. In a free society knowing you have a choice empowers you as a person and allow you to make the right choice for your circumstances. Please veto the bill that would criminalize abortion for survivors of rape. Send the message that democracy is about choice and not about limiting choice and access.

When I was 15years old, I was drugged at a party, and then raped by a 19 year old drug addict who I thought was my friend. A little while after I experienced morning sickness when I was shopping with my mother who had no knowledge of the rape. My mom bought me a pregnancy test which of course determined I was pregnant. Fortunately my mother took me to an abortion clinic, where I prevented the life of another sicko from entering this world. I am now 10 credits away from getting my Bachelors degree in psychology at Russell Sage College. If I didn't have the abortion the pregnancy would have ruined my life! PLEASE DO NOT BAN ABORTIONS!!!! You may think you're saving a life, but in reality you'll be taking the life of the mother!

I am a resident of Louisiana and appalled by this new legislation. It is amazing that in 2006 a woman is still considered incapable of making good decisions. I was sexually abused by my foster father throughout my adolescents and thank God I never became pregnant but if I had I would have had an abortion. I woman should not be made to feel that she must carry a child that she does not want

because right wing fundamentalists believe they are "saving" a life. Whose life exactly are they saving??? Certainly not the woman forced to carry a pregnancy by a man who rapes or abuses her. When does this maltreatment of women end???? Have we achieved nothing over the past 50 years??? Apparently not!!!!

My grandfather was a pedophile who began molesting me at the age of 8 and continued until his death 8 years later. Being taught that your body exists solely for the uses of men is a hard lesson to learn at 8, but it is one I learned well. As a teenager I went from one demeaning, abusive relationship to another. I had an abortion when I was 19. I tried to commit suicide when I was 20. I spent 10 years in therapy trying to reclaim my life, my body and my sense of self-worth. I worked full time and went to night school to earn my BA. I then went on to earn a JD from a prestigious law school. Today, I am a senior engineer on a scientific research project. If I had had a baby when I was 19, I know that I would have never made it through undergrad. I would never have gotten off drugs. I would still be going from one abusive relationship to another. Please, please, please keep abortion safe and legal.

I taught in an inner city school, grades 7-9 for 12 years. I had 7th grade girls who wore coats in 90 degree heat to cover their pregnancies, the results of rape by relatives. I spent the night in a shelter for women after one of my female students was beaten by her father after HE impregnated her. She ultimately had the baby because she had to other choice. Your laws are archaic and your choices are barbaric. You should be ashamed of yourselves. How bout working and funding care for

children in the foster care program or are continued victims of parental abuse? You disgust me.

When you are raped, you become so dehumanized. This heinous action forever violates you as a person and destroys your trust and you lose your sense of self. Why are you forcing rape victims to relive their trauma by carrying a rapist's baby to term? How can this legislation be so inhumane? Protect women's rights. We are all equals. Violation against one individual is a violation against all.

Hello. I am a licensed clinical social worker, and I have seen first hand the devastating effects of rape and incest on victims and their families. I have actually worked with a teenager who is the product of rape (his mother was raped by her father) and was not allowed to have an abortion. This boy was deformed, and had numerous health problems, emotional and mental. His mother had trouble accepting him because every time she saw him, she saw her rape. My patient told me that he asked his mother why she did not abort him, and that he wished he had never been born. Please do not sign that into legislation. Please.

I am a survivor of incest. I am grateful that I did not have to face the options that many young women today must face (at least in terms of an unwanted pregnancy). I am a mother, an educator, a Christian, but I am also a believer in choice. A rape victim loses her (or his) choice when someone assaults them in a very intimate, painful way. It is inhumane to expect that person to be victimized again and again during a nine month period of pregnancy and then the pain of a delivery of this

child that has resulted from a rape! I also am adopted, so I absolutely support adoption to abortion, but I also know that every woman - young or old - should not be forced to give birth to a child in this situation. Love, education, & prayer can be part of her decision, but it must be HER decision.

Dear Governor Blanco, Like many of the women telling their story, I was a victim of incest. I was continually molested and raped by my father starting as a toddler, until I told at the age of 14. My siblings were also molested by this man. I grew up in a small town, and once the town found out, I was ostracized from the community. I became sexually promiscuous after this. Although it was a cry for help, no one provided support. Luckily I never became pregnant during this time period. Several years later, I married a wonderful man. After 3 years of marriage, we decided to start a family. Three months into that pregnancy, I began to hemorrhage. I had to face a decision to abort that child so desperately loved, have a total hysterectomy and lose all hope of ever having a family, or die. It is a choice that no one wants to make, but other options were not available. I now work with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. In my work, I see women and children who are continually abused, who have few choices and resources, and who get very little support from the community. Part of my job is to empower them by giving them choices. This legislation takes their choice away. When women and children are allowed to be continually abused, continually shunned, and continually ignored, their options are removed from them. When perpetrators are not held accountable, when society blames the victim, and when society glorifies abuse of the women and children, we have a society that does not support ALL of its members.

Until our country is ready to protect the most vulnerable of our society, do not further abuse and imprison them by approving this bill.

I was raped by my father, starting when I was at the age of five and continuing on until I moved out of the house at age 18. My sister was raped by him, too. We did not tell anyone for a variety of complex reasons, fear that he would follow through on his threat to kill us and our mother being somewhere near the top of that list. I am 35, and she is 33. We are just now starting to get our feet under us and get some healing in our lives. I have been suicidal many, many times in my life. My bedtime prayer for years was that God would just take me, but He never did, so I held on until that day I could be free. I married at 18 and am now a college professor, a published writer, and a happily married mother of two wonderful children who I wanted and chose to have. I am writing to tell you that there is no doubt in my mind that to be forced to bring a pregnancy caused by rape or incest to full term means that a woman can NEVER be free of the violence that was committed against her. Faced with that hopelessness, I never would have been able to get where I am now. I never would have survived.

I apologize for writing my comments here ... my story is not about rape or incest, but it is about the right to choose in a violent situation. I was 24 years old. I was happy in my relationship with my abuser -- I did not realize it was an unhealthy relationship. We planned the pregnancy. He wanted me to bear his child -- I wanted that, too. To our elation, I became pregnant. That's when the violence began. By the time I was four months along, I had ended my relationship with the father

out of sheer self-preservation. I was frightened for our unborn child, but determined to give that baby a happy life. I struggled with how best to deal with the baby's father and to keep his violence away from my baby. I tried to think of everything I could do to keep him away from us. I talked to my mom and I talked to my best friends. I cried constantly. I was depressed and terrified -- for my own safety as well as that of my baby's. The culminating event occurred on a rainy night. He came to my apartment and broke the door down. The neighbors downstairs called the police. He threatened my life and he told me I would never raise the baby -- he told me he would prove to the courts that I was an unfit mother and he would have the baby taken away from me. After he was done screaming, he threw the knife. To this day, I believe that had he wanted to kill me, he would have done it then. The knife landed square between my feet, twanging and shivering in the wood floor. In an instant, I yanked it from the floor and fell on my backside from the force of the pulling. I held it out in front of me as a shield and cried for him to get out. That was when we heard the sirens. He ran. I shook off the police and called my mother and my best friend. They came to me and through hours of tears, sadness, depression and frustration, I made the painstaking decision to abort my baby. I told no one. I told no one for ten years. I was ashamed, embarrassed, and terrified that he would kill me if he knew. My mother, my best friend and I told everyone that I had a miscarriage. Twenty years later, I still firmly believe I made the best choice -- for me and for that baby. That baby would have had a life filled with terror and violence. That is no life for a child. I did not play God. I made the most heart-wrenching choice a mother can make. I made the choice for us both to be free from violence. Though I sometimes yearn for the "if-onlys", I know that I

made the right choice. A choice I was allowed to make. A choice no one else had the right to make for me. A choice every woman should be allowed to make. When violence is a part of the making of a life, a woman needs to have the right to choose how that violence and the creation of that life will impact her, forever. What good is a mother who looks upon a child created in violence? What good is a mother who gives up a child she could have loved, but possibly feared? What good is it to force a mother to bear a child created in violence? Please share this story ... always. Give others the belief of power in themselves that they have the right to make a choice. No one should take that choice away. Thank you.

When I was in my early 20's I went on a couple of dates with a police officer, I decided to stop seeing him because he made me uncomfortable. He did not think I had a right to make that decision, or any decision regarding my own body. He decided to rape me. I found that I was pregnant, but I was too afraid to even consider an abortion. I moved to another state, only telling my parents where I was going. I did not tell them about the pregnancy because I did not want them to be placed in danger if I did decide to terminate the pregnancy and her found out. There I had a miscarriage. I thank God every day for that reprieve. He, like the people in the Louisiana legislature, believed that he could, and should rule my body. Please understand that laws like these do nothing to protect children. Punishing rapists and child molesters, and providing affordable health care, housing and education are things that the legislature could do to protect children.

Dear Governor Blance, I am an incest survivor plus a multiple rape survivor. At 15 I got raped by a man who attended my school, since he was of a different racial background than mine and this was then 1970, I was ostracized within my family, school and community, thankfully I did not get pregnant from the rape, but it has changed my life, allowing for further abuse and then abusive relationships because of how I was treated due to being raped. If I was pregnant because of it, I don't know what I would have done, since it was 1970, and I believe in life at conception, but I know the confusion, the suicidal tendency I felt after being raped, and being pregnant may have just made it all worse, plus I know my parents would have sent me away further demeaning what I went through, is any teen really equipped to deal with that? Because of my incest I learned to dissociate, so a lot of what happened in my life is locked away but the trauma of that first rape, plus the other two I remember clearly, it was locked away too to a degree, I'd just know it happened and by who and wouldn't recall the rest until my dad died, who was one of my incest abusers, then the memories of the rapes fully came back. I know, no child or teen is fully prepared to carry a baby under those circumstances, if they have family support, love and therapy then maybe, but without it, it is not a good thing. I hope you would look at this bill from the standpoint of the rape survivors, potential rape survivors and incest survivors and see what a little bit of what it would be like to be forced to be young and carry a child of that was from an act of violence, disregard for your own well being you are just there to please the need of the abuser, and an act you had no choice to participate in. Rape is not a consensual loving relationship, which one is usually hoped to have been associated with conceiving and bearing a child. Trauma from the rape, and betrayal if it is incest or rape from

someone you know is hard to deal with, teens are all over the place hormonally and emotionally and not equipped to deal with such trauma and the issues they bring when raped. Thank you for reconsidering this bill and for your time.

I have been a victim of rape more than once. You could say I was lucky because no child was conceived. I would have had an abortion if I would have become pregnant, and I have three children and love them dearly. I was the product of a fourth of July rape and my mother has never let me forget the awful details. You need to think! That is the problem people do not always think, if this has never happened to you or any one that you love it is easy to take this right away from women. It may just be an act on some males part but we the women live with that every day of our lives. Having a child is a blessing, but if you are raped that is not a blessing. I was brought up in the church and they have very stronger feelings about abortion. How many men do you know that bear children? It is easy to sit back and try and tell people what to do when you yourself have never carried, and delivered a child. I just think Governor Blanco you need to take the time and speak to a woman, a child that has been raped or was the product of a rape. I truly think you would see things in a new light and not take this right away from women, children, we the victims.

I am fortunate to not have had to experience the brutality of rape, personally. However, working with battered women has let me be witness to the atrocities men commit against women on a daily basis. Over the years I have held the hand of many a woman who have heart-wrenchingly considered abortion after experiencing marital rape, stranger

rape, date rape and gang rape. One such woman came to our shelter with 5 children, fleeing an abusive husband. He followed her across country finding her in each state she thought she would find safety in. In one state, she and the children thought they had found a safe place for the night in a hotel. She stepped out to get a bucket of ice and was abducted by a stranger. After being raped repeatedly, he released her and she went back to the hotel room to call police. The rapist was found and convicted and she was pregnant. She mustered all the strength she had and decided to get an abortion. It was her thinking that she owed it to her children, they were struggling to make ends meet as it was...how could she add another mouth to such an uncertain time in their lives. I am happy to report that 3 years later, she and her children have settled into life in a small town. She has a nursing degree and the family is thriving. The oldest child recently graduated and is attending a state university. One can only wonder how the story would have changed had she been forced to carry the child who was a product of rape. Been forced to add one more person for her to struggle to provide for. What does our country have against women? Why do we feel we have the right to tell women what they can and cannot do with their bodies. For the state of LA to pass this legislation would be a huge message to women in this country: Women don't matter. Is this the message you want your state to be affiliated with?

Dear Governor, I am a 34 year old female who today still lives with the pain and anger of a rape. This violent act was committed by a close and trusted friend, and my life has never been the same. I have struggled with that night for the last 17 years, and it has effected EVERY part of my life. I am very thankful that a pregnancy did not result from the rape, and I could not imagine being forced by

my government to carry this child to term. It would be as if I was living the rape over and over again for nine months. Please do not sign this bill. To do so would be forcing the rape victims to relive their rape over and over again.

I was raped by two separate men in my life. One man slammed my head into a cement wall and beat me to the point of unconsciousness. Then that man raped me taking my virginity from me. He took my sense of innocence and my childhood. I was young. I cannot imagine the detriment this would have caused me if I had not been able to have an abortion. The resulting pregnancy would not have been my fault, yet this legislation in Louisiana would have victimized me twice. The second man broke down the door to my home which was locked. He kicked his way into my house, held me down, and raped me. Again, this was not my fault. While I believe in the importance of careful family planning, I do not believe that I should not be given a choice. I was not given a choice by either of these men to have sex. You cannot take away my choice to not allow myself to be traumatized for an additional nine months. Please be responsible and listen to the women in this country. Women have the right to choose what happens to their bodies. They lose that choice when they are victims of rape and incest. Please do not allow us to be revictimized.

Although I am not a resident of Louisiana, I have traveled to your beautiful state, and am now deeply concerned about the fate of the majority of its population - its women and girls. As a survivor of rape (in college) and incest (by my father), I urge you to listen when I tell you that the abortion bill passed by Louisiana's legislature is a terrible distortion of the pro-life philosophy

because it ignores the lives of women who have become pregnant against their will. I agree that abortion is a sad choice for a woman to have to make, but I also feel that it is absolutely vital that it remain an option for women - a private option between her, her physicians, and anyone else with whom she chooses to share her struggle. I cannot convey to you strongly enough how appalled I am that politicians think that they have any right to force women to make a specific choice about abortion. You should be aware that if this bill ever does become law in Louisiana, women and girls whom you represent - your constituents - will continue to do whatever they can to terminate unwanted pregnancies, even, in some cases, if it means committing suicide. Women and girls all over the United States are watching for your response to this bill. They deserve respect. They deserve the veto of this misogynistic bill.

I am now a Grandmother with small grand daughters. Growing up I was a victim of incest. At one time I thought I was pregnant by my father and I prayed every day for help. No help was there. Thank God I wasn't but I believe it was by luck only. Because of the abuse and the horror I am an advocate and I thank God every day that women now have a choice and programs to help them. Now that may be taken away. Again young girls and women will have no control of their lives and we are going back to the dark ages. You have NO idea how this has affected my life! Please vote against this horrible law! Do NOT make this young girls/women suffer and live in fear, especially when they are the true victims. It is a true case of "revictimizing the victim"! We must make strides forward and hold perpetrators more accountable, not go backwards and punish those who are innocent of these horrendous crimes!

I myself have experienced the horror of rape and cannot imagine what I would do if I had become pregnant and been forced to have the child. Thinking about the rape is painful enough, with all the mental as well as physical anguish coming back to haunt me. I honestly do not think I have ever experienced a feeling worse than when I think about that. Having a child should be by the woman's own choice and a wonderful, joyous experience (albeit highly uncomfortable), not something that is forced upon you. Rape is about not having a choice and to take away a woman's inherent right to choose what to do with her body after she has suffered through being raped is completely unconscionable and is essentially treating women as less than human.

I was extremely lucky. I was attacked by a man intent on raping me but unable to maintain an erection. I still feel the after effects of this in my life more than 20 years later. I sleep with a light on - always. If I come home after dark and for some reason the light that I leave on is out I feel the fear creep over me and it takes a LOT of courage to enter my apartment. And this is nothing to what I felt for the first few years. I can only guess how much worse my life would have been had I gotten pregnant and been forced to bear a mixed race child. Adoption probably would not have been an option and I would have been stuck with a child that for me would forever be tainted with the horror of the rape. In reality, had I gotten pregnant I would have had an abortion, legal or not. Forcing a woman to have a child she doesn't want is the same as slavery. My body, my choice.

Dear Governor Blanco, I find the legislature's lack of empathy for the victims of incest and rape,

absolutely appalling and deliberately cruel. As a victim of sexual abuse, whose road to recovery has been long and difficult, I cannot fathom how horrible it would have been if I had been forced to bear the child of my abuser. A survivor already has to live with the emotional and physical residue of their attack for the rest of their lives. The recent legislation would add insult to injury, by ridding the victim of any chance to overcome their assault, and by forcing women to bear and rear the children of their abusers. Under your legislation, a child or woman that has the misfortune of being attacked would then have to deal with the fallout of a society that already tends to blame its female victims of "asking for" the assault, and their children would be doubly ostracized and traumatized by the knowledge that their birth came as the result of a violent act. The legislation would effectively condemn women for the actions of their abusers, and by extension, subject unwanted children to potential abuse. Is it your belief that rape and incest are natural acts, the kind of loving procreation that God intended? Is it your belief that countless women and their unfortunate children are expendable, the property of all men, including the men that assault and impregnate them? This legislation strips women of the power to determine the course of their own lives, in much the same manner that a rapist does, and complicates their healing physical, mental, emotional and spiritual process immeasurably, and unnecessarily. I urge you to reconsider this extreme measure, and do not allow the short-sighted need to control life to preempt the need for compassion, empathy and understanding, not just for survivors, but the unborn children who would bear the consequences of your attempt to 'protect' their lives.

I was the target of sexual assault by family members from before I could walk until I started puberty. In my forties, I still have not yet felt safe enough in my body to engage in a long term intimate relationship. Among the most devastating aspects of the violation were being mind raped, and feeling like an object rather than a person. A very significant part of my recovery has been making decisions to not let my body be used by anyone again. The legislation regarding outlawing abortion even in cases of medical urgency, rape or incest that is awaiting your signature is another symptom of the way our culture controls, objectifies and traumatizes women. I do not think abortion is a good solution, but I think outlawing it, especially for those who have already been assaulted, is much worse. I hope that you will veto this bill, and direct state resources into preventing incest and rape, rather than further penalizing those already hurt. Thank you for your attention.

Dear Governor, I have been a volunteer at a rape crisis center for four years. I am a Catholic woman who believes life is a valuable, precious gift. However, one of the characteristics that makes humans unique is our free will. I have worked with countless survivors of rape and incest, some of whom have gotten pregnant as a result of their assault. Some have chosen abortion, some have kept the child, and some have given it up for adoption. I must say, based on my conversations with survivors, that women who have kept their children often struggle with that decision. Of course they try to love the child, but many survivors have said they harbor some sort of resentment for the child, and cannot help but be reminded constantly of the violent crime to which they were a victim. Children are a precious resource, but they can only reach full potential with loving, nurturing parents.

Parenthood must be undertaken with the realization of how much responsibility it requires, and unfortunately, there are already too many examples of unfit parents in this country. Please let the women, who have survived such a violent crime and loss of control as it is, exercise their judgment and free will in making a responsible decision whether they can handle bringing a child into this world. Thank you for your consideration.

Governor Blanco, I wasn't sure where to begin, I have so much to say. I was raped by my 1st cousin, a man I trusted with my life, and was also my best friend as we are the same age. At the time of my rape, he raped me, raped me anally, and used an L wrench to rape me. He then tried to kill me, but I managed to get away ,with no clothing ,and during freezing weather, a part of me wanted to die, as a part of me was destroyed, but I am alive today, and have never forgotten the pain, helplessness, and the anger. Governor that fear is still here, ever present, and near, I fear for the lives of my daughters, other young women, children, no one can be trusted.

I graduated in 1959 as class valedictorian and attended college on a scholarship where I dropped out after becoming pregnant the summer of my freshman year. At the urging of my family, I married the father who wanted a wife and didn't much care how he got one. I had 3 kids in 4 years, a do-it-yourself abortion 3 months after the last one was born, a legal abortion due to failure of the Dalkon shield, and another legal abortion 2 years later after a condom failed (I suspect it had been tampered with). I could have divorced my husband if I were willing to leave with the kids and the clothes on my back. He was self-employed so I wouldn't have been able to enforce an order for child support or alimony either, so I waited for him to die. I received a settlement from the Dalkon shield failure which I invested in the stock market and have accumulated a nice portfolio since. One of my children committed suicide at age 26 and the other 2 have had mental problems. If I sound like a bitter old woman, it's because I am and there are more like me who don't speak up. The book "Freakonomics" by Levitt quantifies what women have known intuitively from their own experience that kids do better when their parents want them and are ready for them. Kids in this fortunate situation also do better than adoptees and low birth weight babies as well. The countries with a history of few restrictions on abortion (China, Japan and India) are buying our debt, selling us their goods and taking our jobs. A policy of growing more cannon fodder isn't going to cut it anymore.

I was raped 2 days after my high school graduation, an action resulting in the loss of my virginity. If I had gotten pregnant as a result, my life would be very different. I am now a freshman in Civil Engineering (a field of study in which I am only

one of 5 girls in a class of 120 students) and a proud member of my University's Dance Team, for dance is my true passion in life. I also love being able to represent my university at sporting events and in my daily life. However, if I had gotten pregnant due to one of my fellow classmates insensitive and irresponsibly action, I would obviously have been unable to audition and make my dance team, as well as had been unable to afford my college education and pursuit of an engineer's license and architectural design degree. I strongly urge you to rethink this bill and objectively evaluate the consequences your decisions make on the rest of the population.

I was raped by an acquaintance in college at age 17. I was a virgin up to that time and had hoped to save myself for marriage. The guilt and shame that I went through was unbearable. I thought about committing suicide. To this day, I still have panic attacks if someone holds me down for too long, even in play. I am lucky that no conception had occurred. I had no means of supporting a baby, and do not know if I could have mentally survived it at the time. Today I have a college degree, a good career, and 2 wonderful children who are loved, supported, well-cared for and wanted. Please do not commit this unspeakable offense against teens and rape victims.

I was molested for seven years by my father, a minister, who punished me for seeing any other boys. When I was free of his domination, I was very promiscuous and crazy as so many victims are at that point. Abortion was never anything I wanted but it probably kept me from becoming a prostitute and drug user.

I was raped when I was 16 years old, which profoundly affected my life for years afterwards. Fortunately, I have rebuilt my trust in intimate relationships and have a healthy married life now...but had I become pregnant and been forced to carry the baby to term due to this awful incident in my life, I would not have had the chance to grow beyond it. Who would I have raised a child with? The rapist? Shouldn't a child have two parents who love it? I certainly intend to give a loving home to my future baby, but I wouldn't have been able to provide one as a teenager, especially because the rape made me a volatile, angry and depressed teen. That is no fit way to become a mother.

Dear Governor Blanco, I am a graduate student currently striving to make this world a better place. I am no longer an angry victim nor am I the "feminist" who lashes out towards the legislative process and officials. I have accepted my experience and have learned to focus my energies into assisting those who are survivors and those who feel misunderstood. While I will not reveal my political party or stance on abortion I will say this: no words could ever describe to you the devastation, humiliation, vulnerability, and pure emotional and physical agony I experienced when I was raped at the age of 15. If that act of violence had resulted in the creation of life and if my opportunity to react or make a choice in that situation had been denied to me, I would sadly say suicide may have been my only "apparent" option at that moment. Though this is difficult to discuss, and (I'm sure) difficult for you to consider, being a 15 year-old impoverished Hispanic, raised in a conservative, Catholic tradition, not only would the disgrace of the situation possibly have me excommunicated from my family, the thought of then

bringing and being responsible for a life while having no family support system, no education, dealing with the emotional aftermath of my attack, and then needing to rely on the government financial aid programs for everything is TOO much to bare... I am not saying it would have resulted in abortion... I honestly do not know. But the message of being lawfully forced into such an impacting decision as a RESULT of being sexually forced and violated into a violent situation is just plain scary. Please reconsider. While I do not envy your occupation with all the responsibility you need to uphold, I do find faith in knowing the legislation will decide what is best for ALL women in all situations from all backgrounds... Not just the ones with "ideal" happy endings. Sometimes, those happy endings are NOT an option for some women; It would not have been one for me. I thank you for your time.

As an incest survivor, I am appalled that no allowance is made for women who conceive as a result of rape or incest. I am assure you with complete unabashed conviction that if I had become pregnant as a result of my father's abuse, I certainly would have had an abortion. Barring that option, I can say with equal conviction that I'd have committed suicide rather than carry that child. This is supposed to be about saving lives? Utter nonsense. In my case, this restriction would have cost TWO lives - the one of that fetus, and mine. If you dare to be callous and cold-hearted enough to enact this plan, I hope you keep a very close eye on your "accidental death" and suicide statistics and know that, when they rise - and they will - that this is what your "life-saving" efforts have amounted to.

For almost my entire 15th year, I essentially belonged to a 25-year-old man who abused me physically, emotionally, and sexually--every day. Yes, this can happen in America, and it happens more often than anyone would imagine. As it was, it took me 22 years to even begin to deal with the emotional impact of this abuse. I had bouts of depression and nearly committed suicide. Had I been forced to carry the rapist's child as well, I definitely would have ended my life before giving birth.

As a survivor of rape, I am horrified to think that those of you promoting this law are so callous to think your will and the law would force a child or woman victimized by rape or incest to bear a child if she is unfortunate enough to become pregnant by such an act of violence. Would you really want your wife or daughter to have to have a rapist's baby if it happened to her? I think people often become more compassionate, able to see "shades of gray" and respect differing choices and opinions of others, and the rights to exercise those differing views when traumatic events bring the issues closer to home. I know that was the case for me.

I am a survivor of rape, and thought I would have to make the choice to keep or abort the child. I was 16 years old, when I was raped by a 22 year old coworker. At least I HAD a choice. It was agony, having to wait those few weeks to see if my period would come. What was I going to do, where was I going to go? I was a junior in high school, and I hadn't a clue how to tell my parents about the rape let alone explain that I was pregnant from it! But, I was lucky-my period came in the time it took for me to get home from the store AFTER buying the pregnancy test. This law is cruel and damaging to

those of us who have already suffered so much. If passed, the law would only create more trauma to what we have already experienced. We had no control over the rape, and now you want to take away what control we have left over our bodies! Its not right!

I am a 28 year old survivor of rape. The worst part of that horrible and humiliating experience was the feeling that I had no power over my own body - and to think of a situation where the State would also have had jurisdiction over MY BODY is an insult beyond imagination. To pass this legislation would indeed confirm that women in Louisiana do not have even the basic human right to control their own body. If you pass this legislation, the least I can say is SHAME ON YOU!!!

Dear Governor Blanco, As a mother of three and a victim of rape, I have a hard time understanding how a bill like this could have already gotten so far. It is unbelievable to think that the state of Louisiana could destroy all that women and men have worked for regarding individual rights. I do not feel that abortion should be taken lightly. You have heard quite a bit regarding rape, but you must consider the life and death issue of the mother. If my life was at risk, I would probably have a very hard time ending a pregnancy to save myself, however I do have three wonderful children who need a mother. Many times when there are medical complications so severe, that an abortion becomes necessary, there is a huge chance that the fetus will not live to full term anyway. In cases such as this the family will have to go on without a mother or a new baby. How can the government make this life-changing, and even deadly decision for every woman in the state.

Dear Governor, As a victim of incest, and a psychotherapist, I know only too well the devastation that it can cause to a young woman as she attempts to make her way through the confusing world of young womanhood. Without the option to have an abortion, you will be forcing generations of children to bear the burdens of abuse that preceded them. The cycle of violence will continue with these children and without education, treatment and therapy, which most people do not get, you are setting the next generation up to continue the cycle. IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT TO DO?? Veto this bill TODAY!!!

My best friend was raped by a relative at the age of fourteen, and had she become pregnant, the indignity of the state forcing her to have the child would have been unconscionable. By definition, victims like my friend already feel terribly alone, without support, without resources, and without options. The last thing they need is for their world to be a little more narrowed by invasive and unfeeling legislation like that being considered by you, Governor Blanco. She has since become a phenomenal mother of three children, all of whom she chose with love. Don't take those choices from the women of this state.

I was raped repeatedly by a number of perpetrators when I was six until I was twelve. I can still remember the horror of each of these events. My life was forever altered, my soul forever damaged. I am so grateful that I never became pregnant. I cannot imagine being forced to carry a child that is borne of such an act. Please reconsider this legislation. It is important for women trying to

recover to be able to reclaim their lives; taking away their right to choose will only cause them to feel raped once again.

I am a rape survivor by an ex-boyfriend who drugged me as well. A close friend was recently drugged in a bar, raped and then left underneath a truck to die. I can't imagine if we had become pregnant and not had the option of abortion. We both suffered extreme trauma that we are still coping with. I also know many women who were sexually molested by their father or male relatives. As women we are subject to more violence by men, and this fact already undermines our power. Any woman in any situation has the right to choose for herself whether or not to bring a child into this world. Situations are unique, and having/raising a child is not necessarily the right option in certain circumstances. It is unhealthy for children to be born into an unwanted or trauma-laden situation. Please protect women's choices and control of their own bodies and lives.

Hello, I have been raped by a good friend's boyfriend when I was 15 yrs old. I lost a part of myself that day. If I had gotten pregnant and was forced to keep the child, I would have lived that rape every day for the rest of my life. My child would have to suffer all his/her life not knowing his/her father and/or knowing that they were conceived in this horrible way. We have enough children suffering in this world. It's time to stop the suffering. If these pro lifers care so much about life, they should be more constructive and help the children who are alive and suffering. There are many, many children who are in foster homes that need love. Many of whom are being abused at this moment. Do you truly think for one moment I

would do that to my child? If I sin by choosing to abort an unwanted fetus, then God should be my judge. I do believe however that the abortion should be legal in the first trimester. After that it is questionable. But, many women are so frightened by the experience they are going through that they end up waiting longer than they should. I believe if abortion was legal for the first trimester, these women would act faster. If society would stop making things worse for women than they already are.

Governor Blanco, Please do not sign this legislation. I have spent years and years learning how to trust men after my rape at 15. The rape did not end in pregnancy. If it had, I believe my very religious parents would have considered offering me an abortion. I was very young and not equipped to care for another life. My life, and the child's life would have been destroyed. many women who experience rape go through a stage of shame, and self-blame. I've spent years learning that I did not do anything wrong. If I had a child due to the experience, I would have done something wrong. I would have failed at motherhood. Please please protect the young women who are abused by family members and all women who are victims of rape. Please.

10 years ago my daughter was raped by another student while she was on campus at UNC. The aftermath of this event has totally changed my daughter and her relationships with men and even with our family. I cannot imagine what would have happened if she had become pregnant. At age 30, she has finally met someone that she feels she can trust enough to marry and plan a future with. She was one of the lucky ones that didn't get pregnant

when raped. Are you sure you have the right to determine what a young woman should or should not do when she has been raped? She spent 4 years in therapy, and now does volunteer work at a rape crisis center. Rape is difficult enough...let's don't make it more difficult for those who become pregnant.

I am a 47 year old woman who was sexually abused by five males during a 10 year period early in my life. Only one of them was not immediate family-and no, we are not "trailer trash" as so many ignorantly believe! My family members are mostly professionals (I am a nurse) and business owners. I was also raped by an acquaintance when I was 18. Luckily, neither of these times did I get pregnant. I did, however, become pregnant at age 26 by a then boyfriend with whom I was living with and discussing marriage. After I announced that I was pregnant, he begged me "not to kill his baby!" I chose to keep the child. I did NOT choose to stay with this man, as he began screaming abuse and expletives at me and this continued into and escalated to physical violence! I left him when 8 months pregnant to go to a Domestic Assault shelter. From there, I moved in with a worker and eventually got my own apartment and through much hard work and deprivation (I even had to hock all my jewelry once to buy groceries-I was "awarded" \$40.00 a month for child support-in 1986! [which I rarely received])I completed my studies and went to work full-time plus!!! The family of my daughter's father were-and still are-very, very dysfunctional! Her father and his mother undermined me at every turn and, eventually brainwashed my daughter (from birth) that I WAS trash and she, in turn, became physically abusive to me FOR 6 YEARS!! I could not leave without threat of abandonment and subsequent jail-time and no one would help! The schools,

counselors, the police and the Juvenile Court. They flat-out refused to help-oh, and this also includes CPS, whom I called of my own volition. They told me there was nothing they could do! BUT, they sure showed up if someone made any type of comment that I was abusing my daughter!! I finally had her arrested at age 17 and put in jail and pressed charges of Domestic Violence against her. I can tell you, there were times that I wished with all my heart that I had NEVER given birth to this child from this man, who I did not, of course, suspect of such abuse when we were together initially! Thank God-and I mean that literally, as I AM a believer-my daughter woke up after this act of tough love and we are now close and she respects my boundaries! I was not raised to be a permissive parent, but I was fighting something much larger than myself! EVIL. My daughter was also sexually abused by the son of 2 of my coworkers (very strange "coincidence")and much of her rage was directed at me as an easy target, plus she was raised to HATE me! The man who was the perp in this Federal Child Pornography Case-which included my then 11 year old daughter and 2 other young girls-is in a State Penn., doing 20 years. All of these young girls were pregnant within a few years of the abuse. My daughter-whom I had taken to the doctor to place her on birth control, not because I WANTED TO, but because it seemed better than an unwanted pregnancy, stopped taking her BC pills and got pregnant about 2 weeks after her 15th birthday! She now has a 4 year old daughter. She obtained her GED and was attending college, but she also has to work over 40 hours a week to support them both. Of course, college went out the window! My granddaughter was in day care 12-16 hours per day 5 days a week. My daughter wanted to spend more time with her so she dropped out of college. She now has a six dollar and fifty cents per hour job. Yeah, great! I REFUSED TO LET HER GET AN ABORTION BECAUSE

I DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THEM!!! And now her life is basically predetermined for failure or at least a massive struggle! She did get pregnant once more, when my GD was 2. This time? I paid for her to have an abortion. She is now more mature and faithful in using her BC patch!! My point? IF we think we can moralize and control the decisions of others, then we need to be prepared to help them in their time of need!! MOST WOMAN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE END UP PROMISCUIOUS AS ADULTS/TEENAGERS!! Yet you do not take this into account. I also have had an abortion. When the father of that child left me during the pregnancy. Once was enough. I then became an abstainer for many, many years. My current fiancé' has had a vasectomy, thank God, as any form of hormonal BC pills/patches/shots gave me tremendous migraines! Please reconsider your position. Condemning or judging people for their poor choices-or for having no choice at all-is not our place. That belongs to God. And I would like to add two things here: #1) I have no hate, anger or rage directed toward my and my daughters abusers. Most abusers were themselves abused! It is a poor choice, yet again, but I have understood this and have forgiven them-although I will never forget! and #2) Feel free to use my name for any purpose in making your decision as I value truth and honesty above all else and have nothing to hide! Thank you for your consideration. Julie Gates

At 16 my ex husband raped and beat me until my child was born. He continued his abusive ways going as far as turning his violence on a innocent baby, if I didn't do as he wanted. The day my child screamed in terror when my father hugged me that was enough he was afraid of men coming near me just as I was, the impact has lasted a lifetime for both of us. We grew up like best friends not mother and child, we saw counselors for year, at 3 he came

home from visitation with a fractured finger and very high fever, we took him to the ER, by that time I had gone in hiding and had a divorce where he thought I should pay child support since I took his child, and claimed that was abuse. Needless to say the judge laughed him out of court but 50.00 child support was nothing and he never paid that, and when I tried to get it, he tried to kill us. I am 49 now, my son is 32 the abuse still shows, in all my relationships I choose abusive men, and my son is still is scared of me with men, just like me. His main thing was I was adopted, I had no family so there was no one to help get me out. He was wrong as was the trail of abusive men I left behind. Please Help stop this bill, we go thru enough pain in our life and we feel punished for something we did not do. All my male friends have suffered from a fear deep inside me that will never go away and my son is afraid to have children. My father tried to get me an abortion at 7 months but realized we both would probably die. I would not change anything for my son, but I wish if I had known my options and not hiding out we could have grown up a different way as a mother and child. Rape is hard enough, to decide or be made to decide is our own right. Give us a chance to do the right thing in our own situations. My son also was a victim of Katrina his family came to his rescue, not his father's, we were just happy he lived to come out of the rubble since his grandparents deaths he has withdrawn. My family was a great source of support and loved me and my child, his family didn't know we were alive. Just remember, rape is something you never forget, a child of rape just adds, but give us the right to have that child, adoption is not as bad as some think and we had the most loving family with all the support in the world. So others probably do to. Don't tell us what to do, we were already forced to do one someone said we don't need force on us more. We

were from Mississippi and left our home town to get away from him, I had to leave the state, and my son is far enough he can't find him. Sad is not the word, survival and love makes all the difference.

My grandmother sought an illegal abortion in the 60s when she became pregnant by her second husband, a man who physically and sexually assaulted both her and her daughter by another man (my mother). The procedure was botched and left her sterile, but when her choice was go through a potentially life threatening procedure or bear the child of her abusive, psychotic husband, she has to concede that she made the correct one. The Louisiana ban will only ensure that more women will suffer like my grandmother did. A ban on abortion will not end abortion; it will only drive it underground and into the hands of unethical or untrained people, which will cause the mortality rate to skyrocket. And frankly, even if it did curtail abortion, I doubt the state of Louisiana possesses the resources to handle all of the unwanted children that will result. Do you know anything about the history of Romania? Their current state of impoverished ruin can be directly traced to the outright ban on abortion leveled upon them by their government officials. Do you want to be the Romania of the United States? Do you really think your state, with its pathetic showings in all social categories that count, can really handle this?

At 16 in the pre-Roe days I lost my virginity to one of the local jocks. Unbeknownst to me, I conceived. I didn't know I was pregnant because I kept bleeding irregularly off and on until I miscarried the pregnancy at 4 1/2 months, nearly hemorrhaging to death in the process. Just to put the icing on the cake, 2 weeks after my emergency D

and C, I was in the doctor's office, and he raped me with the speculum, ramming it up me hard enough to make me scream, all the while visibly aroused, with my mother standing there doing nothing. This experience left me too traumatized to ever be able to tolerate being pregnant.

I am writing because I know that we need to remember to use and share our voices and experiences. I was coerced into a sexual encounter when I was 18 years old. I told my mother and she was furious and sad for me, but the lines were so unclear in the situation (alcohol, party etc) that I have never felt comfortable talking with people about this. I am fortunate enough not to have become pregnant through this, but I will always bear the scars of sadness and a sense that somehow it was my fault, even though on an intellectual level I know that this is not the case. The insane cruelty being brought about by this legislation is devastating. I pray and I act hoping that we will turn back this tide to silence us. We need to use our voices, we need to roar.

While I can't personally speak to the devastating impacts of sexual violence, as an advocate for victims I can say that the most important aspect of healing following a traumatic experience is the ability to regain control of your environment, particularly your body. Taking away ANY person's ability to make decisions regarding their future, their health, or their wellbeing is simply tyrannical. MANY of the clients I have served have opted to terminate pregnancies that were the result of rape. I can't imagine how disempowered and revictimized they would be today had they not been able to choose for themselves which path to take.

While you may not agree with abortion, it is not your or the government's decision to make.

While I am not a survivor myself, I am a mental health counselor and have worked with several women who have suffered through this situation, as well as a couple of adults who started their lives as these unwanted children. The ramifications for these people, as well as our society are major, and cannot be ignored. Saying that this is about protecting unborn children is a farce...these children are marked from conception and will act this out in a variety of ways that affect the society at large in a very negative way. If the woman affected by these crimes doesn't want the child, don't make her have it. That child pays the biggest price.

I was sexually assaulted by seven different men, three being relatives when I was a preteen and a teenager. Thankfully those assaults didn't result in a pregnancy. They were assaults on my person and any child that would result from such a situation is a product of violence and power and control, not one made upon a mutually agreed decision between loving partners who WANT the baby. Being sexually assaulted is horrible, demeaning and you never really fully get over it. Some women who become pregnant CHOOSE to keep the baby, see that word? They get to make a choice. It's not a woman's choice to get raped and it's not her choice to get pregnant but she should ALWAYS have the choice if she puts 9 months or the rest of her life, or literally her life towards what was forced on her. If you sign this you are forcing women against their will to do something that will further cause them harm and may be life threatening. If I were to have become pregnant I myself wouldn't be able to

keep the baby, or to even carry it. It would be a constant reminder of what happened to me. I probably wouldn't have finished high school or been able to get a job due to lack of financial and family support. I probably wouldn't be here right now as I was suicidal after what happened to me as it is, to find out that I was pregnant also...I know I wouldn't be here because I wouldn't have been able to handle it because I would have continued to be victimized by some of my attackers. Making women give birth to children they don't want is oppressive and wrong.

I am a rape and incest survivor. Having suffered at the hands of merciless, heartless, and cruel men over a period of several years, I can testify to the fact that women in these types of situations have their souls butchered. Becoming pregnant from a rape, whether incestuous or not, would be the final straw. If I had become pregnant from any of the rapes, I would have chosen an abortion or death. If you make abortion illegal, you will have back-alley abortions in your state. You will have women killing themselves rather than giving birth to babies created by monsters. You will be killing women who have souls already in pieces. Please have a heart. Do not make abortion illegal.

I am a survivor of rape and if I became pregnant I would have somehow fundraised from my friends to get enough funds to have an abortion elsewhere. At the time I had just turned 17, was looking at colleges and living a relatively peaceful middle-class existence. If my parents had found out--who are supportive and pro-choice--they would have been devastated and I could not handle any additional pain or emotion from others--I needed to deal with what had just happened to me. For Louisiana

residents, if something ever happens to you--and 1 out of every 3 women is sexually assaulted or raped--I hope you can somehow get to another state to obtain an abortion. A product of rape could never be a happy reminder. It is my body, my choice. I equate the state of Louisiana with my rapist; both want to control my body.