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Scoil Mhuire Buncrana
Opinion - 1st Place

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun...damental Rights

I am sixteen years old. I live in a country where if I was raped and impregnated tomorrow, I would be denied a termination on that pregnancy. I live in a country where if I was having a baby who had no chance of survival, I would be forced to endure the ordeal of carrying a child I knew was already not for this world. I live in a country where if I sought an abortion in my own home, I would be persecuted and imprisoned. And I am angry.

The 8th Amendment of the Irish Constitution illegalises abortion in Ireland, therefore denying women of their right to bodily autonomy, their right to control over their own bodies, their right to have a choice in what happens within their own womb.

I am angry, because this Amendment means that a Syrian refugee who was raped and impregnated in her home country came to Ireland in early 2014 and was denied an abortion. Despite seeing a number of agencies, her pregnancy was too far advanced by the time she was assessed by a three-doctor panel, and she was forced to have a caesarean section against her initial wishes. This woman came to our country seeking asylum, and was instead forced through an ordeal no woman should have to go through. How can we consider this country a safer place for women than the one she just left? I am ashamed.

I am angry, because a woman I met on a bus told me the story of her friend. Her friend, who so desperately wanted a baby, and was overjoyed when she found out she was pregnant. However, a scan revealed that a foetal abnormality meant that the baby would not survive more than a few minutes after being born. This woman then had to face the fact that her only alternative to being forced to carry and give birth to a child who would not survive, was to leave her home and seek an abortion elsewhere. I am heartbroken.

I am angry, because in 2015, 3451 women travelled from Ireland to England and Wales to have an abortion. That's over 9 women a day. Over 9 women a day who had to leave their home, the support of their family, and the comfort of their bed, in order to obtain a basic human right. Over 9 women a day who cook dinner and exercise and make tea and play with children and go to school and work hard and love hard and yet, are seen as criminals in the eyes of our government. I am disgusted.

We need to learn to trust women. Trust women to know what is right for them. Trust women to make the right decisions regarding their own bodies. Trust women to know what is best for themselves, rather than letting a government decide what goes on inside her.

Because it's your mother. Your sister. Your daughter. Your niece. Your cousin. Your girlfriend. Your wife. It's every woman who is being robbed of the right to control her own body.

The people of Ireland are calling for a change. No, it isn't up to the church or the state to decide a woman's fate. No, get your rosaries off our ovaries, if you please. Yes, it's time to Repeal the 8th.

I am sixteen years old. I live in a country that denies women their fundamental human rights. And yes, I am angry.

Judges Citation:

When it comes to an opinion piece, many just draw on their own experiences. What is interesting about the piece that is awarded first place in this category is that the author brings in a plethora of examples to show how a highly political topic affects different women on different levels.

The women seeking asylum in this country that cannot seek an abortion after she has been raped, the woman who so desperately wants a baby but finds out there is a foetal abnormality which means her child will not survive, the 3451 women who travelled from Ireland to England and Wales to have an abortion in 2015. Her research is factual but emotive, her opinion piece is well structured and thought out, her use of language is engaging, repeating again and again, 'I am angry', and of course, there is that fantastic phrase that finishes up a great piece... 'Get your rosaries off our ovaries, if you please.'

It is purely coincidental that these awards are announced on a week where we celebrated International Women's Day where thousands of people marched in Dublin to repeal the eight amendment. No matter when this piece was written though and despite your own personal opinion on this highly contentious issue, this is an opinion piece that strikes a core. For her piece entitled, 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun...damental Rights', well done to Siofra O'Dwyer from Scoil Mhuire Buncrana.