

The Euthanasia Debate

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Euthanasia is a growing political and moral debate that continues to become a major headline in today's media. Euthanasia is otherwise known as "assisted suicide". It is the attempt to cause death upon someone who has severe medical problems. Euthanasia is sometimes called a form of "mercy killing" to help the severely ill out of their misery.

There are numerous reasons of why assisted suicide has become such a heated topic. The first issue is the cost of medical care in the United States. Medical costs are rapidly getting higher, exceeding the rates of inflation. These financial pressures can cause an individual and his/her caregiver to lean towards Euthanasia.

In addition, morals and values of Americans have changed over the years. Traditional religious values are falling through the cracks, making ethics of quality vs. sanctity of life be put to the test.

Last but not least, psychological disorders among individuals are increasing. Suicide attempts and completions are gradually rising in America causing the Euthanasia debate to be put to the test.

Where do Americans stand on this debate? Well, it seems to depend on the situation. The name Teri Schiavo, in particular, should ring a bell.

Teri was born to Robert and Mary Schindler. In 1983, Teri wed her first love, Michael Schiavo.

In 1990, after living a healthy life, Teri suffered an abnormal cardiac condition, which left her pulse-less and not breathing for five minutes. With the lack of oxygen to her brain, Teri became brain dead at the age of 26.

Teri was diagnosed with a neurological condition known as PVS. PVS is a persistent vegetative neurological state, with no hope of recovery. This also means that a patient with PVS is unaware of themselves and the world around them.

The problem with Teri's case was the ongoing dispute between her guardian of care and husband Michael and her parents. The Schindler's felt that Teri's wishes were indeed to stay alive, even with significant non-curable brain damage.

The battle between Teri's parents and her husband began in 1990 and finally ended when Michael Schiavo won his case against Teri's parents and the tube that fed and kept Teri alive was removed.

The Schindler family sparked national interest in the fight to save their daughter's life, no matter what state she was in.

If allowed to live, Teri would remain a vegetable, live off a feeding tube, obtain bed sores and never live a normal life. Is assisted suicide acceptable in Schiavo's case?

Conservatives feel that Teri was alive and should therefore be considered a living human being. They believe that assisting in her death is murder and inhumane.

Famous conservative author Ann Coulter had quite the mouthful to say about the case of assisted suicide in Schiavo's case. She said, "As important as it was to enforce constitutional rights to desegregated schools, isn't it also Teri Schiavo's right to due process before she is killed by starvation? Liberals new found respect for "federalism" is completely disingenuous. People who support an abortion are prohibited from ever using the word "federalism"."

On the other hand, there is another side to this issue of Teri Schiavo. Michael Schiavo seemed to be a loving husband who was fighting for the wishes his wife wanted, but could not fulfill on her own terms. He has been made out to be a murder, a cheating husband and a criminal.

Legally, Michael Schiavo did nothing wrong. Therefore he is not a murderer or a criminal. As far as cheating, he was living with someone during the case, but the battle of Teri lasted from 1990-2005, so he was moving on.

Personally, each situation is different whether it's Teri Schiavo or a terminally-ill cancer patient who wants to die

pain-free. Would I want to live as a vegetable? No. However, everything happens for a reason. Do doctors and medical guardians have the right to play God? Do families, such as the Schindler's hold on to their daughter for selfish reasons?

Basically, this debate comes down to the people who are religious and people who are not. In religion, individuals are taught that God determines life and death. This debate is about the quality of life that someone lives and the sanctity of their life.

It's a tough call for political parties. Each medical condition is different. Children that are severely mentally retarded and are brain dead, do we assist in their suicide? Where do Americans draw the line? What is morally right and wrong? A life is a life, no matter what state they are in right? These underlining questions will continue to spark the debate of Euthanasia, and probably never reach a solid answer.