

# ***“An Open Letter to 21 Million Women”***

***by B.J. Isaacson-Jones ( 1988 )***

Where are you?

For over 16 years we have provided  
you with choices

Painful choices

I remember—

I sometimes cried with you.

Choices, nevertheless, when you were desperate.

Remember how we protected your privacy  
and treated you with dignity and respect  
when you

were famous

had been brought to us in shackles

with an armed guard, or

were terrified

that you would run into

one of your students?

I remember each of you.

Our clinic was firebombed.

Do you recall?

Exhausted and terrified we had  
been up all night.

We rerouted you to another clinic  
because you wanted an abortion that day.

Where are you?

Priding ourselves on providing abortions for  
those who cannot pay, we have spent millions  
of dollars that we never really  
had caring for you. We wanted  
to give a choice.

I also gave you cab fare and  
money for dinner from my own pocket.  
Have you forgotten?

I remember you cried and asked me how  
you could carry this pregnancy to term when  
you were abusing the children you had,  
were having an affair,  
tested positive for AIDS,  
could not handle another,  
were raped by your mother's boyfriend,  
pregnant by your father and  
shocked and torn apart when  
your very much wanted and loved  
fetus was found to be  
severely deformed.

Your mother picketed our clinic  
regularly. We brought you in after dark.

Have you mustered the courage  
to tell her that you are pro-choice?

You are.

Aren't you?

I recall shielding your shaking body, guiding you  
and you husband through the picket lines.

They screamed adoption, not abortion!

You wondered how you could explain your  
choice to your young children.

You broke our hearts.

You had just celebrated your twelfth birthday  
when you came to us. You clutched  
your teddy bear, sucked your thumb  
and cried out for your mom who asked  
you why you had gotten yourself pregnant.

You replied that you just wanted to be grown.

You're twenty today.

Where are you?

I pretend I don't know you in the market,  
at social gatherings and on the street.

I told you I would.

After your procedure you told me that you would  
fight for reproductive choices (parenthood,  
adoption, and abortion) for your mother, daughters,  
and grandchildren. You will . . . won't you?

I have no regrets. I care about

each and every one of you and  
treasure all that you've taught me.

But I'm angry. I can't do this alone.

I'm not asking you to speak about your abortion, but  
You need to speak out and you need to speak  
out now. Where are you?