

Dear Pregnant Girl,

My name is Erika. I'm a senior at UCSB who's been working on assignments about pro-life/pro-choice issues. I've learned and read a lot about the issues. As I was doing my research I kept thinking about the young girls in my hometown who are pregnant. I'm from Tulare County and it saddens me to say this but we're known to have the highest teen pregnancies in the nation. As of 2016 it was found that the central valley teen pregnancy rates still remain high. Fortunately, the local middle schools and high schools in the central valley do their best to provide information about being pregnant at a young age and the consequences of it but the information can only go so far. I'm not sure why the pregnancy rates are high but I have a slight idea that it's due to drugs, gang violence, low socio-economic status, and possibly ethnicity. Ethnicity plays a big role because the central valley is heavily populated with Hispanic families who are primarily of low socio-economic status. Regardless of the reason why young teen girls are getting pregnant I want them and you to personally know you're not alone. You don't have to take the easy way out and give into peer pressure.

Before I go any further I want to tell you a story about a 19 year old girl who got pregnant by her boyfriend. She says, "I wanted to show him I loved him enough to do it for him". They made an appointment at a clinic in Kentucky, four hours away from where they lived, and the night before they decided not to go. Early the next morning, he told her to get dressed but she didn't want to go. They both cried during the four hour trip. She didn't believe abortion was killing but she'd always been against it. When she had the ultrasound she asked the nurse for a picture and the nurse said, "Seriously"? A month went by after the procedure and it turns out the boyfriend later regretted it too. She says, "When I cry about it, I cry alone. He thinks it would make me sad to talk about, but I don't want our baby to think we

forgot. I've never heard of anybody else having an abortion here". By telling you this story I'm not trying to persuade you in any way, shape, or form. My only intention is to inform you of what another female has felt before and after the abortion.

I don't know your story, who you are, your name, age, or where you're from but I hope you'll make the decision to let your baby live, either with you or another family. One of my favorite verses from the Holy Bible is Jeremiah 1:5. It says "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations". I quote this verse because it's a reminder that regardless of someone's religious affiliation, I believe every fetus growing into a baby will be someone. They can be the next teacher, doctor who finds a cure to cancer, a police officer, a fire fighter. The baby is meant to be someone who can be the change we want to see in the world.

Whether you're under 18 or a few years older I'm sure you're scared and feel alone. You're not. You're probably thinking, "How could she know what I'm going through"? You're right, I don't. I don't know what it's like to be pregnant and not have people support you. I don't expect to understand what you're feeling or even slightly comprehend what you're going through. Although, I do know you can't do life alone. If you're from Tulare or Kings County there is a place located in Visalia, Ca. called Tulare-Kings Right to Life. A woman by the name of Kelly Quinn is the executive director whom I interviewed for an assignment I previously worked on. Kelly became involved with Tulare-Kings Right to Life when she was seeking help with her own personal decision about abortion. She told me she recalls being young and had no formal knowledge about abortion or the affects it entailed. Her realization about the decision she made didn't hit her until she was well into her adulthood. Kelly told me she believes "without a doubt, Tulare-Kings Right to Life is making a difference in the hearts, minds, and lives of those

around us”. Along with herself and her colleagues, they work together to provide information for youth so they’re educated about having a baby at a young age. They also provide information and educate the public about being pro-life and what it stands for.

Another organization that helps with teens and older is called Young Lives. I’m personally familiar with this organization because before I transferred to UCSB I helped young pregnant moms like yourself. I became involved when one of my dad’s co-workers needed help at church taking care of babies and toddlers. So my sister and I both decided to go and help out. I’m not going to lie but being with little ones can be exhausting. After a year of volunteering we were invited to go to Williams, Arizona for a bigger Young Lives retreat. Young Lives is geared towards helping young moms who get pregnant at a young age have healthy relationships with their babies. Both organizations I’ve mentioned are also religious based but Young Lives is more. Their focus is not only to incorporate healthy relationships but to give the young moms and their boyfriend (if the father is involved in the child’s life) to develop a healthy relationship as a family and with God from the Christian faith. If you choose to attend Young Lives you can expect to drop your baby off at a safe environment with trained staff who are background checked and will care for your baby while you’re in church. This is a lot of information at once but I want you to know you have a support team on your side. There are many other moms like yourself who’ve had to make a decision you’re working with on a daily basis. If you’re interested in Young Lives there are chapters all over the country I can help get you involved in.

Equally important, if you’re not religious or of the Christian faith you can visit Tulare-Kings Right to Life. I mentioned earlier that Tulare-Kings Right to Life is religious based but they don’t promote religion. Their goal is to educate and advocate for life; the born and unborn. If you’re not from Tulare or Kings County I can help you find a place to get involved in that’s

suitable to your needs. There will be no pressure on my part to push you into doing something you don't want to do. My hope is to give you information and background as to what options you have available to you so you can utilize them to the best of your ability. As I mentioned earlier, you can't do life alone. I will be with you every step of the way regardless of religion background.

Another important fact I want to make apparent to you, regardless of religion, is the option of adoption. If you choose adoption please don't think you're giving up your baby. There are a couple types of adoption you could choose from. There are closed adoptions and open-adoptions. A closed adoption happens when you and the adoptive parents have no contact with one another and you don't see your baby. An open-adoption is when you and the adoptive parents speak to each other and you're a part of your baby's life. You'll get to watch your child grow and flourish as well as see him or her succeed and live out their dreams. Neither choice will be easy but if you're not ready for the responsibilities of taking care of your child you might want to consider adoption. You're not saying goodbye to your baby, you're giving him or her a future that will be rewarding in years to come.

I've listed a few adoption agencies you might want to consider looking at. The first one is a national adoption agency called American Adoptions America's Adoption agency located in Overland Park, Kansas. They are one of the largest domestic adoption agencies in the United States. They are a non-religious agency and fully licensed equipped with a large, qualified staff who will support and guide you step-by-step. The second adoption agency is located in Fresno, California. It's supported under The Roman Catholic Diocese of Fresno. It's called Infant of Prague Central California Adoption Services. Their primary focus is you, not just your baby. Infant of Prague wants you to be O.K. and confident in the choices you make for your baby and

yourself. They do pregnancy counseling as oppose to adoption counseling where they talk to you about making good decisions if you choose adoption or parenting. The third one is an agency called Bethany located in Massachusetts. This adoption agency is also religious based. At Bethany you get to develop an adoption plan, meaning, you can choose where you want to place your child.

If you choose Bethany as the agency you'll be able to choose what type of family your child goes to. You'll get to choose from a religious or non-religious family. You get to choose if your child will live with a family that has pets, how often you want visit your child and if you want your child to live with a family close by. You can get connected with both Bethany and Infant of Prague through Tulare-Kings Right to Life website. If neither of these agencies appeal to you we can look together and find an agency for what you're looking for you and your baby. I will also provide you with my contact information so we can chat about options regarding adoption or if you need someone to talk to. I'm here for you. Please don't hesitate to email me.

I hope this letter finds you well. ☺

Erika Peralta. Contact info: peralta@umail.ucsb.edu