

**Ursula K. Le Guin:**

They asked me to tell you what it was like to be twenty and pregnant in 1950 and when you tell your boyfriend you're pregnant, he tells you about a friend of his in the army whose girl told him she was pregnant, so he got all his buddies to come and say, "We all f\*cked her, so who knows who the father is?" And he laughs at the good joke....

What was it like, if you were planning to go to graduate school and get a degree and earn a living so you could support yourself and do the work you loved—what it was like to be a senior at Radcliffe and pregnant and if you bore this child, this child which the law demanded you bear and would then call "unlawful," "illegitimate," this child whose father denied it ... What was it like? [...]

It's like this: if I had dropped out of college, thrown away my education, depended on my parents ... if I had done all that, which is what the anti-abortion people want me to have done, I would have borne a child for them, ... the authorities, the theorists, the fundamentalists; I would have born a child for them, their child.

But I would not have born my own first child, or second child, or third child. My children.

The life of that fetus would have prevented, would have aborted, three other fetuses ... the three wanted children, the three I had with my husband—whom, if I had not aborted the unwanted one, I would never have met ... I would have been an "unwed mother" of a three-year-old in California, without work, with half an education, living off her parents....

But it is the children I have to come back to, my children Elisabeth, Caroline, Theodore, my joy, my pride, my loves. If I had not broken the law and aborted that life nobody wanted, they would have been aborted by a cruel, bigoted, and senseless law. They would never have been born. This thought I cannot bear.

What was it like, in the Dark Ages when abortion was a crime, for the girl whose dad couldn't borrow cash, as my dad could? What was it like for the girl who couldn't even tell her dad, because he would go crazy with shame and rage? Who couldn't tell her mother? Who had to go alone to that filthy room and put herself body and soul into the hands of a professional criminal? – because that is what every doctor who did an abortion was, whether he was an extortionist or an idealist.

You know what it was like for her. You know and I know; that is why we are here. We are not going back to the Dark Ages. We are not going to let anybody in this country have that kind of power over any girl or woman. There are great powers, outside the government and in it, trying to legislate the return of darkness. We are not great powers. But we are the light. Nobody can put us out. May all of you shine very bright and steady, today and always.