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## Freedom to discuss the 'choice'

***That silence you hear doesn't mean the abortion question was settled with the Morgentaler decision 20 years ago***

**By Brigitte Pellerin and Andrea Mrozek**

*"I never tell a woman what to do with her body / But if she don't love children then we can't party."*

That line from Flipsyde's 2006 single *Happy Birthday* may not be your idea of typical rap lyrics. It certainly isn't ours. But when rap artists start writing songs apologizing to their aborted children, songs that become international hits, you know something's up. Namely, that abortion is very far from being the settled issue politicians and advocates in Canada claim.

Perhaps you never heard of Flipsyde, a California hip-hop group. That's OK. We're a bit fuzzy on them, too. But *Happy Birthday* is haunting; it's a song that stays with you. It's strange that, with lyrics like "I paid for the murder before they determined the sex / Choosing our life over your life meant your death," it made the top 10 in Austria, Germany, Poland and Sweden. Stranger still that most Canadians are unaware of it. (You can find it easily on YouTube.)

The song's message may just be too out of synch with the kind of teaching young people have been receiving for 20 years, since the Supreme Court's Morgentaler decision struck down Canada's abortion laws and removed all restrictions on abortion at any stage during a pregnancy. "Please accept my apologies / Wonder what you would have been," the young rapper sings, "I think about it every year, so I picked up a pen / Happy birthday, I love you, whoever you would have been." Such melodrama over just another personal choice. Young women are strenuously taught to prevent pregnancy. But if they don't manage that? Abortion is a valid and neutral choice, akin to whether one prefers an Americano or a latte.

If abortion really were so settled, you wouldn't see research like the 2007 Environics poll showing 62 per cent of Canadians are uncomfortable with the status quo. Likewise, 34 per cent of women wouldn't tell pollsters they think an unborn baby ought to be protected from conception. If abortion really were settled, politicians would not need to concern themselves with passing laws to keep pro-lifers away from abortion clinics. And university campuses would not need to go to the trouble of making things exceedingly difficult for their pro-life clubs. There would be no danger of their arguments persuading anyone.

Can it be that pro-choicers know their position is brittle? Right now, abortion is something most people avoid thinking about it. Most Canadians don't know there are no restrictions on abortion in this country even at eight months. They don't know there's one abortion for every three live births. And those who call the issue "settled" don't want you to know.

The reason is clear. The taking of a human life is not an easy topic, no matter how many euphemisms we use to camouflage the horrible truth of what the "choice" is. It is especially hard on the countless women who have had abortions. Many of them are left to face their loss alone, sad and silent.

That loss is very real and it's time to break the silence. What a pale and twisted shadow of compassion we offer women in this country: Terminate your baby and never talk about it. That silence, and that famous expression "the right to choose," protect a choice we won't name, a consensus that never was, a right that never materialized and a purported freedom that brings misery to woman and child alike.

Ah, you object, women in this country are not forced to have abortions. With rare exceptions it is true. But if you are a young college student, about to start an exciting career, planning a trip abroad, or perhaps facing family pressure because you were not supposed to get pregnant and you did – what do you do? Abortion, you are told, magically wipes out your mistake. For many men and women, it is an extremely attractive option. Until afterwards when those Flipsyde lyrics hit too close to home.

"Happy birthday," Flipsyde sings, "make a wish." OK. We wish for a culture that defaults to life, not abortion. We wish for freedom to discuss what the choice is. We wish for a culture where women can be women, without being told to change their bodies and take their babies' lives. We wish for a world where rappers don't have to write "From the heavens to the womb to the heavens again / From the endin' to the endin', never got to begin" with such a sad, heavy heart.