In recent days there has been a concerted effort to delegitimize any objections to embryo-killing. Some have gone so far as to say that society has a moral obligation to pursue lines of research involving embryo-killing at taxpayers’ expense. Advocates of this killing have tried to malign those with objections by claiming that they are imposing their “personal, private, and religious” views upon everyone else and are preventing the development of needed cures.

We disagree.

All human beings are equal.

Basic justice requires that we not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity. Likewise, justice requires that we not discriminate on the basis of age, size, stage of development, or condition of dependency. We see this doctrine of equality clearly embedded in our Nation’s principles and is succinctly articulated in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Likewise, the 14th Amendment states: “No state shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Human beings are intrinsically valuable and have rights because of what they are.

Our Founding Fathers knew that human rights are not bestowed by the government or by a majority. Human beings have rights by virtue of their humanity. Our rights do not derive from our strength or beauty, from our intelligence or talents, or from our usefulness to others or to society as a whole. This explains why we defend the life of a mentally handicapped child just as much as the life of a Nobel Prize winning scientist. It would be manifestly evil to kill a mentally handicapped child to harvest his organs for labor, or to exterminate Jews to create an “ideal” race.

Our nation’s laws must extend the same basic rights and protections to all human beings.

If attacks were made on the mentally handicapped, African-Americans, or Jews, we would expect our government to pass laws protecting them. We would not expect our political leaders to say that they were personally opposed to slaving the mentally ill, but thought others — for the good of science — should have a choice to do so. We would not expect our leaders to say that they were personally opposed to slavery, but thought others should have the choice to own a slave. We would not expect our leaders to say they were personally opposed to the destruction of life, but thought others should have a choice to destroy a class of people. Our opposition to killing innocent human beings is not merely “personal” or “private.” It is a principled judgment based upon the demands of justice. We have a duty to protect the members of our society under attack by passing legislation prohibiting their abuse, and prosecuting those responsible. It is a necessary component of our national defense to argue for federal funding to subsidize the killing of the mentally handicapped, African-Americans or Jews.

A human embryo is not a potential human being.

In the embryonic stage of our lives, each of us possessed the genetic constitution and epigenetic primordia to develop by a process of internal self-direction and self-integration from the embryonic into and through the fetal, infant, child, and adolescent stages of development, and into adulthood with our unity, determinateness, and identity intact. In other words, each of us came into being as a human being; none of us became a human being only at some point after coming into being. In the embryonic stage of our lives, we were not “potential human beings,” for we were human beings already. We were potential adults. Our potential was, like the potential of a fetus or a newborn infant, to mature into adulthood.

It is wrong to intentionally kill human beings at any stage of development.

If it is a well established fact that human embryos are human beings, why are we entertaining discussions about federally funded embryo-destructive research? Just as it would be evil to kill a mentally handicapped child to harvest his organs for transplant, so too would it be evil to kill the embryonic human being to harvest his stem cells for scientific research. Just as it was wrong to exterminate Jews, so too it is wrong to execute embryos, even for the inadulable goal of fighting disease.

The direct and intentional killing of innocent human life is the most important political consideration.

We realize that many candidates who support embryo-protection fail on other issues. We yearn for the day when all candidates will be pro-embryo-protection, so that we may choose our representatives on the criteria of other issues. While some of us may prefer the economic, educational, health and foreign policies of certain pro-embryo-destruction candidates, we recognize that the issues surrounding embryo-destructive research are of paramount importance, and we are forced to distinguish between socially desirable policies and the perpetration of intrinsically evil acts. Imagine someone claiming, “I’m not a fan of Jefferson Davis’s support of slavery, but his economic policies are more important.”

More than 1.3 million human lives are extinguished every year in abortions, and even more will die if unbridled embryo-destruction research is permitted. No candidate’s tax, educational, or foreign policy can be so good — and certain of its promises — that it justifies tolerating such a grave injustice on so massive a scale. Pro-life citizens are not of one mind on the war in Iraq. But we see that no candidate is running on a platform of targeting innocent civilians or even accepting “collateral damage” at the rate of 1.3 million deaths a year. Even opponents of the war should see that the massacre against the unborn is the graver evil.

Contrary to the claims of our opponents, none of our appeals have been personal, private, or religious. Our simple demand is for the equal protection of all human beings.

This November, we ask that you do not support politicians who deny basic human rights to an entire class of human beings. A vote for a pro-embryo-destruction candidate is a vote for the direct and intentional killing of innocent human beings.

Written and signed, October 19th, by the student-members of:

Princeton University Pro-Life;   Choose Life at Yale: an Undergraduate Organization;   Harvard Right to Life;   Cornell Coalition for Life;   University of Pennsylvania for Life;   Dartmouth Coalition for Life;   Stanford Students for Life;   First Right at UVA;   Students for Life at NYU;   Georgetown University Right to Life;   MIT Pro-Life;   Notre Dame Right to Life;   Johns Hopkins University Voice for Life;   University of California Berkeley Students for Life;