

Don't Send Her Packing – Dáil Protest 27/6/07

On Wednesday 27th June, Choice Ireland placed 20 suitcases outside Dáil Eireann to represent the estimated 20 women each day that leave Ireland to access abortion services abroad. Recent statistics suggest that 14 women each day provide Irish addresses at abortion clinics in Britain alone. Each of these women was represented by a suitcase with a tag describing the circumstances in which that woman travelled for an abortion. These stories were adapted from "The Irish Journey" a book published by the IFPA in 2000 which documents real life accounts of Irish women who have terminated a pregnancy.

Through the action Choice Ireland also wanted to highlight the fact that this figure of 14 women a day does not encompass the increasing number of women the Crisis Pregnancy Agency believe are travelling to other European countries due to the spiralling cost of abortions in England. Although direct statistics are not available, the CPA is conducting an investigation into the other destinations visited by Irish women for abortion services. Choice Ireland however called attention to these women who are not included in statistics by placing 6 additional suitcases, each carrying a flag representing each of the 6 countries believed to be the most popular destination for Irish "abortion tourists".

To order a copy of The Irish Journey, please call 01 806 9444 or email post@ifpa.ie

Names were changed and pictures on the tags posed by models.

1. Deirdre

I made this same sad journey twenty-five years ago. Now I make it again with my fourteen year old daughter.

Don't send us packing.

2. Angela

I have a son with severe brain damage who needs all my love and energy. He is a 60 minute an hour, 24 hour a day job. I can't give a decent life to any other child. It breaks my heart to leave him for the whole weekend when he can't understand.

Don't send me packing.

3. Miriam

My contraceptives failed. My relationship broke down. I am not ready to have a baby.

Don't send me packing.

4. Michele

I have two young children and an abusive husband. We are getting out. I can't go ahead with this pregnancy.

Don't send me packing.

5. Molly

When I had my twins at age nineteen, my family were not supportive. Now I am pregnant again, eight years later. I can't face being forever connected to a man who has caused me nothing but heartbreak and grief.

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6. Ellen

I suffered from lack of confidence in myself and my sexuality. When my boyfriend said he didn't like to use condoms, I went along with it.

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7. Rachel

I just finished my first year in college. We took a risk one night and I got pregnant. I couldn't go through with the pregnancy. I'm twenty and I have no financial stability. I've had to make three lonely journeys to England to have this abortion.

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8. Anna

When I first found out I was pregnant I was happy about it. Then reality loomed. My boyfriend said he could be of no help - financially or emotionally. I already have two young children. I had to borrow money from the credit union to travel for this abortion.

Don't send me packing.

9. Jean

I got pregnant again at 45. I already have seven children, the youngest is three, I couldn't face going through that risk and fear again. The practical arrangements to travel are enormous.

Don't send me packing.

10. Lorraine

I was raped by a family friend. The horror of that night, I can't tell you. I knew I couldn't put the family or kids through a public court case. For me this abortion will always be a positive factor during a nightmare time.

Don't send me packing.

11. Linda

I can't start another family at 45. I'm not Irish but have lived here for over 20 years. Abortion is legal where I come from, but that does not make it easy. When I started to tell people about this abortion, I was amazed by the level of fear and secrecy surrounding abortion in Ireland, and the emotional isolation imposed on women.

Don't send me packing.

12. Sinéad

I'm 19. It thought about keeping this baby but how could I? I was lucky my da didn't kill me when I got pregnant at 16. She's adopted now. I still live at home, I've hardly been out of the town and my boyfriend is useless.

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13. Catherine

My relationship with my husband was emotionally abusive. We separated four years ago. I have three small children. We have just got some precious routine and stability in our lives. My contraception with my boyfriend failed.

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14. Áine

When my sister had her baby outside of marriage, my father wouldn't speak to her for six months. I don't know what people will think of my story but I'd like to be able to tell my sister that it wasn't the easy way out.

Don't send me packing.