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Guest Comment Legal abortion at stake

By ELAINE LEVY

WE STRUGGLED for years to obtain safe, legal abortions. Now we need to struggle once again to ensure that right.

A 29-year-old woman with four children, ages 1 through 9, and on public aid, called my medical center in desperation. A man broke down her door, beat her and then raped her.

The woman recently had been released from a hospital after having a nervous breakdown. She still suffers from high blood pressure and emotional stress. Unfortunately, no physician in her small Illinois town would perform an abortion because "they don't believe in it." The doctors did tell her, however, that if she carried the pregnancy to term, they would watch her high blood pressure and make her comfortable during the delivery. But fearful that she would have another breakdown, and not wanting a fifth child under the age of 9, she wanted an abortion.

The woman receives \$434 per month from public aid, out of which she must pay \$250 towards rent. The rest barely covers the utility bills and food. To get to the medical center she had to borrow money for the bus ticket. We agreed to perform the service.

I would like to share my personal views and that of many others regarding reproductive "freedom." I stress freedom since this is an innate gift which every human being possesses and should not be violated or dictated by the government.

The unrest continues to ripen in times of "political power" for the Moral Majority. Not only have they hindered the indigent women, but the threat of the IUD



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and the pill as supposed "abortion measures" is included in the proposed Human Life Amendment. The Moral Majority speaks of fetal personhood and protecting the rights of the unborn; but what about our personhood, our rights, one of which is choice—not only a constitutional choice, but a personal choice.

The fact remains that women will not stop having abortions under any conditions. Will we have to read of the horror stories in the headlines about self-induced septic abortions like we did before abortion became legal in 1973? Since the closing of Cook County Hospital, women like the patient who came into the medical center, are desperate because of financial hardship. Is this only the beginning of the end of ban all abortions? Women—black, white, rich or poor—can never truly be free without the right to personal control over their own reproductive life. *Levy is administrator of Albany Women's Medical Center.*