

Ms. WATTLETON. Mr. Simon, I would just like to add one piece. I do not know whether that article also mentioned that in all of Latin America illegal abortion is the leading cause of death in women of reproductive age.

Ms. MICHELMAN. One quick addition to Faye's comment. I think the way to reduce abortion is not by taking away the right to choose, but to reduce the need for, to make abortion less necessary through sex education, family planning, contraceptive research. It does not work to take away the right to choose; it just makes women die.

Senator SIMON. And I know my time is up, but we have a million teenage pregnancies each year.

Ms. MICHELMAN. Yes, we do, the highest rate—

Senator SIMON. About 300- or 400,000 of those end up in abortions. We know that if we work on the drop-out rate, we reduce teenage abortions.

Ms. MICHELMAN. That is right.

Senator SIMON. So that there are things that we can do in a constructive way to reduce abortions.

Ms. MICHELMAN. That is right.

Senator SIMON. The difficulty is that many of the people who take the anti-choice stand are the very people who are working against the kind of social programs that would reduce the school drop-outs and that sort of thing.

Ms. MICHELMAN. The need for—that is right.

Senator SIMON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I think the points that you all raised are valid. I would like to raise another one and then yield. I am not going to ask any questions, but just make a point. I have heard it often mentioned what Judge Thomas' religious beliefs were and are and what church he attends, and whether that sheds any light on his views.

I want to make it abundantly clear, I think that is absolutely, totally, completely irrelevant as a matter of principle, and I also think it is irrelevant as a matter of fact. There are four practicing Roman Catholics on this committee, three of whom support choice. I would hate to be in the position of, because I am practicing Catholic, someone assuming that I was unwilling to sustain *Roe v. Wade*, were I on the bench. It would be an unfair argument. I think people should be clear about that. It is totally irrelevant, in my humble opinion.

Now, I will yield to my friend from Philadelphia.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Michelman, your statement of your own personal experience is very powerful. Let me ask you if you believe that a firm commitment by a nominee to uphold *Roe v. Wade* is an indispensable factor for confirmation.

Ms. MICHELMAN. Senator, I think a firm commitment to uphold this fundamental right is as indispensable as a firm commitment to uphold the right to free speech, the right to religious freedom—basic, fundamental rights. And Faye, I think, and I both have said a couple of times that this right is as basic as any of the other fundamental rights that our Founding Fathers elaborated upon, so I do think it is.