

The following is a speech written and delivered by a Spring Lake High School sophomore for a local oratory contest held annually in Grand Haven. The purpose of the contest is to raise awareness on a critical issue: The rights afforded to the preborn human person. It is written in memory of...

The Missing from My Generation

by V. Belanger

Mistakes: a word we use to describe things that we wished had never happened. A bad decision. A wrong choice. Something we work to erase.

In our lives, we have all heard someone say, "I was a mistake." Sometimes it's a joke, sometimes it isn't. But words have so much power; our internal dialogue has the power to build our confidence or kill our self-esteem. The statement "I was a mistake" is so powerful because we internalize these statements and build ourselves up or continually break ourselves down.

The definition of a mistake is an action or decision that produces an unwanted outcome. This raises the question we don't think to ask often enough: when does a mistake stop being something that we do...and become something that we are? Because human beings are not mistakes.

I was born in 2009. I'm part of a generation growing up where, statistically, so many are missing. Turning the question of abortion from a philosophical one—to reality.

According to the World Health Organization, recent estimates show that 6 out of 10 unintended pregnancies and 3 out of 10 of all pregnancies end in abortions. Hundreds of thousands of abortions are reported in the United States every year, with recent studies showing over 600,000 annually. In the first half of 2025 alone, there were 500,000 abortions. Since 1973, over 69 million abortions have occurred in the U.S.

That is not just a number. It's friendships that were never formed, classrooms never filled, and lives that didn't have a chance to begin. On the global scale, around 73 million abortions occur worldwide every year. That's about 200,000 every day.

Every hour, thousands of lives are lost before they even begin. When I stop and think about it, millions of people who could have been a part of my generation...aren't. The year I was born, 2009, there were over 780,000 abortions. Every one of those lives could have struggled, succeeded, laughed, failed, and grown—just like me. And yet, they are often reduced to a single word: mistake.

There is also a legal side that speaks for the value of life. In some states, when a pregnant woman is killed, the law recognizes not one, but two victims. In the unborn Victims of Violence Act, harming an unborn child during a crime is treated as a separate offense. This isn't just a technicality—but a recognition that every life has value, even before birth.

From the pro-life perspective, this is showing something: human value is not conditional. Every life, no matter how small, deserves protection. If people truly believe in dignity and equality, that belief must extend to those who cannot speak for themselves.

Now, I understand something important: This issue isn't simple. People experience uncertainty, pressure, and fear—situations that most of us hope we never have to face. According to the Pew Research Center, many women who choose to have an abortion report reasons like bad timing, feeling unprepared, or financial instability. When we ignore that reality, we are failing to reach people who need hope the most.

These are real struggles people deal with, and they don't deserve judgment; instead, they need compassion. Acknowledging hardship does not mean changing the effects of humanity, because the value of a human life has never been dependent on the circumstances that it is surrounded by. In the Bible, Psalm 139 says, "You knit me together in my mother's womb...I am fearfully and wonderfully made." It's not a statement about

perfection, but a statement about value. This verse is saying that before we are seen on this earth, we are known. Even before we take our first breath, we have value; we matter.

Science supports the Bible on an important point: from the earliest stages of conception, a human embryo has unique DNA—completely distinct, already human. Within weeks of conception, a heartbeat is detected, and by the end of the first trimester, most major organs have started to form. A fetus is a life with potential, not a potential life. And if that statement is true, this question is not what it is—but how we choose to give it value.

What qualifications do we need to become human? Age? Size? Whether we are wanted? If we say that some humans matter less for those reasons, then the idea of value is conditional. A world where value is considered conditional is one where no one person's worth is secure. The pro-life perspective is embedded in a simple idea: every human has value—not because of how they were conceived, not because of what they can do, but because of what they are. Human.

This isn't just about a policy, whether we should or shouldn't have it. It's about people. It's how we see each other. When you are looking at someone, do you think, "They are a problem I need to solve" or "a person to protect?" Once we start labeling people as mistakes, we don't just change how we think—we change how we treat each other and our overall willingness to accept one another.

Imagine a world where all of us were judged that way. Not by who we are, but whether or not we were "planned." By our circumstances, not our potential.

I stand up here today as someone born in 2009, a generation intended to shape the future. A generation missing 100s of 1,000s of people, not from war or famine or strife, but because at their earliest moments someone labeled them a "mistake".

So, how can we shape that future when so many people are missing? Maybe it's time we redefine the word. Mistake. Mistakes are something that we choose to do, not what we are. No matter how unexpected, no life is a mistake. And if humans truthfully believe in equality, in dignity, in human rights, then those beliefs have to reach everyone—even the voiceless, even the breathless, even the smallest, and even the ones who were never given a chance to live.

The worth of the world is not reflected on how it treats the strong, but how it shields the most vulnerable—the ones who never got the chance to sit in a seat like yours, to have a voice like mine, to speak a first word, to take a first step, or to even take a first breath.

And maybe that's where our mistake begins, it's not in how life begins, but it's society failing to see the value that every life holds.

I want to leave you with this final point: when a human life is never given the time to live, to be loved, to be known, to make a difference that could change the world, will we call them mistakes? Or will we recognize them as human beings and grieve the loss of what they could have brought to this world?

We thank this student for their excellent submission, which is acutely related to their future career goal of becoming an OB/GYN doctor. We congratulate both of our 2026 winners, and also prior contestants including two who won at the state level, with one eligible due to age to advance to the national competition! To learn more about this speech contest (generally taking place each March) and several other upcoming youth contests—most with monetary prizes, please contact Theresa at Tri-Cities Right to Life. Email: TG@TriCitiesRightToLife.org, or visit <https://TriCitiesRightToLife.org> to find details on our local pro-life advocacy defending life from conception to natural death. Also, scan this QR code for quick links. Most of all, please consider joining us :)



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