



Eye on Culture



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A Media Shift on the Abortion Issue?

As America marks the 35th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, media coverage of a high-profile murder case, recent pro-life films and plummeting abortion rates indicate a cultural current recognizing the value of human life.

By Colleen Raezler

Are the media having second thoughts about abortion?

Media treatment of abortion typically has emphasized the rights of the mother to choose abortion, rather than the humanity of the child, but a new attitude is appearing in both news and entertainment media.

News coverage of the murder of pregnant Marine Maria Lauterbach said volumes about shifting attitudes on abortion. Miss Lauterbach's body was discovered in the backyard of fellow Marine Cesar Armando Laurean on January 12. A CMI review of network and cable news coverage from January 12 to January 15 found that reporters overwhelmingly used the humanizing words "baby" and "child" to describe the little life also cut short by the vicious murder, rather than the clinical-sounding "fetus."

Science is also providing more evidence that women are carrying babies, not just blobs of tissue, in their wombs, and the news media are telling the story. *Newsweek* featured two three-dimensional ultrasound pictures in the January 21 issue. In one picture, the unborn baby's limbs, torso and head show clearly, and the other, a close-up of a baby's face, showcases the baby's well-defined facial features.

Yet despite the compelling pictures *Newsweek* editors wouldn't commit to a full pro-life message, and used both the term "fetus" and "babies" in the caption.

Here's the breakdown of which networks and reporters used "baby" or "child" and which used "fetus:"

Baby or child:

Jim Avila, ABC
Bill Weir, ABC
Liz Marlentes, ABC
Jeffrey Koffman, ABC
John Roberts, CNN
Ed Lavandera, CNN
Tony Harris, CNN
T.J. Holmes, CNN
Gretchen Carlson, FOX News
Alisyn Camerota, FOX News
Laurie Dhue, FOX News
Jonathan Serrie, FOX News
Paige Hopkins, FOX News
Shepherd Smith, FOX News
Martin Savidge, NBC
Amy Robach, NBC
Mika Brzezinski, NBC

Fetus:

Deborah Roberts, ABC
Jeff Glor, CBS
T.J. Holmes, CNN
Betty Nguyen, CNN
Laura Ingle, FOX News
Kelly Wright, FOX News
Lester Holt, NBC

The news media seem more and more willing to recognize that an unborn child is indeed a person.

On the entertainment side, Hollywood has released a series of movies in which pregnant, unmarried women choose life for their babies. Summer hits *Knocked Up* and *Waitress* and December surprise smash *Juno* have been well received by the public, though some major media reviewers have cried foul because the films rejected or failed to consider the option of abortion.

Does Hollywood know something these far-left movie critics don't? The Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of America's largest abortion provider, Planned Parenthood, released a study last week finding that abortions have dropped to 1.2 million per year, the lowest number since 1976.

Summary: Abortion numbers are on the decline. Hollywood is making life-affirming movies. The news media are referring to unborn babies rather than fetuses, and are covering scientific advances that leave no doubt that what resides in a woman's womb for nine months is a human being, not a blob of tissue.

A significant cultural attitude shift on abortion appears to be unfolding.

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