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RIGHT WING WATCH



Deceptive Video 'Sting' Attacking Planned Parenthood:

***Dishonest Hit Job is Part of Religious Right's Campaign
to Deny Women Access to Reproductive Health Care***



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Introduction

The current wave of political attacks on Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest provider of reproductive health care for women, is the latest example of a now-familiar kind of coordinated propaganda campaign waged by right-wing activist groups, far-right pundits and media outlets, and politicians willing to collaborate in promoting false information for political purposes. This dishonest hit job on Planned Parenthood is being promoted by many of the same groups and individuals responsible for marketing the deceptive and manipulated videos that were used to mount the now-discredited attacks on ACORN and on Shirley Sherrod, formerly of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The videos being marketed breathlessly by Religious Right groups like the Family Research Council are part of a years-long campaign that religious fundamentalists and their political allies have waged to destroy Planned Parenthood and thus deny millions of women access to reproductive healthcare. More specifically, the campaign is designed to take advantage of anti-choice victories in the November elections and build political momentum for the kind of anti-choice legislation that has already been introduced in the House this year. There is cruel irony in charges from Religious Right groups that Planned Parenthood is exploiting young women, when it is policies promoted by those groups, including the defunding of Planned Parenthood and redefining rape to further restrict victims' access to abortion, that would deny countless young women essential medical screening, access to birth control, and a place to turn during times of medical and emotional crisis. In fact the vast majority of Planned Parenthood's work is not even abortion-related; its services help prevent 612,000 unintended pregnancies annually.

Media and public officials should keep in mind the well-documented record of deceptive editing and misleading statements by the individuals peddling this story and should refuse to give these false charges more credibility than they deserve.

Lila's Lies

Anti-abortion activist Lila Rose, a photogenic young activist who Religious Right leaders hope to make the new face of the anti-abortion movement, claims that the video Religious Right groups are circulating "proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Planned Parenthood intentionally breaks state and federal laws and covers up the abuse of young girls it claims to serve." False. In fact, far from proving a pattern of illegal

activity, the Live Action project demonstrated that Planned Parenthood has strong institutional procedures in place to protect young women. When Live Action activists appeared at numerous facilities presenting themselves as seeking help with a child sex trafficking ring, Planned Parenthood wrote to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder requesting an FBI investigation. Live Action attempted its "sting" across the country; the one Planned Parenthood staffer who violated those procedures and is featured in Live Action's video was fired.



LILA ROSE: THE NEW FACE OF THE ANTI-ABORTION MOVEMENT

A Call to "Take Planned Parenthood Out"

Political groups that are intent on denying women the ability to have an abortion under any circumstances have long targeted Planned Parenthood and the public funds it receives to provide health care and sexuality education to low-income women.

The current campaign heated up in 2008, when

"...more than 50 leaders from anti-abortion organizations banded together to form the National Coalition to Defeat Planned Parenthood. The coalition, spearheaded by Chicago-based Pro-Life Action League, met for the first time in

September and quickly issued its plan to cripple Planned Parenthood Federation of America, a major provider of reproductive health services for poor and uninsured women, by ending any federal, state, or local government funding to the group.”

Also in 2008, Religious Right leaders intensified efforts to portray Planned Parenthood as engaged in a Hitlerian effort to “exterminate” black people. For example, Harry Jackson, better known for his anti-gay activism, has denounced abortion as “black genocide” and “pandemic extermination.” Jackson spoke at a Religious Right gathering on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. in August 2008:

“We have got to, on our watch, defund Planned Parenthood in America...there’s got to be a concerted effort that we take Planned Parenthood out. They’ve put out a hit on all children, but they’ve set themselves up to put out a hit on black and Hispanic babies especially. It’s time that we take them out.”

Of course, there is a tragic history of deadly violence against abortion providers. Just five months ago, a Planned Parenthood office in Madera, California, was firebombed after 20 years of service.

A report from this year’s anti-abortion “March for Life” notes that among the speakers was Rabbi Yehuda Levin, who warned, “The liberals, pro-aborts, and homosexualists who champion the killing of the preborn baby murder agenda don’t connect the dots, when ultimately a doctor kevorkianizes them or their loved ones. God acts measure for measure.” Levin denounced Planned Parenthood while the crowd chanted “defund Planned Parenthood now!”

Lila Rose got her start with James O’Keefe, the now-disgraced right-wing activist whose videos helped drive the successful right-wing campaign to smear and dismantle anti-poverty group ACORN. Religious Right leader Gary Bauer said last year that “Planned Parenthood deserves the same treatment ACORN is getting.”

No Respect or Compassion: Force Women to Have Abortions in Public, Redefine Rape

Speaking at the Values Voter Summit, the largest annual political gathering for the Religious Right, Lila Rose revealed a shocking lack of respect or compassion for women:

If I could insist, this might sound a little strange, but if I could insist, as long as they are legal in our nation, abortions would be done in the public square until we

were so sick and tired of seeing them that we would do away with the injustice altogether. Maybe then we would value the unborn child as we value the one year old child just learning to walk, and maybe then we might hear angels singing when we ponder the glory of conception, that first beginning of human life.

The same level of compassion was on display at an anti-Planned Parenthood press conference in Virginia last year at which Virginia Delegate Bob Marshall said that disabled children are God’s punishment to women for having had abortions. He also once said regarding women who become pregnant after being raped that “[T]he woman becomes a sin-bearer of the crime, because the right of a child predominates over the embarrassment of the woman.”

In spite of the rhetoric, it is already illegal for any group, including Planned Parenthood, to use federal funds for abortion services, except in cases involving rape or incest or necessary to save the life of the woman. But House Republican leaders are pushing legislation, the “No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act,” that would further restrict abortion funding to cases of “forcible” rape, a change that could eliminate the option for underage girls who are victims of statutory rape, women who were drugged, and many victims of date rape; incest would only be covered for women under 18.

Using Economic Arguments to Hit Poor Women While They’re Down

In a December 2008 *Wall Street Journal* article, journalist Stephanie Simon wrote that Religious Right groups were mounting a new anti-choice lobbying campaign that “focuses more on economic than moral concerns” and “paints Planned Parenthood as a wealthy organization that doesn’t need taxpayer help.” Helpfully playing his part, Rep. Mike Pence argued in December that the nation’s high unemployment rate and “tough economic times” were a reason to deny funding to Planned Parenthood. And in a letter last year, socially conservative Tea Party leaders argued “Most of the members of this movement would probably describe themselves as pro-life. Regardless, abortion is a multibillion-dollar business. Why is the government paying Planned Parenthood anything, much less almost \$1 billion from 2002-2009?”

Of course, as journalist Adele Stan noted last year, hard economic times also mean greater need: “more women than ever are expected to seek their health care through Planned Parenthood, as lost jobs lead more to live without health insurance.” ■



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