

# ONE WOMAN SPEAKS OUT TO PROTECT CHOICE, ACCESS

In 1990, at the age of 13, I received my first and only school sanctioned sex education lesson at Red Lodge Middle School in Red Lodge, MT. My eighth grade class was herded into the auditorium where we watched slide after slide depicting the advanced stages of a number of STDs. It was quite gruesome, but our speaker assured us that we would be given the means to protect ourselves. At that point, our teachers handed out wallet-sized "virginity pledges" that we were to sign and then ostensibly flash at our prospective partners if we ever felt pressured to have sex.

A few years later when I found myself in that very predicament, do you think I pulled out my virginity card? I didn't. Do you think I asked my partner to wear a condom? To be honest, it didn't occur to me. It wasn't that I didn't know what a condom was or why you would use one, but try buying a box of condoms at the local pharmacy when the guy at the checkout counter is one of your dad's hunting buddies. Or asking your extremely conservative mother who has yet to broach the topic of sexual intercourse with you in any way, shape or form, to drive you the 70 miles you can get some birth control.

Last year, while working as an abortion counselor at Blue Mountain Clinic, I counseled a young mother of two from eastern Montana who had discovered that she was pregnant

again. She had an on again-off again partner; she lived with her folks and was studying for her GED while working part-time at a gas station. I asked her if her decision to have an abortion had been a difficult one. "Yes," she said. "But I have to do what's best for my kids and I cannot be a good mother to 3 children. I can barely keep it together with two." She was 16 years old.

When I did find myself pregnant, I was living in Missoula. I had options. I had just graduated from college; I had a job. And though it would have been a struggle, I could have feasibly had a child. However, I did not want to become a parent for the sake of parenthood itself. I wanted a family that I could provide for to the best of my abilities -- I still do. And so I chose to have an abortion. It was quite possibly the toughest decision I've ever made.

Today, we are forced to recognize the fact that under this administration and with the reconfiguration of the Supreme Court, our right to choice is in jeopardy.

With the passing of three decades since Roe v. Wade, the images of horror from the pre-Roe era have faded for many. I think back to my own grandmother who tried to terminate her last pregnancy by poisoning herself-nearly killing herself in the process.

I am enraged that our access to safe, legal abortion may be compromised.

KEEP ABORTION LEGAL

YOU, TOO, CAN TAKE ACTION. TELL YOUR STORY. VOLUNTEER. VOTE. GIVE.

## VOLUNTEER. TELL YOUR STORY.

Contact Annie Hansen at Blue Mountain Clinic 1.406.721.1646 to become an advocate for other women.

## NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Contact these organizations for unbiased information on abortion, reproductive health and birth control.

- Blue Mountain Clinic on the web at [www.bluemountainclinic.com](http://www.bluemountainclinic.com) or call 1.406.721.1646
- National Abortion Federation on the web at [www.prochoice.org](http://www.prochoice.org) or call 1.800.772.9100

## NEED HELP PAYING FOR AN ABORTION?

- National Network of Abortion Funds on the web at [www.nnaf.org](http://www.nnaf.org)
- Blue Mountain Clinic Access Fund on the web at [www.bluemountainclinic.org](http://www.bluemountainclinic.org) or call 1.406.721.1646

## RAISE YOUR POLITICAL AWARENESS. VOTE.

- Learn about where your Representative or Senator stands. Call Project Vote Smart at 1.800.868.3762 or visit [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)
- **Register to vote and exercise your right.**

## FOR SUPPORT, CONNECTION AND CONVERSATION

- Call Backline, a safe confidential hotline, at 1.888.493.0092 or visit [www.yourbackline.org](http://www.yourbackline.org)
- SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective 1.404.344.9629 or visit [www.sistersong.net](http://www.sistersong.net)
- Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice on the web at [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org)

## EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION?

If you need information on emergency contraception or the morning after pill call Blue Mountain Clinic at 406.721.1646 or call 1.888.not.2.late or visit [www.not-2-late.com](http://www.not-2-late.com)

## ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES

“I am very grateful for the staff of Blue Mountain Clinic. They made my experience as pleasant as possible from the beginning when I first called. It’s not an easy decision to make but I knew it had to be made. I am a single mother of three already and I’m trying to go to school to become a nurse. Blue Mountain Clinic also helped me with funding for gas to get back home as I traveled nine hours to get here from my home town in Wyoming. It was much worth it because of the excellent care I received.”

BLUE MOUNTAIN CLINIC PATIENT AND ACCESS FUND RECIPIENT

“I know my decision was the right one. I’m surprised that my emotions did not get the best of me. My head, heart and gut all agreed. I feel strong and ready to face a future journey ahead of me – I feel so empowered to have been given a choice. I am lucky.”

WOMEN’S SHELTER RESIDENT AND ACCESS FUND RECIPIENT

## KEEPING ABORTION SAFE, LEGAL AND ACCESSIBLE

The Blue Mountain Clinic Access Fund is one arm of our clinic that came out of a necessity to assist in funding emergency contraception, birth control, technical support and abortion services to those women who can’t afford to pay for these services.

Access is very important. At Blue Mountain Clinic we don’t want to turn away anyone seeking reproductive care because of a lack of financial resources. Through our access fund we’ve been able to offer women vouchers for medical services as well as money for gas and lodging.

And we will continue to do so.



Family Practice

610 North California Street •  
Missoula, Montana 59802  
406.721.1646 (phone) •  
406.543.9890 (fax)

## BLUE MOUNTAIN CLINIC ACCESS FUND

“Ladies,  
It is up to us to be strong and trust in ourselves in order to truly let go. Find the courage within yourself to be free from the pain society places upon the hardest decision you will probably ever make. Don't be afraid and don't forget –  
Love thyself.”

BLUE MOUNTAIN CLINIC PATIENT

## WOMEN SPEAK

“I traveled across the globe in order to be provided with a safe abortion. The country that I am currently living in has sub-standard medical facilities and practices. Access to safe abortions is almost impossible. Aside from safe medical procedures, medications specifically contraceptives are also difficult to obtain. The birth control available may be counterfeit as well. In Georgia, the country I live in, sexual and reproductive health is rarely discussed. The majority of the populations is uninformed and misinformed. As a result there are many children living in poverty within the family structure as well as in “children’s homes.”

I feel fortunate that the decision I made is the result of education and access. I am certain that I want to terminate my pregnancy because I am not psychologically, emotionally or financially prepared to have a child at the moment.

Today I have been trying to imagine what it must feel like for a woman that doesn’t have the options that I do. I must be terrifying.

I am very grateful to the staff at Blue Mountain Clinic for giving women options. I am also thankful for the consideration and kindness with which I have been treated.

MY BODY,  
MY CHOICE

BLUE MOUNTAIN CLINIC PATIENT, RESIDENT OF GEORGIA AND ACCESS FUND RECIPIENT