

When I first watched Rebecca Haimowitz's documentary *62 Days*, I couldn't help but feel overcome with grief and pain for the Muñoz family. Films have the unique ability to engage an audience by harnessing a deeply profound emotional experience. This may be why we tend to have such innately strong feelings about our favorite movies. There always seems to be some particular emotional tie to these movies, whether it's a classic romance that brings unhinged joy and gratitude or a childhood film that is associated with bittersweet memories of your youth. While watching the Muñoz's incredibly tragic story unfold, I imagined myself in the family's position. I thought about how earth-shattering and devastating it would be to watch one of my own loved one's deceased body be put through what Marlise's was, while knowing the situation was undeniably futile. This experience reminded me of something that we may be inclined to forget when navigating the overtly pragmatic world of ethical decision making- that is that *we* are at the very core of ethics, and we are *human*. To be human entails a level of overwhelming complexity, as we are, in both a physical and metaphysical sense, vastly abstract creatures with a highly developed perception of connection to the world and an ability to place particular meaning on such connections. However, the consequence of being so chaotically abstract is fallibility. This is why one of the most basic convictions surrounding the human condition is that anomalies can and should be expected.

While many ethical theories do indeed take this notion of complexity and great potentiality for human error into account, I believe it should be the ultimate, underlying conception in any system that directly implies or underscores the value of human life. In the Muñoz family's situation, physicians adhering to a Texas pregnancy exclusion law maintained Marlise's essentially deceased and decaying body on life support, even though her fetus was not deemed viable, forcing her family to endure an excruciatingly painful and traumatic situation. As ethics clearly has its rightful place in the legal system, it was astonishing to see how such a blatantly unethical situation could have arisen from the enforcement of a law. This is where I believe a more universal understanding of the conception of human complexity has great weight in ethical considerations of law-making. Perhaps situations similar to the Muñoz's could be avoided or at least limited if we were to properly conceive of the potentially ambiguous and varied inferences that can be made from legislature and impact this has on human lives. Thomas Mayo, an associate law professor at Southern Methodist University who helped draft the Texas statute involved in the Muñoz's case, told the Fort Worth Star Telegram, "It never occurred to us that anything in the statute applied to anyone who was dead. The statute was meant for making treatment decisions for patients with terminal or irreversible conditions." It is logical to deduce then that if legislatures had assumed that inaccurate assumptions of this extremely impactful law could have been made and thus properly stipulated this important detail when drafting it, the hospital may not have misapplied the law's meaning. Consequently, Marlise's autonomy may have been saved and her family's emotional pain avoided.

Ultimately, life does not ebb and flow in carefully orchestrated, predetermined measures, and the very essence of what it means to be human involves great ambiguity and an expectation to deviate from the norm. Ethical considerations and the legal system attempt to define order and value by determining right from wrong, but in light of Marlise Muñoz's case it is clear that in doing so, an attempt must also be made to respect and acknowledge the remarkably human and invariably complex nature of the real people and real lives these determinations surround.