

# CONSCIENCE

THE NEWSJOURNAL OF CATHOLIC OPINION

VOL. XXXII—NO. 2 2011

## Behind the Façade and the Myth

The Ugly Truth about  
Human Life International

DAVID J. NOLAN

## Exposing Trafficking in Bigotry

Anti-gay Activities of  
US Religious Conservatives  
in Africa

KAPYA KAOMA

## Trying to Hijack the Civil Rights Legacy

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## Politicization of the Pulpit

Conservative Catholic  
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AND JARIS MUJICA

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Catholics for Choice shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well-being and respect and affirm the capacity of women and men to make moral decisions about their lives.

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CATHOLICS  
FOR  
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS, CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE HAS DEVELOPED a reputation for investigating those who work to undermine people's reproductive choice and access to reproductive health services. In 1991, we released a series of reports on the antichoice activities of the Catholic hierarchy in the US—a multimillion-dollar organization that seeks to restrict access to reproductive healthcare for everybody, not just Catholics. Since then, we have examined a wide range of conservative Catholic organizations, both in the US and abroad. Today that work is as important as ever.

Exposing the hubris, hypocrisy and hyperbole of those who oppose the provision of reproductive health services around the world is necessary in order to cut them—and their influence—down to size. Politicians, decision makers, the media and the public deserve to see the hard facts about these organizations' activities, their finances and their friends. Those who seek to deny women choice often do not tell the truth about their agenda to influence public policy, instead seeking to manipulate others into enforcing their narrow fundamentalist agenda. Ironically it is the very language that these groups employ—as well as their crude tactics and heartless actions—that most reveals how their ethics and values leave a lot to be desired.

Sadly, the media's investigative reporting capacity has greatly diminished in recent years, often leaving Catholics for Choice to provide the only real information on what lies beyond the opposition's rhetoric. In this issue we highlight the ways that colleagues have used our research to further their own work. We also look at the investigations and activities of those whom we admire as collaborators in this vital area.

We share our research because we want people to use it—enjoining legislators and policymakers to check the provenance of arguments, not blindly accept them because the claims, or the person presenting them, seem to be legitimate. Most of all, we share our work because we believe it does us all good to see the reality behind the opposition's bluster. They may sometimes talk a good talk, but the reality is that there are far more skeletons in their closets than there are facts in their arguments. This is not about making a statement—it's about making a difference.



DAVID J. NOLAN

Editor

*Conscience* is a unique magazine, and one we would like to get as wide an audience as possible. So, I have a favor to ask. Think for a moment. Ask yourself, do I know other people who I want to be as well-informed as I am? I'm sure you do, because inquisitive people always know other inquisitive people.

So, please consider buying them a subscription as well. To purchase, please visit our website, [www.CatholicsForChoice.org](http://www.CatholicsForChoice.org), or call us at (202) 986 6093.

*“Its cast of characters would make for good theatre. There’s a founder with anti-Semitic leanings and a penchant for crossing over into enemy lines; another leader accused of nepotism and financial malfeasance; and a recent president who has admitted to sexual misconduct while he performed exorcisms.”*

— DAVID J. NOLAN , p12

*Conscience offers in-depth, cutting-edge coverage of vital contemporary issues, including reproductive rights, sexuality and gender, feminism, the religious right, church and state issues and US politics. Our readership includes national and international opinion leaders and policymakers, members of the press and leaders in the fields of theology, ethics and women’s studies.*

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ABOVE: FATHER MATTHEW HABIGER, FORMER PRESIDENT OF HUMAN LIFE INTERNATIONAL,  
POINTS AT SOUTH AMERICA ON A GLOBE. © CORBIS / MARK PETERSON, 1995

# Obama's Pandering To Right Wing Alienates Prochoice Advocates

**T**HANK YOU FOR publishing Jodi Jacobson's article, "Is Obama Prochoice?" (Vol. XXXII, No. 1). Ms. Jacobson clearly summarized President Obama's lack of action around reproductive rights, and I agree with her that his silence around abortion is appalling.

Where was President Obama when the government was on the verge of shutting down in April over the issue of funding family planning services? Where is his leadership now that the Senate has introduced a parental notification law, and the House has introduced legislation prohibiting federal money from being used to train doctors on how to perform abortions? President Obama's silence has given legislators at both the state and federal level the green light to keep passing as many pieces of antichoice legislation as possible. As Obama recedes further into the background, we are going to see more abortion restrictions passed and, even worse, more violence against patients and abortion providers.

I am very disappointed in President Obama's continued efforts to pander to the right wing—by trying to win the hearts and minds

*Letters may be edited for clarity and length.*

of conservatives, Obama has turned his supporters into opponents as well. If President Obama is prochoice, then we need him to be vocal and visible now with a strong statement about abortion.

SERENA FREEWOMYN  
*Founder, Feminists for Choice  
Tucson, Ariz.*

## **A Gray Area: Obama's Record on Reproductive Justice**

I WANT TO THANK JODI Jacobson for her provocative article, "Is Obama Prochoice?" (Vol. XXXII, No. 1) and add some perspective about the Latina experience.

Ms. Jacobson rightly points to tough battles that the White House has left largely to advocates to wage. What Ms. Jacobson doesn't mention in her article is the crossroads where immigrant women in the US found themselves in the healthcare debate.

The Obama administration failed to prioritize some of the toughest issues regarding reproductive rights, along with immigrant health (we don't want to forget that he agreed to strip undocumented immigrants from purchasing in the exchange) and immigration reform. The result was additional hardship for immigrant women.

While I agree with many of the concerns raised by Ms.

Jacobson, I don't agree that Obama is antichoice (or anti-immigrant as some immigrant rights groups have asserted). Perhaps the issue is more gray than the question implies. A particularly polarized and mean-spirited political debate has swept the nation, often further stigmatizing the women and communities who most need access to services. The essential question may be: what leadership role should he play now to achieve the best outcome for all women nationwide? The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health urges the administration to amplify its leadership on both of these issues, courageously taking the political risks to stand up for what is right, and making good on campaign promises that promote basic values of dignity, justice and self-determination for all women.

MARIA ELENA PEREZ  
*Director of Community  
Mobilization  
National Latina Institute for  
Reproductive Health  
Washington, DC*

## **USAID Fight For Reproductive Rights Should Focus On Contraception**

MICHELLE GOLDBERG'S article, "All at Sea: USAID under Obama" (Vol. XXXII, No. 1), critiques the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for insufficiently promoting access to safe abortion worldwide and for failing to take full advantage of the legal and political leverage available to do so. While the latter point is justified, the

article appears to equate access to safe abortion with reproductive rights. Reproductive rights *include* access to safe abortion, but also access to contraception.

USAID provides more than one third of the donor-funded contraceptives that reach developing countries. Nowhere is this aid more important than in sub-Saharan Africa, where on average 25 percent of women in any given country say they do not desire to become pregnant in the next two years but are not using contraception.

Fewer unintended pregnancies translate into fewer abortions, pure and simple. In this region, USAID would do better to focus its efforts on improving access to contraception rather than fighting battles about the legality of abortion. Only two countries in sub-Saharan Africa permit abortion without restriction (South Africa and Cape Verde), so achieving full reproductive rights on the continent requires massive legal change for which there is little political will. Most African governments are, however, generally open to contraceptive provision. There is no doubt that US abortion politics severely hamper the effectiveness of international organizations working on reproductive health, as my own research on the United Nations Population Fund has discovered. The need for access to safe abortion will remain even in situations of complete contraceptive coverage. But given that

improved access to contraception moves us so much farther ahead in our progress towards reproductive rights and women's health in sub-Saharan Africa, USAID should place its emphasis there, and save the fight for abortion for later.

RACHEL SULLIVAN ROBINSON  
*Assistant Professor,  
School of International Service  
Affiliate Professor, Dept. of  
Sociology, American University  
Washington, DC*

### **Obama: High Hopes and Disappointment**

THE LAST ISSUE OF *Conscience* (Vol. XXXII, No. 1) was groundbreaking. Congratulations for the many articulate essays that confront the failures of Obama's leadership. I've been waiting for one of "our" groups to articulate the reproductive health community's disappointment after their hopes were raised so high when Obama was a candidate for president.

Catholics for Choice is leading the way in defining the progressive edge of our movement. Thank you.

SUSAN YANOW  
*Reproductive Health Consultant  
Cambridge, Mass.*

### **Letters Reveal Vatican As "Puppet Master" Behind Abuse Cover-up**

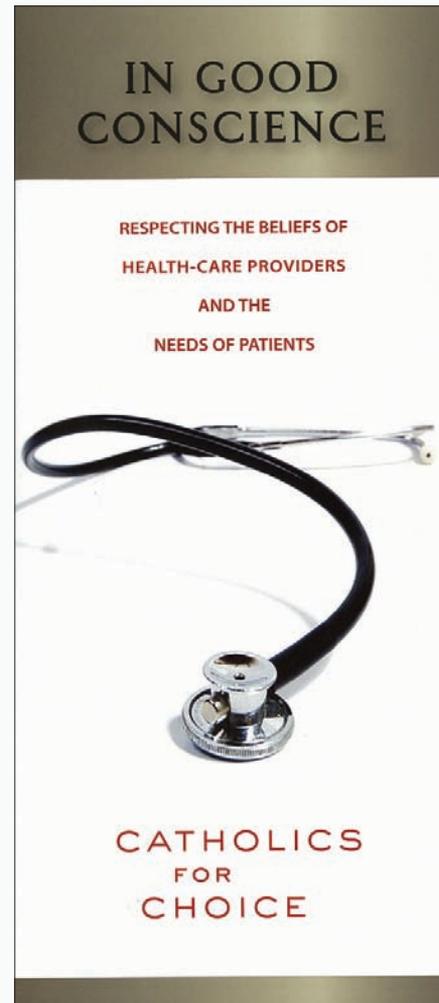
IN THE LAST ISSUE OF *Conscience* (Vol. XXXII, No. 1) there was an item from "In Catholic Circles" titled "The Vatican Faces Its Legacy on Mandatory Reporting to Civil Authorities" that touched on a 1997 letter to the papal ambassador in Ireland. This

communication, along with a 1984 letter to the diocese of Tucson, Ariz., can aptly be described as a "smoking rocket launcher." The consensus is that the messages show the Vatican dissuading local bishops from reporting suspicions to prosecuting authorities while forbidding the release of incriminating files—the complete opposite of the impression the Vatican has sought to create.

This is significant because it renders the Vatican less able to avoid being charged in court with multiple child abuse cases. The financial implications for the Vatican—and perhaps the fallout for its personnel—could be very serious. These letters also make it much more difficult for the Vatican to heap blame on local bishops defending themselves, as they will ultimately have to, having broken numerous articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A major obstacle for the courts has been to prove that the Vatican itself was the puppet master. These two letters from the Vatican and the Pope's representative that have recently come to light present the clearest evidence yet that the Vatican was not just complicit but calling the shots. This might make it nigh impossible to pull up the Vatican drawbridge in the future and heap all the blame for gross misdeeds on local bishops.

KEITH PORTEOUS WOOD  
*Executive Director,  
National Secular Society  
London, England*



# LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK.

Please e-mail letters to:

[Conscience@CatholicsForChoice.org](mailto:Conscience@CatholicsForChoice.org)

# The Church and Abortion

## Mexican Constitutional Amendment Would Make Abortion “A Human Right”

CARLOS NAVARRETE, parliamentary coordinator for the political party Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) in Mexico’s Senate, has introduced an initiative to reform the Mexican constitution and make the right to abortion universal.

The proposed amendment to Article 4 of the Constitution, reported by Mexico City newspaper *La Jornada*, affirmed that “man and woman are equal before the law” and thus have “the right to decide—in a free, responsible and informed manner—the number and spacing of their children.” The amendment would also guarantee a woman’s right to abortion within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

The proposed legislation went on to specify a period of six months for the federal and state authorities to develop the legal and administrative infrastructure to make this constitutional reform a reality for Mexico’s women and men.

Navarrete based his statement that “reproductive autonomy is a human right” on the principles of equality and non-discrimination required of the Mexican government.



Carlos Navarrete, parliamentary coordinator for Mexico’s Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), speaks to an audience in Havana.

## Changes to Irish Abortion Law Proposed

THE “YOUR RIGHTS, RIGHT NOW” report has called for the enactment of legislation “to clarify the circumstances under which an abortion may be lawful” in Ireland. The report, produced by a coalition of 18 NGOs and trade unions, comes on the heels of a European Court of Human Rights decision, known as the X Case, which ruled that one woman’s life was at risk because she could not access an abortion. The Irish government had six months from the December verdict to outline its plans for making abortion available.

Exactly how open the access will be is still up for question. Labour leader Eamon Gilmore said the legislation should allow abortion in circumstances where the woman’s life or health is at risk, while Fine Gael

leader Enda Kenny said that the decision was meant to refer only to the woman’s life, according to the *Irish Times*.

The “Your Rights” report, which “identifies gaps in

assistance to pay for an abortion always results in excommunication as a necessary accomplice to the abortion.

However, an archdiocesan investigation into the case of Fr. Pousa affirms that this interpretation is not correct. The inquiry found that the priest, known for his work with the poor, did not violate the law nor incur the penalty of excommunication. Pousa “did not concur in the intention of the offense and was not principally complicit in the abortions that had already been decided and carried out by two girls in a very precarious economic situation” and thus would not be excommunicated, according to the archdiocese of Barcelona.

The incidents from several years ago received attention recently as part of a new book that also described Pousa’s blessings of same-sex civil unions, support of voluntary celibacy and the ordination of women.

## US Bishops Conference Welcomes Ban on DC Abortion Funding

ONE OF THE STIPULATIONS of this spring’s multi-billion-dollar federal budget deal was that a comparatively tiny sum of money—approximately \$62,300—raised locally to make abortion available to low-income DC women may not be used for that purpose.

In reaction to the decision, the district’s nonvoting delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, told the *New York Times* that DC is “a sitting duck” for others’ political agendas. The United States Conference of Catholic

Ireland’s respect for a wide range of civil, political, economic and social rights,” has been submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

## Priest Who Paid for Abortions Not Automatically Excommunicated

FATHER MANUEL POUSA, a controversial Spanish priest who admitted to paying for two abortions, was not automatically excommunicated, according to a statement from his archdiocese. The church’s canon law prescribes that penalties, including excommunication, can be incurred by Catholic women who procure abortions and, in some cases, by other Catholics without whose assistance the woman would not have been able to have an abortion. Some suggest that providing a woman with economic

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© REUTERS/DARRIN ZAMMIT LUPI, 2011

Women walk past a billboard reading “Christ Yes, Divorce No” in Malta.

Bishops (USCCB) wrote in a Feb. 14 letter to Congress, however, that they “welcome the bill’s ... restoration of a consistent ban on such funding in the District of Columbia.”

The funding ban will target poor women. “It is mean-spirited to tell us we can’t spend our money on what we know to be legitimate, life-saving healthcare,” DC Mayor Vincent Gray said at a sit-in protesting the decision, where he was later arrested.

In another move related to the federal government’s approach to abortion provision, several bishops have issued statements exhorting Congress to pass the Pence Amendment, which would defund any organization offering abortion services—including Planned Parenthood.

### Archbishop Target of Pie Attack

BELGIAN ARCHBISHOP André-Joseph Léonard received several pies to the face from activists unhappy with the cleric’s anti-LGBT and antiabortion statements.

Léonard is on record as saying AIDS was “a sort of intrinsic justice” visited on LGBT people by God. He has also said “homosexuality is not the same as normal sex in the same way that anorexia is not a normal appetite.”

One of the protesters told reporters, “For all those homosexuals who daren’t tell their parents they are gay, for all those young girls who want to have an abortion, he absolutely deserved it.” The archbishop was also attacked with a pie while celebrating All Saints Day Mass in 2010.

## The Church and Politics

### Malta Votes for Divorce in Defiance of Bishops

SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT of voters from this overwhelmingly Catholic country voted to legalize divorce in a non-binding referendum in late May.

Prime minister Lawrence Gonzi, who campaigned against the divorce initiative, said, “Now it is our duty to see that the will of the majority is respected.” The divorce legislation passed by an overwhelming majority in Parliament. In the past, couples could seek a legal separation through the courts, which would not

## Come Again?

“Contraception strikes at the heart of the marital act. When a couple impedes the inherent procreative powers of that act through the use of a condom, a pill or other means, they are engaging in disruptive and contradictory behavior by seeking to perform the act on the one hand, while simultaneously blocking it on the other.”

— Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, “NFP and the ‘Telos’ of Sex,” *Catholic San Francisco*, May 11, 2011.

Using contraception allows couples to both perform the marital act and block it at the same time? The wonders of modern family planning know no bounds.

allow them to remarry. Otherwise, they could apply for an annulment, an often lengthy process. Malta has been the only country besides the Philippines where divorce was not available.

The Maltese Episcopal Conference funded 75 percent of the anti-divorce campaign.

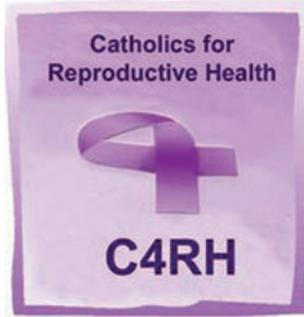
### Church Leaders Give up on RH Bill Dialogue in Philippines

ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS Ricardo Vidal said he didn't "see any point for dialogue" because President Benigno Aquino III had already made up his mind that citizens should have "the right to choose how best to manage their families."

"We told them our line is still open but they were very clear not to hold dialogue," Aquino's spokesperson Edwin Lacierda responded.

Yet the breakdown of dialogue did not indicate a cease-fire on the part of most members of the hierarchy. "Lawmakers who support the RH Bill are no different than terrorists," asserted Archbishop Jose Palma, vice president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), who made the remarks on Radyo Inquirer, a Manila-based radio station.

Not all clergy are opposed to the reproductive health reform initiative. Rep. Luzviminda Ilagan claimed that parish priests are more "grounded" in the "day to day life, the struggles and the hardships of the poor," making them more in line with "the RH bill, [which] is an attempt to respond to the



call of the times and the practical needs of the poor." The bill is also supported by the Interfaith Partnership for the Promotion of Responsible Parenthood, a coalition of leaders from many faith backgrounds, including Catholics for Reproductive Health.

Recognizing that other church groups had taken different stands on reproductive health, Fr. Melvin Castro, executive secretary of the CBCP, acknowledged that "the reproductive health bill is a moral issue so everybody has the right to speak on the matter regardless of religion."

## The Church and Contraception

### Youcat Translation Unintentionally Supported Contraception

A RECENTLY PUBLISHED Italian translation of the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church (Youcat) was pulped due to an error that mischaracterized the Vatican's teachings on contraception.

The edition incorrectly translated the German word for "birth regulation" as the Italian term for "contraceptive methods." This word choice implied that methods other than the Vatican-

approved rhythm method were acceptable.

British Catholic journalist William Oddie wrote in the *Catholic Herald* that it was "sloppy and amateurish" for such a mistake to make it through the vetting process and into publication. A spokesperson for the Citta Nuova editorial group said "the product is temporarily suspended, but not halted."

### Nebraska Bishop against Communion for Planned Parenthood Supporters

BISHOP FABIAN BRUSKEWITZ of Lincoln, Nebraska, came down against both Planned Parenthood and LGBT rights in two statements he made in April.

Bruskewitz said Catholic lawmakers who support Planned Parenthood would be denied Communion in his diocese "because they've defected from the church's faith."

Calling excommunication a measure to make people "realize the error of their ways," the bishop says he believes dialogue is "important" but "must have an exit" and is "not just simply talking interminably."

The Nebraska bishop is strongly in favor of talking when it comes to homosexuality, however. "Homosexual acts are intrinsically evil, and if one does them with full knowledge and consent, they're mortal sins and place one's eternal salvation in the gravest of jeopardy," he said. Thus, it is sometimes necessary to speak about resisting the "inclination" of same-sex attraction, which

he compares to "people who are inclined to start fires, or to kill people, or to rob something, and they can't give into their inclinations."

## The Church and Culture

### Cardinal Pell in War of Wits in Australia

A RECENT EXCHANGE ON the pages of *The Australian* and *The Swag* had Australian Cardinal George Pell vying publicly with Father Eric Hodgens, *Swag* co-editor Father Peter Maher and other Catholic writers.

Hodgens questioned church policies on celibacy, women's ordination, divorce and homosexuality and was sharply critical of Pope John Paul II. He also called for a departure from the model of priest-bishop obedience in which "bishops learned the trick of controlling the pack." "Our promise of loyalty was made to the church in the person of the bishop," Hodgens wrote in *The Swag*. "If the bishop is wrong, a loyal priest speaks up."

Pell called Hodgens' remarks "an astonishing example of provincial arrogance," while Maher said Pell's response was "full of slogans and not well argued."

In a detailed rebuttal to Hodgens published in *The Swag*, Pell took the other priest to task for such faults as being "less than Catholic" and having "hostility to some ancient devotions such as adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and veneration of Our Lady."

Hodgens' vision of a more "mature," questioning



Cardinal George Pell of Australia (L) at a news conference in 2008.

priesthood suggested that the church “rearticulate our concept and imagery of God so that God is the unseen, transcendent core of being rather than the string puller and button pusher of a puppet world.”

### Bishops Oppose Contraception Coverage as Preventive Care

THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE released a report in July calling for the inclusion of comprehensive family planning services as a preventive benefit for women’s health under the Affordable Care Act. This move would make contraception more available and affordable for American women, who often incur copays and other out-of-pocket expenses for family planning.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released a statement opposing the report in which Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, chair of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-life Activities, said that the recommendation “undermine(s) the good of women and children, the consciences

of employers, employees and health plan providers and the common good.”

DiNardo’s statement further alleged that the reclassification of contraception as preventive care would “would force all men, women and children to carry health coverage that violates the deeply-held moral and religious convictions of many.” He called for legal protections of the conscience rights of individuals who disagree with contraception coverage.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) told the *New York Times* that the IOM report brought the US “one step closer to saying goodbye to an era when simply being a woman is treated as a pre-existing condition.”

The IOM’s findings must be approved by Kathen Sebelius, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), who asked an independent panel to examine the classification of family planning services last year. Nineteen Catholic organizations have signed a letter urging Sebelius to implement the recommendations.

### Pope Closes Unorthodox “Party Monastery”

A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY in Rome that encouraged dancing nuns and visits from celebrities like Madonna has been closed by Pope Benedict XVI.

The Santa Croce monastery had been home to Cistercian monks for over five centuries, but recently it had attracted a reputation for unorthodox practices such as nuns—including a former nightclub dancer—dancing around the altar, as seen in a YouTube video.

The basilica is part of the diocese of Rome, where Pope Benedict also acts as bishop.

## The Church and Sexual Abuse

### Child Pornography Not Reported Due to “Priest Shortage”

A KANSAS CITY-AREA PRIEST arrested on possession of child pornography has revealed critical weaknesses in the system meant to safeguard children and youth from abuse and exploitation from anyone working with the church. The *National Catholic Reporter* quoted an

insider from the diocese as saying that the bishops’ independent review boards have been “exposed as a sham” by the five-month gap between the discovery of Father Shawn Ratigan’s problems by the diocese and his arrest.

Bishop Robert W. Finn learned of the “many images of female children” found on the priest’s laptop in December, but the Kansas City diocesan review board that monitors compliance with child protection measures said they were never told about the child pornography found in Ratigan’s possession. He was pastor of St. Patrick’s parish at the time.

When the diocese finally contacted police in May, Ratigan had collected more graphic photos of children, some of which were covertly “taken in and around ... churches and schools.”

Finn said he was notified last year of a memo regarding Ratigan’s behavior but he did not ask to read it. When he finally read the memo this May he said, “hindsight makes it clear” he should have requested a full copy, and that he “felt great shame”

## Come Again?

### POLITICS FROM THE PULPIT

“Catholics can never cast their vote for a candidate who, by word or deed, says he will support abortion.”

—The words of Archbishop Javier del Rio Alba of Arequipa, Peru, in a widely reported homily that garnered considerable controversy in the media and among advocates. He later backtracked somewhat spectacularly, when he clarified, “We bishops do not get involved in politics.”

So, which is it, Archbishop Alba? May Catholics ignore your admonition on how they should vote? Or is this a case of do as I say in church, but ignore me when I speak to the media?

at the “multitude of inappropriate behaviors.” The bishop defended his hesitation before an angry, tearful congregation at St. Patrick’s, saying, “We have a priest shortage in our diocese and needed a pastor here.”

### **Critics Claim that John Jay Report Blames Sex Abuse on '60s, not Bishops**

THE JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF Criminal Justice released its report “The Nature and Scope of the Problem of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States” to a storm of criticism from different corners of the sexual abuse debate.

More conservative commentators like George Weigel of the *National Review Online* agreed with the report’s suggestion that the “deviant” behavior of the 1960s and ’70s was reflected in the increase of abuse cases among the clergy—what has been called the “blame Woodstock” explanation. He differed with the researchers’ conclusion that homosexuality—whether that of individuals or what he calls a cultural “victimization of

adolescent males”—is not to blame for the preponderance of male abuse victims.

A.W. Richard Sipe, a former priest and recognized expert on the mental health and sexuality of the clergy, had other misgivings about the methodology. Among them were: that no one on the research team had been a seminarian or priest; that evidence from Grand Jury reports was not included; and that no clinical observations of the accused priests informed the study. The research team concluded that there was no one characteristic that would make it possible to identify abusers in advance.

One of the most hotly debated topics is the report’s parameters for “pedophilia”: “It is inaccurate to refer to abusers as ‘pedophile priests,’” the researchers said. As Sipe pointed out, however, the clinical definition puts the age of the abuse victim as 13 or younger, while the John Jay team chose to define instances of pedophilia as the cases where victims were 10 or younger. “If the John Jay researchers had used that cutoff, a vast majority of the abusers’

victims would have been considered prepubescent,” noted the *New York Times*.

Some victims’ rights groups are also dissatisfied with the John Jay findings. David Clohessy, national director of the Chicago-based Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), reacted to the study. “Predictably and conveniently, the bishops have funded a report that says what they’ve said all along... Fundamentally, they’ve found that they needn’t even consider any substantive changes.”

A *New York Times* editorial was even more critical, calling the report “a rather bizarre stab at sociological rationalization and, in any case, beside the point that church officials went into denial and protected abusers.”

### **Philadelphia Suspensions Raise Further Questions about Abuse Response**

A PANEL HAS FOUND THAT the Philadelphia archdiocese’s handling of abuse accusations and victim care had “glaring deficiencies.”

Though the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People required a “zero tolerance” policy in response to alleged abuse, some of the 37 priests mentioned in the report remained in ministry despite failed polygraph tests, multiple charges of abuse or credible supporting evidence.

Most troublingly, Philadelphia passed the most recent audit of its compliance with abuse prevention mandates with flying colors.

“To have that level of compromise of our programs

and our process, I was totally shocked,” said Teresa M. Kettelkamp, executive director of the audit board, the bishops’ Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection.

Philadelphia’s Cardinal Rigali has struggled with the media fallout from the scandal. Though one of the nation’s most powerful clerics, he only attracted about a hundred people to a service he led in recognition of “the evil of sexual abuse of minors, especially by members of the clergy,” a fraction of the seating capacity of Philadelphia’s Cathedral Basilica.

Annual audits have revealed that 55 of the 188 participating dioceses are not in complete compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, adopted in 2002.

### **Former Bishop of Bruges’ Revelations that He Abused Nephews**

FORMER BRUGES BISHOP Roger Vangheluwe candidly discussed sexually abusing two nephews in a recent television interview.

Admitting that he abused the boys beginning when they were around age 8, he said, “I don’t in the slightest have any sense I am a pedophile. I don’t get the impression my nephew was opposed, quite the contrary.”

The public description of what he called “a little bit of intimacy,” along with his manner during the broadcast, caused Guy Harpigny, the bishop of the Belgian diocese of Tournai, to say that the interview undermines the church’s response to the

## Come Again?

“I have said that his first miracle has been to remove from the earth this demonic incarnation of crime, evil and hatred.”

—Alan García, the outgoing president of Peru, claiming that the fact that Osama bin Laden was found and killed on the same day that Pope John Paul II was beatified was no coincidence.

The Vatican has decreed that soon after his death, Pope John Paul II performed a miracle when he cured a French nun of Parkinson’s disease. He needs a second miracle to be elevated to the sainthood. No word yet as to whether the Vatican is going to claim the hit on bin Laden for the late pope.

Catholics for Choice dà il benvenuto ai partecipanti alla Conferenza sull'AIDS che si apre oggi in Vaticano

Noi crediamo in Dio.  
Crediamo che il sesso sia sacro.  
Crediamo nel prendersi cura l'uno dell'altro.  
Crediamo nell'uso del preservativo.  
Ringraziamo il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI per aver riconosciuto che i preservativi salvano vite.

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I buoni cattolici usano il preservativo  
www.condoms4life.org | CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE

An advertisement in Rome's *Corriere della Sera* newspaper welcoming attendees to the Vatican conference on HIV/AIDS.

entire abuse crisis: "Along comes a former bishop who says it was only little games."

### New Vatican Guidelines Rely on Bishops' Enforcement

THE VATICAN RELEASED A letter to bishops worldwide, stating that the fight against sexual abuse of minors is a priority that requires "clear and coordinated" procedures for cooperating with civil authority.

While the guidelines include fast-tracking the disciplinary process against accused priests and extending the statute of limitations, victims' rights groups like Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) complained that the responsibility for enforcement still lies with the bishops. "There are no penalties for bishops who don't come up with guidelines or who violate their own

guidelines," the group said.

This affirmation of local bishops' supremacy was not reflected in the action taken against Australian Bishop William Morris. A pastoral letter by Morris was cause for dismissal by Pope Benedict XVI, but as the *New York Times* pointed out, bishops who have paid hush money to sweep abuse cases under the rug have not incurred papal wrath.

## The Church and Condoms

UNAIDS EXECUTIVE Director Michel Sidibé spoke out in favor of condom use at a Vatican conference on HIV and AIDS held in late May.

Sidibé maintained that education about HIV/AIDS prevention strategies, including condoms, "does not result in increased sexual relations." The UNAIDS

executive director praised "Pope Benedict's recent clarification of the use of condoms for HIV prevention" which he said "has opened up a new space for dialogue."

Before the conference, it became clear that conservative voices in the Vatican were determined to push back against Pope Benedict XVI's comments from last year supporting the use of condoms in certain circumstances. Indeed, the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* published an article right before the start of the meeting in which author Father Perez-Soba wrote, "By feeding the false belief that there is no danger, [condoms] have increased the possibility of infection."

Catholics for Choice and the Condoms4Life campaign welcomed attendees to the conference with an

advertisement placed in Rome's prominent daily newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, which included thanks to "Pope Benedict for acknowledging that condoms save lives."

## Endnotes

### Bishop: Cohabiting Couples May Not Receive Communion

UNMARRIED COUPLES who live together do so "in a state of mortal sin" according to a pastoral letter by Bishop Michael J. Sheehan of Santa Fe, New Mexico. These individuals are "either ignorant or indifferent to their sin" and "in great spiritual danger." All couples except those who have been married before are urged to get married, while those who fall in the latter category are told to seek an annulment. In the meantime, couples may not receive Communion unless they "agree to live chastely."

Cohabiting Catholics also are prohibited from acting as sponsors for Baptism or Confirmation because "it is critical for the sponsor to be a practicing Catholic—and can anyone be seriously called a practicing Catholic who is not able to receive the sacraments because they are living in sin?" These people's involvement in parish ministries and organizations may also be called into question, but Sheehan left this decision "to the judgment of the pastor." ■

# Behind the Façade and the Myth

THE UGLY TRUTH ABOUT HUMAN LIFE INTERNATIONAL

By David J. Nolan



FATHER THOMAS EUTENEUER (R), FORMER PRESIDENT OF HUMAN LIFE INTERNATIONAL, AND AUSTIN RUSE (L), OF C-FAM, AT A 2006 MEDIA CONFERENCE CALLING FOR A BOYCOTT OF THE FILM "THE DA VINCI CODE." © GETTY/WIN MCNAMEE, 2006

**A**S REVEALED IN A NEW report from Catholics for Choice, if Human Life International were a play, rather than an ultra-Catholic antichoice organization, its cast of characters would make for good theatre. There's a founder with anti-



Semitic leanings and a penchant for crossing over into enemy lines; another leader accused of nepotism and financial malfeasance; and a recent president who has admitted to sexual misconduct while he performed exorcisms. Amidst the lawsuits and the apocalyptic pronouncements and the pseudoscience mouthed with utter conviction, it is easy to lose sight of the plot. HLI is a declared enemy of reproductive choice—as well as any other person, group or practice that doesn't fit in with its far-right worldview. The staff at UNFPA as well as the citizens of Poland, the Philippines, Mexico, Brazil and Nigeria (among many others) know only too well that local policymakers are willing to accept HLI's assertions as fact. The most recent edition of *Opposition Notes* shines a light on the farce, the melodrama and the occasional tragedy that is Human Life International.

#### RIGID IDEOLOGY, LOOSE STANDARDS

Human Life International is a Virginia-based organization founded in 1972 by Father Paul Marx whose reputation relies upon shock tactics and ultra-conservative decrees. As discussed in a 2001 Catholics for Choice publication, *Bad Faith at the UN*, HLI developed its talent for deception following the example of its founder, who regularly infiltrated pro-choice meetings under false pretenses. Conference organizers came to recognize Father Marx at the door, but unfortunately the United Nations was not as alert. After the organization was denied Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) status at the UN, it set up the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM). For a short time, C-FAM may have offered HLI a semblance of respectability and an entryway to the United Nations, but it, too, descended into the clown-like activities that mar HLI's record.

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**DAVID NOLAN** is the editor of *Conscience* and the director of communications at Catholics for Choice.

*Opposition Notes* describes HLI's approach to reproductive rights:

"If HLI has an opinion on any given 'life issue'—contraception, abortion, sex education, vaccines, vasectomies, tubectomies, population control, in vitro fertilization, stem cell research, euthanasia—then that opinion is an inflexible and extreme one. If it does not have an extreme and inflexible opinion on such an issue, it is presumably only because it has not yet heard of it."

Ironically, the report found that this rigid ideology is matched with a markedly loose standard of behavior. *Opposition Notes* tells the story of the scandals that have nested at the very top of HLI's command structure. It began with accusations of anti-Semitism and financial impropriety leveled at Father Marx. In 1995, Monsignor G. Higgins, then-director of the Social Action Department of the United States Catholic Conference said of HLI's anti-Semitism, "It evokes the medieval imagery of Jews as devils, complete with horns." Marx had been making racist statements since at least 1977, first targeting the Jewish community and extending his hatred to Asians, Latinos, Muslims and the anti-apartheid movement through the years. During most of his time with Human Life International, Marx established the organization as the publisher of numerous titles of questionable veracity, including *Birth Control: Why Are They Lying to Women?*; *From Contraception to Abortion*; and *Eight Reasons You Should Consider Having One More Child*. The year 1999 was one of the many areas of HLI's timeline that is clouded by competing stories. At that time Father Marx was recalled to his home diocese for what could have been health reasons, fallout from decisions made at HLI or an order from his abbot.

Later, the leadership of Father Richard Welch was sullied by charges of nepotism and financial mismanagement. Welch painted an equally grim picture

of HLI's finances upon his arrival, saying that "people had been stuffing cash into suitcases to take [to the group's branches] overseas." Father Welch resigned after only four years with the organization, leaving HLI to fight a lawsuit filed by two long-time executives who had been sacked under Welch's tenure.

Infighting among warring factions loyal to Marx and Welch in the late 1990s weakened the organization financially, as did lawsuits from disgruntled former employees and an IRS investigation that nearly cost the group its tax exempt status, as reported in the *Washington Post*. Yet HLI has managed to survive in the public eye, if only as an oddity in a media environment always hungry for content. The immediate past president, Fr. Thomas Euteneuer, managed to piggyback on the rising popularity of 24-hour news shows, using his newfound pulpit to decry pressing concerns like toy company Hasbro's release of pink Ouija boards, the subject of one of his many posts on the ultraconservative Free Republic website. He also made himself a fixture outside the hospital caring for Terri Schiavo.

For all his media savvy, Father Euteneuer only gained true notoriety when the story broke about his sexual misconduct with a young woman, which he admitted happened while he was performing an exorcism. The woman was "gravely harmed," according to a statement released by HLI. Euteneuer released his own explanation of his misconduct, published in LifeSiteNews.com, in which he characterized the situation as an isolated incident which "did not involve the sexual act." Tom O'Toole of the right-wing organization Renew America, who calls Euteneuer "a man I have long admired," says he talked to a source who said that the priest had relationships with "more than one woman ... many women ... targeting confused, vulnerable women, often under the guise of spiritual director." A statement from HLI also acknowledged that there was more than one incident, but without offering any further details.

Human Life International has excelled at alienating even those people and

groups who might seem most receptive to its extreme antichoice sentiments. Euteneuer maligned conservative television personality Sean Hannity's support of birth control, calling him a "cultural Catholic" on his own talk show. In a conflict played out on the pages of *San Francisco Faith*, HLI also suffered a serious internal rift over its relationship with the conservative TeenSTAR sexual education program—not because of its abstinence focus, but because the program dared to bring up sex in the classroom at all.

#### **MUDDYING THE WATERS, HERE AND ABROAD**

HLI, now under interim president Monsignor Ignacio Barreiro-Carámbula, has hung on with a smaller budget but undiminished zeal. The fruits of its fervidly antichoice imagination are available on its website—without the context of its frequent scandals—for the casual Internet surfer. Like much US-born pseudoscience, HLI's version of reality can muddy the waters surrounding the reproductive rights of American women and men, but it is often challenged by the wealth of scientific experts and government agencies dedicated to creating balanced approaches to these subjects. In countries with fewer resources and Internet-savvy citizens, however, there may not be the research capacity or the political will necessary to effectively dispute claims such as those made about reproductive health, including sex education, contraception, abortion and HIV/AIDS. It is for this reason that HLI's ability to export its aberrant vision abroad must be curtailed.

The organization's claims to work in 105 countries cannot be proven—*Opposition Notes* found only contradictory evidence of a much smaller number of overseas partners reflected on its websites but it has conducted some activities in Latin America, Africa and Europe, notably post-communist Poland. The relationship between the Virginia-based HLI and its members, chapters, branches, affiliates, associates and divisions cannot be deduced from the little information

on its main website and the often dysfunctional or nonexistent websites of the subsidiaries. A look into HLI's tax records sheds little additional light on the situation, revealing only that there is no evidence of "the world's largest prolife organization" having any dues-paying membership.

Human Life International makes up for its indeterminate size with a loud voice heard in more than one country's parliament. HLI has criticized Mexico in the most florid terms as the country moves toward more liberal abortion laws and the legalization of gay marriages. The group has also praised the Filipino Catholic hierarchy for its inflexible stand against a national family planning program. At this writing, a bill requiring a national family planning program and sex education in schools is being debated in the Philippines Congress. President Benigno Aquino, who supports the bill, has more or less dared the church to excommunicate him. In May, Barreiro praised Filipino bishops' call for national prayers to defeat the bill, which he said was backed by "liberal ideology and money: hundreds of millions of dollars from Western elites who want the Filipinos to stop having children, and so are promoting this antilife, antifamily 'Reproductive Health' bill."

Human Life International has inserted its own misinformation into the debate. In 2010, Rene Bullecer, the director of HLI's operations in the Philippines, said that "85 percent of the Filipino population, which is Catholic, on matters of religion, culture, tradition, and education still listens to the voice of the Church," and thus could be expected to reject the reproductive health bill. Yet although polls have consistently shown that a majority of Filipinos support the legislation, Bullecer's misleading remarks have sometimes been cited as authoritative.

What is perhaps HLI's most far-reaching forum was achieved by devious means. The United Nations rejected its application to its Economic and Social Council because its reactionary views

were “against the purposes of the United Nations,” but the HLI-supported Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM) now promotes the same goals at the UN every chance it gets, though with diminishing effect. C-FAM and HLI are legally separate but ideologically identical, working to try and pass off their own brand of women’s rights at the UN and insisting that women are “honored, respected and dignified as women by prolife and profamily Christianity as nowhere else in history,” in Euteneuer’s words.

Human Life International, while not alone in creating a mythology on sexual issues, has a knack for eliciting strong

- Abortion damages the mental health of women. *In 2008, an American Psychological Association report confirmed that there is no credible evidence of this.*
- Condoms cause AIDS. *A study for the Royal African Society in 2009 found this belief to be a symptom of denial and/or ignorance of how the disease is spread.*
- Condoms don’t prevent HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases. *The Food and Drug Administration says: “Most experts believe that the risk of getting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases can be greatly reduced if a condom is used properly. In other words, sex with condoms isn’t totally ‘safe sex,’ but it is ‘less risky’ sex.”*

- Abstinence-only sex education works, a favorite theme of conservative Christian groups. *Guttmacher writes: “There is no evidence to date that abstinence-only-until-marriage education delays teen sexual activity. Moreover, research shows that abstinence-only strategies may deter contraceptive use among sexually active teens, increasing their risk of unintended pregnancy and STIs.”*

Online, these untruths popularized by HLI easily blend in with the blur of advertisements, conspiracy theories and other stimuli we are accustomed to taking with a grain of salt. Ideologues who lead the charge to reduce aid for contraception,

**There is a clear lesson to be learned from HLI’s role—along with that of PRI—in pressuring the US government to defund UNFPA: it is that for some people, propagators and recipients alike, facts do not matter.**

responses. It appears that readily available facts have done little to counter these myths, judging by their longevity on the Internet. Some of the responsibility lies with those who repeat HLI’s arguments without examining the validity of their sources. This oversight allows the group’s alarmist myths to seep into the discourse about reproductive rights, occasionally reaching the highest levels. A few of the more enduring untruths are listed below.

- Emergency contraception, the “morning after pill,” induces miscarriages. *The National Institutes of Health says: “Emergency contraception pills are taken after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy from occurring. It is not an abortion pill.”*
- Abortions cause breast cancer. *The National Cancer Institute consulted over 100 leading experts who concluded that “having an abortion or a miscarriage does not increase a woman’s subsequent risk of developing breast cancer.”*

- HIV is a man-made virus created for biological warfare or to target people of certain races. *The AIDS Healthcare Foundation states: “HIV/AIDS affects members of minority groups heavily because they do not always have access to health care or expensive antiretroviral drugs. After nearly 30 years of intense study and publicity, there is no evidence that governments have the ability to create such a devastating virus or policies of using the virus to their own ends.”*
- Vaccinations are really secret sterilization programs to stop population growth among minorities or the people in developing countries. *This is dismissed out of hand by reputable epidemiologists.*
- Reproductive health education promotes teenage sex. *The Guttmacher Institute says: “Strong evidence suggests that comprehensive approaches to sex education help young people both to withstand the pressures to have sex too soon and to have healthy, responsible and mutually protective relationships when they do become sexually active.”*

safe abortion and women’s reproductive rights often make use of just such spurious statements in Congress, however, where these same messages take on a dangerous heft. HLI takes the rejection of contraception to an extreme with its belief in capitalist plots and population-controlling politicians, which sounds like the stuff of dystopian nightmares. When believers like Steven Mosher, president of the HLI-founded and -funded Population Research Institute, get the ear of the president, however, the results can be disastrous. In 2001 Mosher authored a bogus report on the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) based on false allegations that the fund was abetting forced abortion in China. Congress and President George W. Bush cut off money to UNFPA in 2001, and though the accusation was found groundless by official delegations from the White House and the British parliament who traveled to China, US funding was only restored when President Obama took office. Worldwide, there is still a shortage of condoms and

other contraception; funding money for family planning has never recovered.

#### FAITH IN FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Mythology is not the same as religion, but a self-described Catholic organization like HLI bringing its take on reality to Congress illustrates the problematic influence religious groups can exercise upon foreign aid. Yet it must be remembered that for centuries this wasn't considered a problem. Religious organizations of all faiths have done good, culturally sensitive humanitarian work at home and abroad and still do. Great teaching hospitals in Asia and Africa

Ban Ki-moon's office has said that if today's need for modern contraceptives were met, nearly 100,000 maternal deaths could be averted and unwanted pregnancies cut by 71 percent.

Whether in American cities or African villages, people facing daily challenges do not usually want, need or have time for lectures on errant behavior, morality and the supposed sin of wanting the same reproductive health benefits and choices their richer, better placed neighbors and compatriots enjoy. Yet Human Life International, and other groups like it, continues to elaborate its extreme antichoice mythology with little understanding of these needs.

entertainment. That's vampire logic," he continued. In other words, the danger lies in not taking these stories seriously enough.

HLI goes to the opposite extreme, taking trivial things like pink Ouija boards to be the expression of evil. This theatrical tendency is what makes Human Life International itself such a good, almost mythic, story: its worldview is certainly colorful and its history is full of bizarre characters. The problem is when the tempest escapes the teapot—when HLI's signature brew of myth and scandal spills over into places like the UN and Congress, where it can sometimes be mistaken for truth.

**The problem is when the tempest escapes the teapot—when HLI's signature brew of myth and scandal spills over into places like the UN and Congress, where it can sometimes be mistaken for truth.**

were founded by medical missionaries long before there was a UN, a World Bank or a Peace Corps to help with development. The reputation of missionary work has been tarnished lately by conservative, usually Christian, organizations more interested in spreading their narrow ideologies than in supporting and assisting people at home and abroad to meet their human needs in their own ways, including assistance with reproductive options.

One of the risks with injecting ideology into aid policy is that it can obscure the practical nature of the task at hand. Humanitarian aid is about people, people with dire needs. Babatunde Osotimehin, a former Nigerian minister of health and now executive director of the UN Population Fund, said all the money spent on propagating an antichoice agenda might be better directed toward meeting the \$24 billion dollar gap in money for programs to meet the reproductive needs of young people and women of childbearing age. A report from Secretary-General

#### MYTH VS. "VAMPIRE LOGIC"

Are myths just dramatic stories? Or are they dangerous substitutions for the truth? Dictionary definitions feature both elements. Former HLI president Thomas Euteneuer dealt with these questions when he engaged in a little literary criticism related to the *Twilight* vampire series.

"A whole generation of teenage girls is absolutely swooning about the new vampire flick, *Twilight*, and its sequel, *New Moon*.... This is anything but a fantasy. It is a potential gateway to grave spiritual danger...." Euteneuer wrote in the ultraconservative *New Oxford Review*. Remarkably, his objection wasn't with the vampire genre itself, but with the way the tale was told. "Gone are the days of Bella [sic] Lugosi's 'Dracula' (1931) where good was good and evil was evil," he lamented in an HLI newsletter. He also took exception to *Twilight's* lack of crucifixes. "Indoctrinating kids ... to think this evil messaging is harmless when dressed up as

Real-world issues that affect real people, like foreign aid policy and access to abortion, should not be influenced by catchy stories from extreme antichoice groups, any more than we would accept doctors explaining away our physical maladies with a tale of evil spirits.

There is a clear lesson to be learned from HLI's role—along with that of PRI—in pressuring the US government to defund UNFPA: it is that for some people, propagators and recipients alike, the truth does not matter. And in HLI's case, the way they arrive at those truths is often through morally shaky ground. Exorcizing political and medical discourse of the myths that organizations like HLI peddle will likely be a never-ending task. But when the extreme right has become such a parody, it often provides more entertainment than real discourse. If it wasn't for the fact that people's lives are at stake, it would be almost entertaining. But they are—so that makes the battle to debunk these myths an urgent and vital task. ■

# Trying to Hijack the Civil Rights Legacy

WHAT'S BEHIND THE ANTICHOICE "FREEDOM RIDES"

By Loretta Ross

**S**ISTERSONG, THE WOMEN OF Color Reproductive Justice Collective, first encountered antichoice activist Father Frank Pavone when a bus carrying antiabortion protestors arrived in Atlanta on July 24, 2010. In October of the previous year, Priests for Life (PFL), led by Pavone, had announced its plan to bring a bus of protestors to Atlanta's King Center to imitate the civil rights movement's summer of 1961 Freedom Rides and hijack the moral mantle of the historic movement. Calling it the "Pro-life Freedom Ride," the organizers compared fetuses to "slaves" and claimed to be the new civil rights movement, according to Alveda King, the niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Thus, the antichoice protestors came to the King Center to appropriate a precious legacy in hopes that it would legitimize them among African Americans.

It was not the first time that Frank Pavone has tried to link abortion with African-American history. Catholics for

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This antichoice billboard in New York City's SoHo neighborhood was taken down after protests that its message was racist.

Choice's *Opposition Notes* profile on Priests for Life recounts how Pavone spoke with television producers about the possibility of broadcasting footage of an abortion procedure, which he compared with images from the 1960s of police in the United States turning dogs and fire hoses on African Americans.

Despite Pavone's hyperbole, women of color in Atlanta were not persuaded that this self-promoting priest really had our interests at heart, although he presents himself as a zealous prophet. After all, the media-hungry Pavone erected billboards in 2001 featuring oversized pictures of himself designed

to guilt trip women who had abortions. He featured Mark Crutcher of Life Dynamics, the producer of the seriously misleading *Maafa 21* antiabortion pseudo-documentary, on his television show to encourage malpractice lawsuits against abortion providers.

Alveda King is not perceived as a trusted messenger in the African-American community because of her support for ultra-conservative politics and the personalities of the Tea Party, such as Glenn Beck. In her writings, she is contemptuous of Coretta Scott King, Dr. King's widow, and distorts her uncle's legacy by claiming that his documented support for family planning in general,

fetuses have human rights that should trump the human rights of women. This is a serious misuse of foundational human rights principles. Written in 1948, Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) says, "All human beings *are born* free and equal in dignity and rights" [emphasis added]. Note that the UDHR says one has to be born to claim human rights. It says nothing about eggs, sperm, zygotes or fetuses, a common-sense view that the antiabortion movement tries to ignore. Furthermore, Article 3 of the UDHR says, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." Antichoicers apparently do not believe this article applies to women, who forfeit their right to security

declaring that the effects of slavery were "mild at best"—this is outrageous pandering to the prejudices of the privileged, who practice slavery denial on par with Holocaust deniers.

The following is a first-hand report I wrote on July 24 about the dueling protests for and against choice in Atlanta last year. Women of color in Atlanta were determined to protest the attempted hijacking of the civil rights movement and stand up for our human rights, acting as the true continuation of Dr. King's dream.

Activists representing SisterSong, SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW and SisterLove assembled at the King Center at

**Despite Pavone's hyperbole, women of color in Atlanta were not persuaded that this self-promoting priest really had our interests at heart.**

and for Planned Parenthood in particular, were manipulated by his wife. Despite confessing to two abortions herself, Alveda King says she regrets her decisions and now works to prevent other women from obtaining abortions, especially African-American women. She is employed by Priests for Life as the director of African-American outreach for the organization.

Ms. King asserts that women's wombs are merely "the place of residence" for fetuses, who have to be liberated because they are discriminated against for not yet being born. "The little baby in the womb appears to his or her mother very much like a little slave," she says, "at the mercy of slave owners." She is apparently oblivious to how offensive it is to compare African-American women to white slave owners. In her pursuit of "freedom" for fetuses, she is untroubled by the prospect of limiting black women's freedom, ignoring the fact that one cannot help black children by discriminating against black women.

In their distortion of the human rights framework, antichoice activists claim that

of person when they become pregnant. Their misinterpretation of this article has led to punitive policing of women's bodies in misguided and misogynistic attempts to elevate fetal rights over women's rights.

Perhaps their most troubling misappropriation of human rights language deals with Article 4, which says, "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." Only by claiming that fetuses are slaves held in servitude in women's bodies can they make the claim that pregnant women are, in fact, slave owners. This interpretation is an insult to all enslaved and formerly enslaved people, and is particularly offensive to African Americans. It seeks to trivialize the brutal legacy of slavery, such as in the following quote from Rev. Clenard Childress. "I in no way want to minimize the horrendous effects of slavery, child labor and denying women to vote, but in comparison to the decimation of our community by abortion they are mild at best," says Childress. An African American

approximately 2:30 pm. We were met by park police and Judy Forte, superintendent of the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site. She said that because our permit to assemble had been denied, we could not use any part of the center itself if we wanted to display signs, chant or do any kind of "protesting activities." In fact, access to the interior grounds, where the tombs of Dr. and Mrs. King rest in the middle of a beautiful reflecting pool, was blocked by the Park Service. We were told we could walk around the back of the pool only if we did not use our signs, bullhorn or literature.

She did offer use of the Free Speech Amphitheatre directly across the street, which is part of the Visitors' Center. She warned us not to cross back over the street when the antichoicers came or she "would have to call authorities." Presumably, she meant we would be arrested. She also asked us to stay on our side of the street and promised that she would keep the antiabortion bunch on their side because the King Center obviously did not want any direct confrontations between the

## Priests for Life: Sponsors of the Antichoice Bus Tour

(AN EXTRACT FROM THE CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE REPORT IN THE OPPOSITION NOTES SERIES)

Priests for Life (PFL) is a 501(c)3 organization that, since its inception, has not let any fears of losing its tax-exempt status get in the way of its electoral campaigning. As detailed in the Catholics for Choice *Opposition Notes* publication “Faithless Politics: Priests for Life Defies Constitution and Conscience,” PFL emerged from Father Lee Kaylor’s 1990 letter-writing campaign urging his fellow priests to mobilize parishioners against a prochoice ballot measure in California. Within months, PFL was founded and Kaylor focused its energies on sending an antichoice newsletter to priests around the country.

Since 1993, the organization’s public profile has been inseparable from its leader, Father Frank Pavone, but its membership numbers have never matched the New York priest’s ambitions. In a country with some 40,000 Catholic priests, PFL has never claimed more than 5,000 members—and any talk of membership numbers tapered off some time around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Pavone has always marketed himself along with the PFL message and image—often with large photos of himself on PFL billboards—in the style of a political candidate. The approach is fitting, given PFL’s long history of inappropriate electoral activities. PFL attracted media attention through its Campaign for Life, an antichoice advertising campaign for the 2000 election during which Pavone explicitly endorsed

Republican candidate George W. Bush.

In 2001, Cardinal Edward Egan ordered Pavone to step down from his post at PFL and return to ministry in the New York archdiocese—an arrangement that only lasted for a short while before the priest returned to PFL once more. Pavone turned his focus from the existing priesthood in 2005 to the founding of a new society of prolife priests in Amarillo, Texas. This experiment, which did not graduate a single priest, was a complete failure. Pavone subsequently returned to PFL’s Staten Island home base.

The leader of Priests for Life offers a very particular slant on the separation between church and state, on the one hand advocating for more church in the state, but on the other, rejecting the rule of law in the church. In 2002, he predicted in a PFL press release that there would be “major Church-State conflicts” unless government policies began to follow a conservative Catholic line. Yet the priest asked in a *Wanderer* article, “When are we going to stop running our Church like lawyers and begin running it like prophets?”

For his part, Pavone has been running the tax-exempt nonprofit as if rules against endorsing candidates did not exist—they are dismissed on the PFL website as “IRS fantasies.” In 2003, the organization ran a thinly-disguised pro-Republican electoral campaign under the guise of a nonpartisan voter drive. During the 2004 election, Pavone repeatedly crossed the line into

campaigning for Bush—he gave a political sermon at a prochoice candidate’s parish, posted Bush speeches on the PFL website and explicitly criticized Catholics’ historical support for the Democratic Party. Some of PFL’s attempts at electoral influence pass through a tangled web of antichoice groups with offices in Washington, DC, and overlapping leadership and ambitions.

The organization, which currently has a budget of \$10 million, appears to have plans to continue its electoral activities in the upcoming 2012 presidential race. Its website already boasts information about some of the possible candidates. In a blog post from this April, “Election Season is Approaching,” Pavone indicated a keen interest in “encourag[ing] the best possible candidates to get into the race.”

PFL’s ultra-right-wing positions on abortion and other issues have alienated many laypeople and priests alike. Its links to the antichoice movement’s extreme, aggressive fringe, such as Operation Rescue leaders Randall Terry and Reverend Philip “Flip” Benham, have been a constant scandal. Ultimately, Priests for Life appears to never have attracted more than one in five US priests. Its current focus now includes Protestants, families and attempts to engage Latinos and the African-American community.

*Titles in the Opposition Notes series may be ordered online from Catholic for Choice.*

two groups. She even warned us not to send photographers across the street or they would be “detained” as well.

We decided to comply with her request for several reasons. First, the amphitheatre allowed us to have a full rally, with speakers, signs, literature and chants—things we could not do at the King

Center. Second, she assured us that the antiabortion protesters also could not demonstrate at the center, but would only be allowed to have a brief procession in front of the reflecting pools. Afterward, they would have to use the sidewalk opposite ours. Third, it was nearly 100 degrees under the Atlanta sun and the

amphitheatre had shaded seats, while most of the center lacked shade or seats. If the officials were willing to treat both sides fairly, then we would move across the street. It felt like a win-win.

At first, things appeared to be working out well. More than 50 supporters came from Project South, Advocates for

Youth, Feminist Women’s Health Center, the Malcolm X Movement and, of course, SPARK, SisterSong and SisterLove. Our supporters were mostly African American, but a number of Latinas and some white activists came to show support. It was a decidedly young group, with elders like me sitting back and watching them lead. We had a spirited rally for about an hour, with speeches and statements of solidarity from groups like the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

The antichoicers’ bus arrived at the King Center at 3:40 pm. The bus was decorated with signs proclaiming it as the “Prolife Freedom Bus.” Obviously, a huge amount of money was spent on these the-

signs, Paris instantly created a new chant: “Racism is the #1 killer of black America, not black women!”

The ironies of the day seemed endless—when was the last time black folks protested at a white folks’ rally at the King Center? Never, in my memory. Generally, we’re to be found protesting at all-white Klan rallies, so maybe it was not so strange after all; it was only the location that was special. We also observed that Alveda King was not permitted to break the rules laid down for the opposing groups any more than we were, and the antichoicers were outraged by this. They became downright abusive towards the park police because they felt she had been insulted,

gone over to their space—they came over to ours. At first, everyone kept their distance— we shouted, they sang; we held up signs, they held up their hands. It was the usual demonstration-type stuff. Then things got interesting when they decided to cross the invisible barrier and start praying over us. Things threatened to break out into a shoving match, until the park police appeared and kept both sides apart.

It seemed a bit ridiculous when they started singing “We Shall Overcome” to counter our singing “Lift Ev’ry Voice.” The irony of white people singing our famous movement song at the King Center in opposition to the

**Imagine the aesthetic of the scene: a group of white folks claiming to save black babies, being challenged by mostly African-American women and men shouting “Trust black women!”**

atrics, probably by Priests for Life, whose budget is in the millions of dollars.

Staying on our side of the street as they disembarked, we started chanting, “Trust black women!” as loudly as we could, holding up signs that read “You can’t steal civil rights” and “Women’s rights are human rights.” Paris Hatcher and Tonya Williams from SPARK, along with Heidi Williamson of SisterSong, led the rally with spirit and energy that really excited our side and kept everyone engaged and having fun.

We were quite surprised when the antichoice protesters piled off the bus—all but a few of them were white as far as we could tell! For a campaign organized by the African-American Outreach Director for Priests for Life, Alveda King, it was surreal seeing all these white people carrying signs that said “Abortion is the #1 killer of black America.” Imagine the aesthetic of the scene: a group of white folks claiming to save black babies, being challenged by mostly African-American women and men shouting “Trust black women!” Once we saw their

making it clear that our tactic of cooperation was the better choice.

They had approximately 100 people—probably twice our numbers—led by Father Pavone. Approximately 10 white women carried signs saying, “I regret my abortion,” as if that would impress us. A few African Americans led the procession in order to be most visible for the cameras. This small group included Rev. Clenard Childress, director of the Life Education and Resource Network, Rev. Stephen Broden, an unsuccessful Texas candidate for Congress, as well as Catherine Davis of Georgia Right to Life, who had helped sponsor the billboards in Atlanta that offensively claimed, “Black children are an endangered species.”

After marching in front of the tombs, the antichoicers walked around to the back of our demonstration to hold their prayer service on the grass behind the amphitheatre where we were, possibly upon orders by the park police. Suddenly, there were no barriers, no police, nothing between the two groups! Again, we were surprised because we had not

freedom of black women was totally lost on them. Priests for Life says in its manual for protests, “Our Media is the Streets,” that it is living the tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s peaceful protests, but is unable to see the contradiction between nonviolence and their signature confrontational speech and graphic imagery.

Eventually, the heat of the day wore everyone out. They moved across the street in front of a laundromat to finish praying. We climbed to the top of the amphitheatre to look down on them to continue our chant: “Trust black women!” I think we frustrated them because I’m sure many of these white folks assumed the black community of Atlanta would welcome them as saviors of the black race. It was obvious they were more than a little uncomfortable about being shouted down by black women. After about an hour and a half of this back and forth, they boarded their bus and left. So did we, but not without singing, “Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah; hey-hey-hey, good-bye.” ■

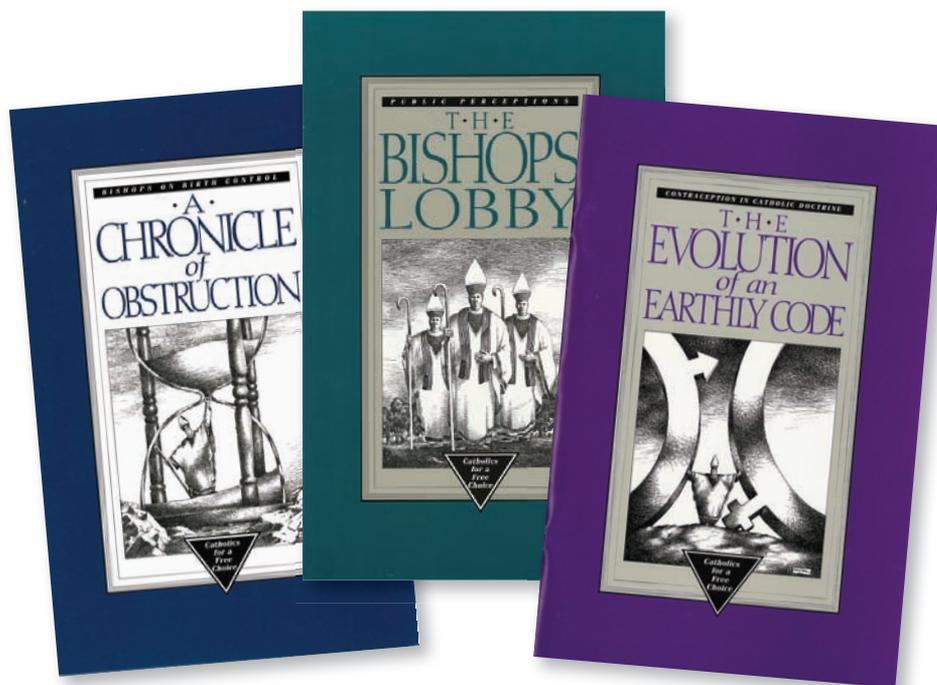
# Twenty Years of Taking down the Opposition

THE CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE GUIDE TO OPPOSITION RESEARCH

By Sara Morello

CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE HAS long recognized the importance of high-quality, hard-hitting opposition research and we have a reputation for delivering research that groups can really use. There can be no argument that when you look at those who oppose reproductive health and rights there is no more formidable opponent than the institutional Catholic church. With diplomatic and political expertise stretching back centuries, the Catholic hierarchy can draw upon a global network and unlimited money and resources. With friends in high places—from national parliaments to the United Nations—they are not afraid to use power, influence and intimidation to reach their ends. This institutional power base has been supplemented with an array of lay conservative Catholic groups working in the United States and around the world, sometimes with fundamentalist forces from other religions, to preserve the status quo and see that the hierarchy's vision of culture and society is reflected in laws at local national and international levels. More

SARA MORELLO is executive vice president of Catholics for Choice.



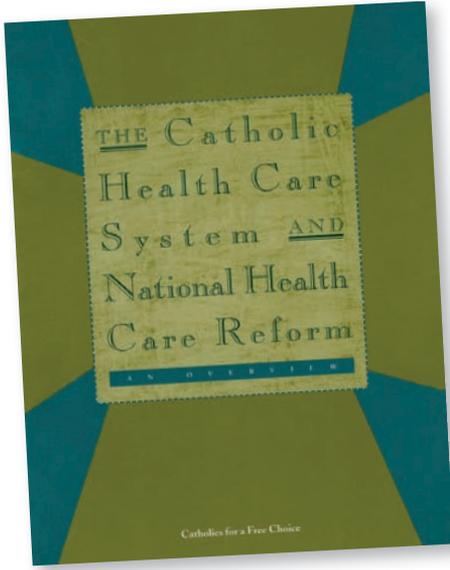
than 20 years ago, we started an investigative research process that has had very positive results for our movement and, perhaps more importantly, caused our opponents significant damage.

Back in 1991, Catholics for Choice released a series of reports on one of the staunchest opponents of choice, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, or the National Conference of Catholic Bishops as it was known then. The first in that series, titled the *Bishops on Birth Control*, looked at the history of bishops' statements opposing the use of family planning, as well as the obstruc-

tionism they practiced on the federal and state levels in order to oppose funding for contraceptive services.

Later reports in the series, such as *Contraception in Catholic Doctrine: The Evolution of An Earthly Code* and *Public Perceptions: The Bishop's Lobby*, laid bare some other important facets of the bishops' work. The opposition to contraception was not derived from the long history of Catholic teachings, but instead, was dreamt up very recently by a church hierarchy committed to controlling its flock. The entirely man-made ban on modern forms of birth control was con-

firmed in smoky rooms at the Vatican in the late 1960s to save the face of a leadership that could not deal with change. *The Bishop's Lobby* revealed the inner workings of a political powerhouse that sought to impose its will on legislators through religious arguments—Catholic arguments not approved by most people of that faith.



The next stage in our opposition research focused on another aspect that was very important to the Catholic hierarchy. Catholic healthcare was then, and is now, immensely profitable for the church hierarchy. The

govern Catholic healthcare in the United States. While we disagreed with many strictures related to Catholic healthcare, these mandates did allow for the provision of EC following a sexual assault.

groups that oppose choice.

A later report led to an about-face by the CHA when we exposed that many Catholic hospitals were going against local laws by not providing Emergency Contraception (EC) to women who had been sexually assaulted—and also against the directives that

*Catholic Institutions and Health Care in the US* (1995) and *Caution: Catholic Health Restrictions May be Hazardous to your Health* (1999).

It is not surprising that our exposés of Catholic healthcare led the Catholic Health Association's internal membership intranet to list Catholics for Choice as a formidable foe and obstacle to the pursuit of its agenda. Each and every one of our reports was distributed to policymakers at a state and federal level as well as to decision makers from the government and civil society. After receiving our reports, these audiences would understand the real agenda of CHA hospitals and how it affects men and women in the community they serve.

Also in the mid-1990s, Catholics for Choice began its hallmark work on conservative Catholic nonprofits with the publication of *A New Rite: Conservative Catholic Organizations and Their Allies*

**More than 20 years ago, we started an investigative research process that has had very positive results for our movement and, perhaps more importantly, caused our opponents significant damage.**

bishops and their allies in organizations like the Catholic Health Association (CHA) lobby long and hard to ensure that the billions of dollars the church receives for the provision of healthcare services continue to flow into their coffers. Our research exposed the extent of Catholic healthcare's reach and showed that these facilities often do not offer vital services. Further, when hospitals merge these Catholic establishments often impose their values on the new entity, even though many of the staff and patients are not Catholic.

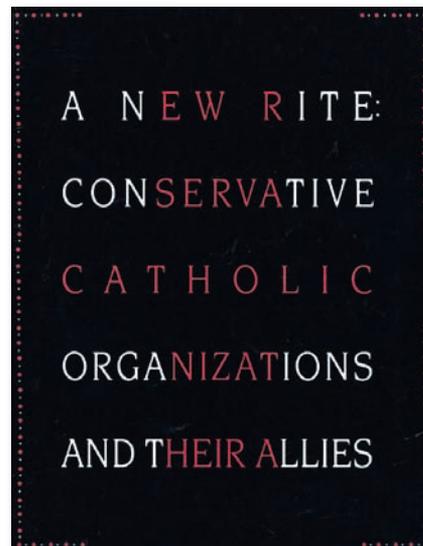
This work received immense coverage in the media, both nationally and internationally. This is one of many instances in which media outlets have used CFC research—today's journalists are often overextended and do not have the time to dig underneath the façade of the

Today, the CHA goes out of its way to show that EC provision following a sexual assault is consistent with the directives and that Catholic hospitals should be providing it.

Further reports appeared regularly over the next few years, including *Reproductive Health at Risk: A Report on Mergers and Affiliations in the Catholic Health Care System 1990-1995* (1995), *Risky Business: The Community Impact of Catholic Health Care Expansion* (1995), *Health Care Limited:*

(1994). This particular report was quickly followed by a series of addenda, updating the statistics for groups already profiled and adding more organizations to the list. It was in the development of this report that CFC honed its approach to opposition research.

By investigating the personalities associated with these organizations and their financial activities, we quickly became aware that many represented a lot less than the sum of their parts. They all had secrets they



wished to hide. This research approach continues today, and can be seen particularly in the forthcoming report on Human Life International (HLI), in which we reveal the “accusations of racism, incitement to violence, infighting, financial malfeasance, nepotism, exorcism and sexual misconduct” that have plagued this group for the past 30 years.

The Záborská and Buttiglione reports were used to undermine their candidacy for high-level roles that positioned them to impose their conservative views on policies relating to women’s rights and LGBT rights. In fact, the Buttiglione report was instrumental in the withdrawal of his candidacies for Vice President of the European Commission and

holder some of the privileges of a state at the UN, such as being able to speak and vote at UN conferences. No other religion is granted this elevated status. Other religions participate in the UN like many other non-state entities—as nongovernmental organizations. The Holy See owes its participation in the UN to an accident of history—its mem-

**Everyone should know what they are being sold when a group seeks to impose its religious beliefs onto the laws that govern us all. Good opposition work is a vital part of what civil society does.**

Our opposition research has also highlighted the work of the church hierarchy, conservative Catholic organizations and individuals in Europe and Latin America.

In the late 1990s, there were several battles in Europe over abortion rights. In both Ireland and Germany, the Catholic hierarchy took a high-profile stand, opposing liberalization of the law in Ireland and the church’s involvement in counseling services for women seeking an abortion in Germany. The two reports from 1998, *Keeping the Faith with Women: The German Bishops and Abortion Counseling* and the Irish paper, *Catholic Options in the Abortion Debate*, were distributed widely to the media and policymakers as well as to advocates in order to correct the hierarchy’s obfuscation of authentic Catholic teachings on abortion. Representatives of CFC were invited to appear before a parliamentary hearing that took place in Ireland—one that was widely reported in the Irish media.

In *Conservative Catholic Influence in Europe*, a series that began in 1997, we published reports on *The Vatican and Family Politics* and *Opus Dei: The Pope’s Right Arm in Europe*, (both 1997); MEP Anna Záborská (2004, updated 2008); Rocco Buttiglione (2004); the Catholic Action Group (2005); and the World Youth Alliance (2005).

Commissioner-designate for Freedom, Security and Justice.

Similarly, a letter from Catholics for Choice was instrumental in preventing the nomination of John M. Klink, a former representative of the Holy See at the U.N., to lead the State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration in 2001.

bership in the Universal Postal Union and the International Telecommunication Union, members of which were invited to attend early UN meetings.

The Holy See has used its position to obstruct consensus on important documents relating to women’s and reproductive rights, most notably at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995

Fourth World

Conference on Women in Beijing. Specific examples of its role include opposition during the 1998 debate over setting up the International Criminal Court, when the Vatican strove to exclude “forced pregnancy” from a proposed list of war crimes. In 1999, the Vatican

used its position at the UN to condemn the provision of emergency contraception to women who had been raped during the conflict in Kosovo, and in 2001 to condemn the use of condoms for preventing the spread of HIV.



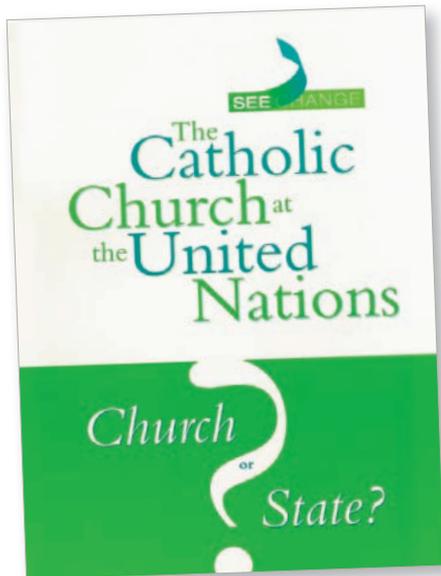
Also on the international level, the work of the Vatican or Holy See at the United Nations has caused great damage to women’s rights and health around the world. The Holy See is a Non-member State Permanent Observer at the United Nations. This designation gives its

As a result of the Vatican's obstructionism, Catholics for Choice initiated the "See Change" Campaign to urge the UN to treat the Holy See as it does other religions—as a nongovernmental organization. For the next four years, media and advocates around the world reported on the campaign and what the Vatican had done to obstruct the work of the UN to improve the lives of women around the world.

*Church or State? The Catholic Church at the United Nations* was a publication that was distributed widely, both within the UN and around the world. As a result of this information campaign, in 2002, when Switzerland became a full member, leaving the Holy See alone in its designation as a Non-member State Permanent Observer, the Holy See was somewhat exposed, with few allies willing to support its cause. After what its supporters described as "skillful lobbying and diplomacy," including a year and a half of publicly announcing that it was considering full membership of the United Nations, the Holy See "settled" for an expansion of its rights as a Non-member State Permanent Observer. But the full membership the Holy See sought was not forthcoming.

Anti-family planning organizations that work on UN-related issues attempted to gloss over the slight, but the snub was obvious to all.

The Holy See did have nongovernmental allies at the UN, however, and CFC quickly turned our sights on them. Initially, the most effective force was a group set up as a front for HLI after the UN refused to grant the ultra-right-wing organization its prestigious Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) status—an important form of UN accreditation that allows NGOs access to meetings about eco-



nomics and social matters in a consultative capacity. Based on what the UN characterized as HLI's "attacks on Islam," its stance "against the purposes of the United Nations," its "aggressive language" and the "issue of tolerance," the group's application to an influential group of NGOs was refused. HLI created the Catholic Family and Human Rights

Institute (C-FAM) as a means of covertly obtaining ECOSOC status at the UN.

C-FAM leader Austin Ruse had a tendency to make unguarded comments when he thought nobody might be listening. The group also left an unfortunate paper trail showing HLI's unmistakable involvement in its founding and the bitter power struggle that took place once Ruse tried to break out from under the control of the parent organization.

As we noted in the introduction to *Bad Faith at the UN, Drawing back the Curtain on the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute* (2001), the true story behind the creation and growth of C-FAM has farcical moments that would leave one laughing except for the deceitful and destructive nature of this organization. Though it started off on a tiny scale, C-FAM's willingness to disrupt UN negotiations on issues affecting women's lives, coupled with its anti-UN rhetoric, were a cause for concern to all those involved in UN activities.

The current series, *Opposition Notes*, is the longest-

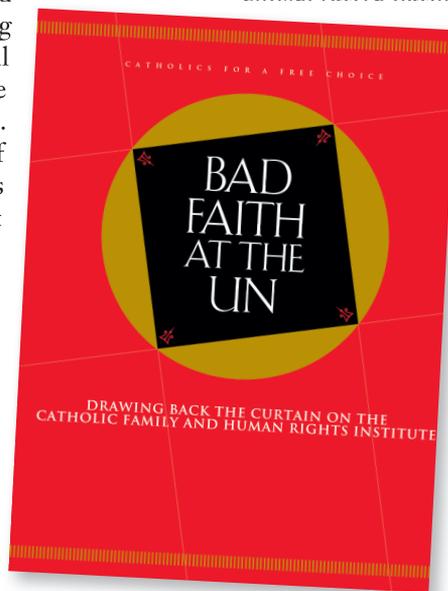
running and most in-depth series of work we have done on opposition groups. The series started in 2006 with an extensive report on the American Life League. Subsequent reports exposed the work of Priests for Life and Catholic Answers (both 2006), the Catholic League (2008), Opus Dei in Latin America (2011) and Human Life International (forthcoming, 2011). The last-mentioned was a follow-up to a report we did on the group a decade ago, which showed that HLI's reputation for mismanagement and bigotry had not changed, but had been joined by allegations of sexual abuse.

Keeping a close eye on our opponents reaps rewards.

On September 11, 2006, the Internal Revenue Service announced that it had revoked the nonprofit 501(c)(3) status of Youth Ministries, Inc., which did business as Operation Rescue West (ORW). While the IRS does not provide information on the circumstances leading to revocations of any group's tax-exempt status, a complaint filed in 2004 by Catholics for Choice provided information on ORW's electoral activities during the Boston Democratic Party convention that we considered to be violations of IRS regulations.

Our complaint referred to a full-page ad placed by the antichoice group on July 15, 2004, in *The Wanderer*, an ultra-conservative national Catholic weekly.

In the ad, ORW called on readers to make what it said was a "tax-deductible donation to help pay the bills and affect the outcome of the election" and asked readers to give a tax-deductible donation to help "defeat [John Kerry] in November and enable President Bush to appoint a prolife Supreme Court Justice to finally overturn *Roe*



*v. Wade.*” In making its case, Operation Rescue West cited the statements of several cardinals and bishops who had attacked Catholic politicians for their support of a woman’s right to choose and invited the support of readers because they were “going into the middle of a war in Boston.” ORW said that the money raised would be spent in Boston during the Democratic Party convention, where it planned to distribute antiabortion, anti-Kerry materials and display highly visible ads on trucks at key sites. As a result, the IRS stripped ORW of its nonprofit status.

Also in 2006, Catholic Answers was forced to reorganize following a separate investigation by the Internal Revenue Service. We first observed the group’s

those resources to engage in illegal political work. Many antichoice religious groups seek to bend the laws with respect to political activity, especially in the months before elections. We increase our surveillance at these times and assiduously report illegal activity. Catholics for Choice believes that as a result of our work antichoice groups have been forced to curb their inappropriate political activism.

We have also taken a hard look at groups who claim to be progressive but instead seek to restrict abortion rights. One such organization is Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good (CACG). We published a report on its activities in 2009, just as its head, Alexia Kelley, joined the Obama administration. To

life Catholic Democrats who have served—or are serving—in the United States Congress.

Catholics for Choice also attended and reported on antichoice meetings held by the World Congress of Families—in Geneva, Warsaw, the Netherlands and London. The 2009 convention had a faltering start, reflected by C-FAM president Austin Ruse’s tweet that there were only about 50 people at the opening ceremony. “What’s going on? Where is everybody?” he asked. Sometimes divulging the reality behind the rhetoric used by antiwomen, antichoice and anti-LGBT groups helps give progressive organizations and politicians a needed perspective. Being well-informed about any real threats coming from the right is important. Perhaps more

**Real data that you can really use** has always been the mantra of Catholics for Choice’s opposition work. We believe in uncovering the real agenda—and the finances, funding and friends—of those who would take away reproductive rights.

problematic behavior during the 2004 election cycle and filed a complaint with the IRS with regard to Catholic Answers’ blatant political work. In a 2006 letter to supporters, Karl Keating, founder of Catholic Answers, explained that throughout 2005 and 2006, the IRS “has been sending us loads of interrogatories to answer” and that they “were forced to hire a top-flight prolife law firm to represent Catholic Answers and protect our interests.” Despite claiming that activities such as printing and distributing their “Voter’s Guide for Serious Catholics” were in keeping with IRS regulations, Catholic Answers nonetheless felt the need to create a 501(c)(4), Catholic Answers Action, to take legal responsibility for the production and distribution of its self-proclaimed “overtly political” manual.

Our concerns in these cases, and others that we filed, hinged upon the legally unacceptable practices involved when any organization that reaps tax benefits for a charitable mission uses

the untrained eye, CACG could have just looked like another Catholic social justice organization, focusing solely on traditional Catholic social teaching such as care of the poor, environmental sustainability and economic justice. However, a closer look revealed that a key aim of CACG is to oppose the availability of legal abortion. CACG temporarily closed its doors in 2010, but seems to now exist as a web forum.

Another example is Democrats for Life, which we reported on two years earlier in 2007. The past four decades have witnessed a profound shift in the political allegiances of the Catholic hierarchy from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. It has also seen the re-emergence of “prolife” Democratic elected officials who claim to represent the authentic position of the church on life issues. This report was important because it highlighted the shifting allegiances of the Catholic hierarchy, as well as the self-proclaimed pro-

important is putting this danger in perspective, rather than buying into and exaggerating the claims to a kind of power that some of these fringe groups do not actually possess.

Real data that you can really use has always been the mantra of Catholics for Choice’s opposition work. We believe in uncovering the real agenda—and the finances, funding and friends—of those who would take away reproductive rights. We approach our work with an eye for painstaking accuracy, guided not by malice but by conviction. Everyone should know what they are being sold when a group seeks to impose its religious beliefs onto the laws that govern us all. Good opposition work is a vital part of what civil society does. More often than not, collating the available information into one easy-to-digest package shines a light that displays an organization as no more and no less than what it is—which is often all it takes to discredit our opponents. ■

# Countering Antichoice Forces in Europe

By Neil Datta

**T**HE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF Europe is split at its core. Parliamentarians, who all claim to have the best interests of their constituents at heart, are divided about how to deal with a central element of humanity: sex.

Sex, sexuality, family planning—these are demographic questions that must skate between personal freedom and collective responsibility. One of the competing philosophies is to speak openly about these issues and propose solutions that protect human rights. The other approach retreats into lofty theory, refusing to acknowledge that with or without God, sex will still happen and its consequences will impact the collective wellbeing.

European lawmakers who possess a modern, realistic and human rights-based understanding of sex—its motivations, consequences and dangers—are currently facing opposition from a range of forces. Whether religious or secular, these forces are exerting an influence in policies both domestically and abroad, as

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**NEIL DATTA** is Secretary of the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF). EPF ([www.epfweb.org](http://www.epfweb.org)) is a network of members of parliaments from across Europe who are committed to protecting the sexual and reproductive health of the world's most vulnerable people, both at home and overseas.

the way that demographic questions are dealt with by governments and development policy is one of the most politicized areas of political discourse at present. A better understanding of some of the leading challenges and the tactics used to oppose improved sexual and reproductive health and rights policies may be useful. These opposition forces affect advocates and lawmakers alike who share a commitment to reproductive rights and to the European notions of a more liberal, secular and progressive society.

## PRESSURES CREATED BY RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF SEXUALITY

Religious dogma is the greatest single driver in conservative efforts to retain the taboo status of sex, sexuality and family planning in public discourse. Making any of these areas untouchable limits women's right to have control over their reproduction.

This restrictive undercurrent flows from the Vatican, from staunchly Catholic governments such as the Philippines and Malta (among others) and from the influence of the Holy See in public forums such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. It is also mirrored in the values espoused by countless Muslim countries across Asia and Africa, where sex until recently was only referred to as a means to procreate, and where women are often still objectified and denied control of their own fertility.



Sophie In 't Veld, Dutch Member of European Parliament, has noted the rise of conservative forces in Europe.

© REUTERS/BERNADETT SZABO, 2011.

Religion is also at the heart of the efforts to limit modern forms of contraception in places like Eastern Europe. In many former Soviet countries, church groups have been quick to fill the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of communism. Religion and national identity, both suppressed by Communist regimes for over forty years, have had a resurgence together in countries like Hungary, which is encoding Christianity—and limits to women's control over their reproduction—in the Constitution.

Some of the world's faithful are steadfast in the belief that life begins at conception, that an unborn child's rights are greater than those of an expectant mother and that these convictions provide the moral foundation upon which the entire framework of society's values is constructed. Followers of these beliefs frequently push to see them recognized by their national lawmakers. This mixing of the political with the religious can be perplexing for those who feel it makes

politicians and governments stray from their responsibility of running their countries to decide upon the answers to existential questions better answered by a person's choice of faith tradition.

#### A NEW DIMENSION STEMMING FROM DEMOGRAPHIC DECLINE

Religious forces are not the only challenge for parliamentarians committed to helping the world find rights-based solutions for its demographic challenges. While national populations are booming across Africa and many parts of Asia, countries like the Russian Federation are experiencing the onset of a demographic winter, with populations set to shrink consider-

potential to gain support rapidly with the help of simplistic and populist arguments. To a casual observer looking for quick fixes it would be tempting to think that banning abortion would help solve population decline, or that claims from a conservative group that homosexuality threatens the family—and therefore the birth rate—are justified. However, such solutions will serve only to deprive people of their human rights and do little to help society to increase its population.

Those preoccupied with protecting the rights of women in the developing world must also find innovative solutions to end demographic decline, with some working examples to be found in France and

#### INFLUENCE OF MODERATE CONSERVATIVES

A further pressure facing parliamentarians in donor countries stems from more moderate conservatives, who use the austerity measures that donor countries are all experiencing at present, along with a worry about the Western world's declining birth rates, to support a more general domestic national tendency toward isolationism and a reduction in foreign aid. They also hinge upon depictions of countries such as China and India as developing so rapidly that they would appear to require little assistance from overseas.

It is easy for citizens and politicians to feel that development aid overseas should

**At the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development, we have now been tracking these trends for over a decade, and in this context we see less reason to fear Europe's new so-called "religious right."**

ably within a generation as a result of a range of social and public health circumstances that are not linked to religion. A new dimension to the population debate is forming because the needs and concerns of areas with declining populations are very real—and very different from those experienced elsewhere, especially in the developing world.

This facet in demographic discourse has added complexity to the debate about issues like family planning far beyond the religiously motivated antichoice camp. Advocates in favor of a rights-based approach to population dynamics must be careful not to alienate themselves from the challenges posed by declining population in some parts of the world. Otherwise, they may unwittingly provide an opportunity for ad hoc coalitions to grow between countries facing demographic decline and parties opposed to sexual and reproductive rights—even if they don't coincide on ideology.

It is worrying for the sexual and reproductive health and rights community to note that these relationships also have the

Sweden. In recent decades France has employed several policies to achieve two goals: reconciling family life with work and reversing declining fertility. To accomplish the first goal, for example, France instituted generous child-care subsidies. To accomplish the second, families have been rewarded for having at least three children. Sweden, by contrast, reversed the fertility declines it experienced in the 1970s through a different mix of policies, none of which specifically had the objective of raising fertility. Its parental work policies during the 1980s allowed many women to raise children while remaining in the workforce. The mechanisms for doing so were flexible work schedules, quality child care and extensive parental leave on reasonable economic terms.

Such solutions will take time to bring to fruition, but they are not contradictory to a rights-based approach to population dynamics. Above all, the activities of advocates for women's rights in population issues must not allow religious groups to win over those that are suffering a demographic decline.

be cut before domestic spending on education and the economy, and that donor countries should deal with their own reproductive health issues before becoming involved in those that are thousands of miles away. This viewpoint, which has gained prominence within Western Europe recently, could provide more religiously oriented antichoice forces with a further source of supporters.

#### THE INCREASING ROLE OF RELIGION IN EUROPEAN PUBLIC DEBATE

In recent years the role that religion plays within Europe has increasingly come under the spotlight in public discourse, largely in reaction to waves of immigration from predominantly Muslim countries. There is an uncertainty about how Islam will fit with the 150-year tradition of European secularism, which grants a comprehensive set of freedoms to the individual, including the right to choose a value system. Europe is still in the process of deciding how to grant citizens these individual freedoms, whilst reconciling this principle with allowing people to practice a religion which some

take as justification to treat women differently than men. This uncertain role of religion and religious tolerance within Europe is therefore also having an impact on parliamentarians' attitudes to reproductive health, as religious allegiances (held by MPs or by their electorates) are often crucial in defining politicians' approaches to divisive issues such as family planning and sexuality education.

Politicians that are particularly interested by immigration could find their opinions corresponding with either side of the debate that has been outlined here. As a result, they could form strong alliances on some issues with the enemies of rights-based reproductive advocacy. Similarly, representatives of Islam might

suit their ends, but which fail to take the wider context into account. (One such example was an attempt by opposition forces to prove that Ireland's particularly low levels of maternal mortality were linked to the illegality of abortion in Ireland. However, statistics show that most Irish women can afford to obtain one in the UK, so the illegality of abortion in Ireland has little effect on domestic levels of maternal mortality.)

Opposition forces have also been seen to exert their influence at the Council of Europe in purely logistical ways, such as by ensuring that votes about their most contentious issues take place at the end of the week, when many parliamentarians will already have returned to their con-

vative forces outlined above is a worry for Europe, showing that "women's rights, gay rights and healthcare are all under threat." But at the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development, we have now been tracking these trends for over a decade, and in this context we see less reason to fear Europe's new so-called "religious right." For while the continent has swung slightly to the right in recent years, development aid is still at record levels, and the pressure that is being exerted on national governments by civil society to honor their pledges to achieve targets such as the Millennium Development Goals and the ICPD Programme of Action is intense and well directed.

**The voices in opposition are loud, but this does not necessarily spell disaster...**

**Each mainstream political party in Europe does have a value base that can support sexual and reproductive health and rights.**

also find reasons to forge alliances with conservative forces concerned by reproductive issues if their interests coincide.

**THE TECHNIQUES USED BY OPPOSITION FORCES**

In recent years the opposition has managed to achieve political results in a range of simple, effective and often highly misleading ways. The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development and its partners across Europe have seen opposition forces mobilize at crucial moments ahead of important votes in the European Parliament and in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, sending letters to parliamentarians to spell out their side of the argument at hand. They also arrange parliamentary hearings and events, where their representatives gain a platform for publicizing their opinions. In their communications activities there has in recent years been a perceptibly growing reliance on false data, where conclusions are drawn from statistics to

stituencies. They also engulf proposed legislation with floods of amendments, thereby managing to delay decision-making processes as long as possible and sometimes causing the whole project in question to be scrapped. This often has the effect of scaring some members of parliament from becoming involved with reproductive health issues, which they view as being too difficult to deal with satisfactorily, and can lead to fatigue among those who support the issue.

**CONCLUSIONS**

It is clear that parliamentarians in favor of finding modern, rights-based solutions to the reproductive health issues facing the world are confronted by a range of direct and indirect challenges at present, and that opposition forces are managing to make their voices heard. Sophie in 't Veld, Dutch MEP and member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe, recently described this with a note of alarm as the "rise of Europe's religious right." For her the existence of the conser-

The voices in opposition are loud, but this does not necessarily spell disaster for the protectors of Europe's liberal, secular and progressive values. And now, in order to gain the support that modern forms of contraception—and a rights-based approach to reproductive health issues—deserve, it is essential that parliamentarians depoliticize the issue as much as possible. It is an issue that can be best supported by scientific facts that prove the overall value that women, societies, the environment and humankind will gain if they invest in empowering women in their reproductive choices.

Personal religious freedoms must not be used as a banner for robbing women of their human rights. Instead they should show what each citizen can do to promote the wellbeing of those who are most vulnerable. After all, each mainstream political party in Europe does have a value base that can support sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our task is to tap into this base in a way that is in accordance with each party's set of values. ■

# The Empire Strikes Back

STANDING UP TO THE BULLYING OF THE CATHOLIC LEAGUE

By Jon O'Brien

**I**F YOU LISTEN TO THE OPPOSITION, you'll hear about how they're tough, fearsome and righteous. They certainly can be loud, but they're not always effective. More often than not, they make mountains of molehills and neglect to mention that many objects of their scorn just don't let them get away with it.

Consider, for example, Bill Donohue of the Catholic League. He issued a remarkable 59 press releases in the first quarter of 2011 and 65 in the second. The titles of these releases range from the tedious to the absurd and none of them really offered any news. Any outfit that would write "Atheists Must Apologize for Hitler" shouldn't really be taken too seriously.

The trouble with Donohue is that he continuously presses society on a tender spot: the reluctance to offend anyone on religious grounds. The group found that the strategy worked in 1993 when the League got a VH-1 ad featuring Madonna, the pop star, alongside the Madonna, Mother of Jesus, pulled from Metropolitan Transit Authority buses because it was "offensive." A couple of years later, Donohue attacked the Hard Rock Café in Las Vegas because it had a restored Gothic altar in one of its bars. The owners decided to remove the altar. These assertions of anti-Catholicism continue today, even though most scholars agree that anti-Catholic hysteria peaked before the Civil War.

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**Tony Malkin, owner of the Empire State Building, stands on the observatory in 2010, the year he stood his ground against Catholic League protests.**

© ISAAC HERNÁNDEZ/MERCURYPRESS.COM, 2010

By (falsely) claiming to speak for all Catholics, Donohue can raise the unwelcome specter of a business or institution being branded as intolerant or anti-Catholic. Though many people and even big businesses can fall for his bullying tactics, it's good to recognize when people refuse to be taken in by his grandstanding. In New York and DC last year, a few people did just that.

When most people look at the Empire State Building, they see a wonder of architecture, a symbol of New York City—or perhaps they envision King Kong clinging to the spire swatting away at a bi-plane. What Bill Donohue saw in the iconic

building was a little different: he viewed the landmark as a 102-storey billboard he deserved to use.

In 2010, his organization filled out a request to have the building lit up in blue and white to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mother Teresa's birth. The building accepts requests such as this and has, for example, used the lights to showcase the Mets (orange and blue) or Earth Day (green).

Tony Malkin, president of Malkin Holdings LLC, and owner of the Empire State Building, refused the lighting application, citing a policy against recognizing religious figures or organiza-

tions outside of a few main holidays. Bill got mad, and as usual, claimed anti-Catholic bias was at work. He even said Mother Teresa had been “stuffed.”

Bill went into his usual mode—calling Mr. Malkin a “coward” and a “liar.” He claimed, as usual, to be representing thousands who were insulted and enraged by Malkin’s decision. Evidence suggested this claim was a stretch—a poll of New Yorkers by the *New York Daily News* showed a majority supported Malkin, and a coalition of Catholic groups (including Catholics for Choice) assured Mr. Malkin that Catholics were not offended. Undeterred, Bill declared, “One wonders what world the elites who run the Empire State Building live in. Besides siding with the Communists and dissing Catholics, they are just plain stupid. If they think they can ride this out, they have no idea what they are dealing with.”

Interestingly, it appears that the Empire State Building knew exactly who it was dealing with, and refused to let a lot of bluster from a fringe organization impose demands on them. Despite a months-long campaign through the summer of 2010, Mr. Malkin did not stoop to Bill Donohue’s level, and continued business as usual. Even when a small group of protesters rallied outside the building in protest.

The Empire State Building furor is one in a long line of perceived slights that Donohue has protested. Each one follows a similar playbook: the League manufactures controversy; overstates its constituency; tries to intimidate the “enemy”; bullies any opposition; complains early and often; and silences the loyal opposition. And in cases like Empire State debacle, it added a new dimension and refused to acknowledge a king-sized defeat as anything other than a victory.

There was a mixed bag of responses to Donohue’s demand for censorship at the Smithsonian. David Wojnarowicz’ “A Fire in My Belly” was removed from “Hide/Seek,” a 2010 National Portrait Gallery exhibition, following Catholic League objections. Wojnarowicz’ video was a tribute to his lover and fellow artist,

Peter Hujar, who died of AIDS. Eleven seconds of the video showed ants crawling on a crucifix, leading Donohue to label it “hate speech” and call for the removal of all federal funding from the Smithsonian—even though no federal funds had been used for the exhibition. When in a knee-jerk reaction the museum bowed to the Catholic League-led campaign and removed the video, the decision was met with outcry both within the Smithsonian and in the larger art world. Dissent was expressed by silent protesters outside the gallery, by funders such as the Andy Warhol Foundation, and by the resignation of James T. Bartlett, a National Portrait Gallery commissioner.

Two art lovers, Mike Blasenstein and Mike Iacovone, were threatened with arrest when they displayed the Wojnarowicz video on an iPad hung around Blasenstein’s neck at the entrance to the exhibit. Though this caused them to be barred from the Smithsonian for life, the two men soon returned and parked a trailer outside the National Portrait Gallery. Calling it the “Museum of Censored Art,” it displayed the video every day until the “Hide/Seek” exhibit closed.

At the Smithsonian, the Catholic League might have won the battle, but they lost the war. Thousands of people saw the banned video, and the ensuing debate about freedom of expression illustrated the healthy role controversy can play in the arts. Blasenstein and Iacovone’s actions earned them the American Library Association’s Immroth Award in 2011, which honors intellectual freedom fighters inside and outside the library profession who have demonstrated remarkable personal courage in resisting censorship. And it is well-deserved.

That a major art venue would so quickly bend the knee to the Religious Right’s sensibilities was still disappointing for those of us who know that the Catholic League is almost all bark and no bite. The Catholic League does not speak for all Catholics—in fact, it speaks for very few, but does so very loudly. The decibel level it strives for should not be considered indicative of

the strength of its support nor the validity of its claims.

Yet Bill Donohue can count on a few well-placed supporters, such as Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, to continue the fiction that his ruckuses are anything more than an attention-getting, money-earning device. Dolan wrote a 2010 blog post “Why We Need the Catholic League” praising Donohue’s protest at the Smithsonian. The Archbishop characterized Donohue as a Catholic “respond[ing] to criticism, insults and slights toward [his] faith,” as would “our other religious neighbors—Jews and Muslims—or ... any other group, such as blacks or gays.”

It is hard to see how the Catholic voice is systematically being silenced in a country where the highest court in the land boasts six Catholics out of its nine members, just as it is difficult to understand how Mother Teresa’s legacy was celebrated by Donohue’s demands to light up the Empire State Building. Many of us know the difference between a clarion call for justice based on sound Catholic principles, on the one hand, and bluster demanding that free speech be curtailed in the name of easily ruffled sensibilities on the other.

If the Catholic League has something to say about a piece of cultural real estate, whether it’s a video or a skyscraper, it’s going about it the wrong way. As Rep. James P. Moran, chairman of the subcommittee that provides funding for the country’s major art institutions, said about the Smithsonian controversy, “The whole point is that we should not be censoring—we should be discussing.”

Donohue’s one-note expressions of outrage never quite attain the level of a conversation and soon fade into background noise. The fact that the “Hide/Seek” exhibition is now going on a national tour, complete with Wojnarowicz’s “A Fire in My Belly,” speaks clearly about who won that war. And the most recent blue and white lights on the Empire State Building? Those were for Columbia University’s commencement. Congratulations class of 2011. Sorry, Bill. ■

# Politicization of the Pulpit

CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC STRATEGIES IN PERU

By Susana Chávez and Jaris Mujica



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Outgoing Peruvian president Alan Garcia (R) walks with Peruvian Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani (L) and Vatican Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone (C) toward a cathedral in Lima.

**I**N PERU, THE HIERARCHY OF THE Catholic church is largely made up of members of the conservative Catholic order known as Opus Dei. Juan Luis Cipriani, the cardinal of

Lima, and 15 of the country's nearly 30 bishops are all members of this order.

Opus Dei is one of the most radically conservative orders in the world and is unequivocally opposed to sexual and

reproductive rights. While everyone is entitled to his or her own religious beliefs, in the case of Opus Dei and similarly conservative factions within the Peruvian Catholic church these beliefs become problematic when they become politicized, serving as the basis for pressuring policymakers and influencing public policy.

**SUSANA CHÁVEZ**, is a Peruvian feminist, teacher of public health, sexual and reproductive rights activist and director of PROMSEX. **JARIS MUJICA** is an anthropologist, doctoral candidate, researcher and the director of research at PROMSEX.

Political activism around issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights by members of the most conservative elements of the Catholic church has been a recurring theme in Peru for the past two decades. Typically, the Catholic hierarchy generates political pressure on elected officials, and on those running for office, in the following ways:

1. By issuing public statements, open letters and press releases and organizing press conferences, the hierarchy outlines its position on issues related to SRHR and then calls on politicians to make “moral” decisions about these matters. In a country in which the overwhelming majority of the population is Catholic, and in which the hierarchy has the ability to mobilize voters at the local level, politicians tend to listen closely to statements made by church leaders, so much so that these lessons on “morality” are oftentimes integrated into the candidates’ political rhetoric. This is true even when a politician’s own agenda, or the agenda of his/her political party, is in direct conflict with the position promoted by the hierarchy.
2. Conservative elements within the church, especially Cardinal Cipriani, convene private meetings with religious officials in which they discuss religious matters, among others. The conclusions from these meetings are typically broadcast on television, as well as in other media outlets. Although Peru is officially a secular state, this practice links elected officials and the church hierarchy in the public’s perception, and creates the perception that secular officials maintain some reverence for the church, religious authorities and Catholic principles generally.
3. Cardinal Cipriani, and other members of the hierarchy, have used Mass and other religious celebrations to expound upon their political opinions. To give a recent example: during the run-up to Peru’s 2011 presidential election, members of the church hierarchy made their preference for one specific candidate clear during

religious celebrations. Official statements by Cardinal Cipriani expressing his opposition to another candidate were also read during Mass.

This most recent example of the church attacking a political candidate drew tremendous media coverage, but it was hardly novel. During the presidency of Alberto Fujimori, who governed Peru from 1990-2000, Cardinal Cipriani and other bishops and priests often expressed their support from the pulpit for Fujimori’s authoritarian regime. In subsequent years, members of the hierarchy have spoken out against Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was established to shed light on the human rights abuses and crimes against humanity committed during the Fujimori regime. The hierarchy has also publicly spoken out against some political candidates, opposed sexual and reproductive rights and sexual diversity, and in some cases spoken out against human rights organizations and the human rights movement as a whole.

In short, members of the Catholic clergy constantly involve themselves in Peruvian politics and make no bones about publicly stating their political opinions on a variety of issues. In Peru, the Catholic church is, in fact, a political entity, with many millions of faithful supporters. However, it is important to note that this does not mean that the church intervenes directly in policymaking.

In fact, there has been a clear shift in the political strategies employed by the hierarchy and particularly by its most conservative elements—from a purely theological discourse to one that has grown increasingly technocratic vis-à-vis the institutionalized democracy that emerged in the years following the Fujimori administration. As part of this shift, conservative factions within the church have established new organizations to pressure decision makers on matters related to public policy.

These conservative Catholic groups in Latin America are rooted in the most

traditional branches of the church, which themselves are closely related to the region’s economic and political oligarchies, as well as the armed forces. This new expression of Catholicism emerged as part of church efforts to reclaim the faithful and exemplifies the tension between what was traditionally considered sacred and the modern way of life. According to those who adhere to this way of thinking, transcendental theocratic values should form the basis of public policy. Groups such as *Tradición Familia y Propiedad*, Focus on the Family, *La Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios*, Opus Dei and the Legionnaires of Christ exemplify the outlook of the conservative groups that emerged during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which emphasize family, traditional values and religious morality as absolute, inviolable principles.

However, during the past two decades, massive social changes and the widespread embrace of human rights have forced cracks in this hegemonic conservatism. Beginning at the end of Fujimori’s regime, and the transition to democracy and opening of Peru’s economy which followed, members of social groups which were previously excluded from positions of power and society’s “elite,”—including women, indigenous peoples and the poor—have increasingly come into their own as full citizens. In this context, the traditional, theological discourse lost its power and was no longer widely embraced by the public.

As a result, these traditional, conservative groups have been forced to reframe their messaging in response to rapid political, economic and social change in which openness and liberty are highly prioritized. Far from rejecting their historical embrace of traditional values, these values have been combined with concern for the “right to life.” This framing creates an intersection between principles of international human rights and the principles traditionally espoused by moralistic, conservative theology.

The conservative groups which emerged during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century rejected a more traditional, “hermetic” religious life and abandoned their theological discourse, opting instead to join civil society. Their traditional views on morality, however, are articulated indirectly through their “prolife” discourse, which supports only heterosexual, monogamous relationships. In addition, their views place God at the center of society and see law and public policies as vehicles for imposing Christian morality on society. These groups portray themselves as defenders not only of tradition and family values, but also as defenders of life and, as such,

actions not so different in appearance, if not in content, from those utilized by prochoice human rights organizations.

These groups provide politicians and other government officials with “secular” arguments against sexual and reproductive rights, eliminating the need to explicitly cite conservative religious principles. Similarly, these conservative, ostensibly secular groups lobby political candidates, senators and members of congress, and succeed in blocking or modifying policy agendas.

Many of these conservative religious groups do not invoke theology or religious doctrines when engaging in public debate. Rather, they focus their argu-

remained in control to a certain extent and, above and beyond any direct participation in politics (a role now filled by the conservative activists), have become a platform for advancing “traditional morality.”

What are the key lessons learned from the evolution of the Catholic church’s role in Peruvian politics?

First, that the transformation of conservative religious groups from hermetic, inwardly-focused organizations to politically active NGOs is characterized by the secularization of their political discourse.

Second, the “secularization” of conservative religious organizations and their formal involvement in politics via

**Members of the Catholic clergy constantly involve themselves in Peruvian politics and make no bones about publicly stating their political opinions on a variety of issues. In Peru, the Catholic church is, in fact, a political entity.**

as human rights defenders and humanity’s protectors. In short, conservative groups have staked a claim as defenders of moral values, and it is through this framework that religious, antichoice activism emerged in the region.

These groups position themselves politically as antagonists of feminist movements, of sexual diversity and of sexual and reproductive rights in general. This politicization of religious beliefs means that conservative religious activists have inserted themselves into the political debate using democratic mechanisms. To facilitate its political activism, the conservative religious sector has created ostensibly secular civil society organizations and has learned to be “strategically secular.” From international groups such as Human Life International (HLI) and the Population Research Institute (PRI), to local groups in every country in Latin America, a whole new sector of faith-based organizations has been created within civil society, with structures, strategies and

ments on preserving morality, common decency and justice. In some cases, religion and the church are used as scaffolding by politicians and government officials, legitimizing the morality of their public discourse. Regardless of how explicitly (or not) religion is invoked, however, when politicians try to achieve greater political legitimacy by invoking religion in and of itself, this legitimizes the use of religious principles and language in the public arena. This legitimization of a role for religious morality within a secular society blurs the secular principles that undergird democracy.

Their many efforts to distance themselves from their overtly religious formation notwithstanding, these conservative groups have benefitted from the support of the Catholic hierarchy, which in some countries is comprised of members of Opus Dei. The bishops’ conferences, along with other official church institutions (in countries such as Peru and Colombia, for example), have

professional spokespersons, civil society groups, political parties, etc., in fact, imply a fundamental change in the conservative beliefs of these organizations.

Third, the emergence of a secular state has not resulted in a decline in political participation by conservative groups, nor in their influence over policymaking, but rather in a transformation of their strategies.

Fourth, that the moralistic discourse of the conservative wing of the church hierarchy is now housed in its associated civil society organizations—which have, in effect, become a political wing of the church.

In sum, the evolution of the Catholic church’s role in Peruvian politics amounts to nothing less than the reconstruction of an important political participant, which participates in politics and exerts political, economic and moral pressure over policymakers as active members of Latin America’s renewed civil society. ■

# Exposing Trafficking in Bigotry

ANTI-GAY ACTIVITIES OF US RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES IN AFRICA

By Kapya Kaoma

**N**IGERIAN NOVELIST CHINUA Achebe said Westerners expect to find “strange, bizarre and illogical things” in Africa. When Political Research Associates (PRA) began to question why African clergy were speaking so loudly against the ordination of gay ministers by mainline Protestant churches in United States, we found “illogical things”—in the form of politicized homophobia—being exported from US conservative denominations to Africa. I am an Anglican priest from Zambia who joined PRA specifically to uncover the nature and extent of this connection, traveling to Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda in the process. I remember that at the time we were writing the 2009 report *Globalizing the Culture Wars*, the story we uncovered was so outlandish that people in both the United States and Africa did not believe us, at first.

There is a passage from Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart* that could be applied to this influx of intolerance.

“The [Western] man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion.... Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one.

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The cover of the Political Research Associates report *Globalizing the Culture Wars*, which depicts an embrace between the Anglican primate of Nigeria, Peter Akinola, and Martyn Minns of the Convocation of Anglicans in North America, a breakaway group of Episcopalians that rejects gay bishops and same-sex unions.

He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”

—Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

## EXPORTING HATE TO AFRICA

Since the publication of our report, there has been major media coverage of the continent’s most overt antigay hate-mongering, Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009, which promised to put some LGBT individuals to death. The

blossoming of this hatred had its roots in Western conservative churches and para-church organizations, according to our findings. We uncovered shadowy financial dealings, forced schisms with mainline denominations and misdirected accusations of neocolonialism just below the surface of the spiritual guidance US churches claim to be exporting for the good of their African counterparts.

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“US conservatives present mainline denominations’ commitments to human rights as imperialistic attempts to manipulate Africans into accepting homosexuality—which they characterize as a purely western phenomenon.”

— *Globalizing the Culture Wars*

Such propaganda was attractive because it was simple. Our task was to complicate this assertion, asking questions like: Who determines what is truly “African”? and Who benefits from these allegations?

We discovered that self-interest was

evangelical churches, which tend to be doctrinally orthodox but socially liberal. Presenting the “international gay agenda” as an assault on the African family, Lively ignited the fire that led to violent expressions of homophobia culminating in the 2009 Uganda bill.

Our research found that African churches seem to be abandoning mainline alliances without the approval or knowledge of many of their members. Though politicized homophobia is not, as is claimed, biblical or historical, how it spread in Africa is an old story: it is

Homophobia exported from the US arrives in Africa tied up with all the trappings of authority. Fringe figures like Lively present themselves as international authorities on homosexuality and gain easy access to highly placed political and religious leaders. Homophobic Africans will cite the “facts” about homosexuality distributed by the US Christian right without ever investigating their veracity. Lies about the LGBT community can be spread without antidote in Africa because people in the US often don’t know what is being done in their name—

**The conservative churches intimately intertwined with the political power structure are injecting homophobia directly into the bloodstream of the political process.**

what really united US conservatives in mainline denominations with African clerics. US conservatives are attracted to the fact that African clerics give them an avenue into international politics and are therefore happy to provide them with funds to support their pet causes. Sadly, this new funding stream carries with it the espousal of homophobic ideology. PRA was the first to show that politicized homophobia was a tale that must be told on both continents, with different solutions to be sought in each place.

When US Christian groups speak about homosexuality to Africans, much is lost in translation between the two cultures. The notoriously homophobic Scott Lively can say “homosexuals ... were the foundation of the Nazi party” to audiences in the US, but this hatred finds a far more fertile soil in Uganda, where what he called his “nuclear bomb against the gay agenda” took on a totally different resonance. Lively and others present homosexuality and LGBT rights as an imperialistic con game designed to trick Africans into accepting a purely Western phenomenon. By touching a nerve among a people alert for signs of neocolonialism, US ultraconservatives have thus subverted the traditional bent of African

what can be accomplished by the money, superior media networks and opportunities for visibility that conservative Western evangelicals can offer on the African continent. This well-oiled machine produces pre-packaged anti-LGBT sound bites ready for African consumption. We documented numerous instances of US churches rewriting the words of African clergy to insert anti-LGBT and anti-Islamic messaging. They later presented these words as authentically African to their American audiences. This is a bitter irony in light of the “neocolonial” accusations these same groups hurl at liberals.

conservative church figures like Evangelical minister Rick Warren are much more open about their homophobia in Africa than they are in the US.

Organized religious homophobia in Africa first came to our attention with African clergy speaking out against gay ordination in 2003, but it can be traced back further—though not to biblical times. At the 1998 Lambeth Conference (the gathering of Anglican bishops in the worldwide Anglican Communion held every 10 years in England), American conservative clergy and the neo-conservative Washington-based Institute on Religion and Democracy lobbied

*Globalizing the Culture Wars*, a report from Political Research Associates (PRA), is an excellent example of the dual powers of opposition research, which can both shed light on a problem and then effect change in that problem area.

Discovering that Africa’s homophobia was a recent import from the West was only the beginning for PRA. They then had to take their discoveries back the US and put them in the hands of American policymakers—the people who could help stop US financial and diplomatic support for Africa’s most homophobic regimes.

PRA’s other mission was to make human rights abuses occurring halfway around the world resonate with the Western media, which has the power to hold US conservative religious figures accountable at home for the hatred they were sowing abroad.

At its best, opposition research is about connections. By connecting the dots for policymakers and activists, researchers are fighting with facts, the very things the opposition often wants to keep quiet.

African bishops to oppose the Episcopal church policy on the ordination of LGBT persons. The damage, of course, has not been confined to Africa's religious community. The amount of political power US conservative religious groups have in Africa is unthinkable from a US perspective. Rick Warren sits on the President's Advisory Council in Rwanda and his book *A Purpose-Driven Life* is studied by politicians across Africa. He is also a close friend of Uganda's first lady, Janet Museveni, who is a member of parliament.

The conservative churches intimately intertwined with the political power structure are injecting homophobia directly into the bloodstream of the political process, which helps explain why Scott Lively's

half-broken machinery and expired pharmaceuticals that have sometimes been foisted on the African continent. In Africa, the US Christian right was able to win support for homophobic views that are increasingly being left behind by Americans.

The good news is that once these activities were publicized in the US, enough of a backlash occurred to convince Warren and even Lively—after many delays and qualifications—to denounce the Ugandan bill. This is exactly the sort of pressure that is needed from social justice and human rights activists in the US, who can make good on threats to bring down a storm of unfavorable media against public figures.

Progressives need to be more astute, however. The progressive media is very

Uganda, anti-LGBT forces are organizing in other parts of Africa including the Congo, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and now Southern Sudan.

Rather than merely condemning those African characters who promote homophobia, US human rights advocates should ask themselves, "What are we going to do to deny the capacity of the US Christian right to make policy in Africa?" In the American political arena, when the Religious Right tries to stage a coup, such as holding the 2011 budget process hostage with demands to include antichoice legislation, they are at least locking horns with similarly armed opponents who can and will speak up just as loudly. But in constitutional processes like those in Kenya and Zimbabwe, there is evidence

**US human rights advocates should ask themselves, "What are we going to do to deny the capacity of the US Christian right to make policy in Africa?"**

March 2009 remarks at Uganda's Triangle Hotel so quickly led to demonstrations demanding harsh anti-LGBT legislation. Lively, a pastor who has long campaigned against gay rights on American soil, told his audience that "the gay movement is an evil institution" receiving its just punishment in AIDS. The talk electrified homophobes in Uganda who subsequently outed members of the LGBT community and called for attacks on and the arrest of homosexuals, culminating in demonstrations that were appeased by parliament's Anti-Homosexuality Bill.

#### **BRINGING THE US CULTURE WARS BACK FROM AFRICAN SOIL**

The mobilization of conservative counterparts in the Global South has emerged as a cornerstone strategy in the US cultural wars. Smaller right-wing conservative denominations depend on Africa to legitimize their positions. *Globalizing the Culture Wars* compares the export of outdated and dangerous ideologies to the

good at being deceived. When someone says, "I'm not involved," they are too often taken at their word. But it's important to remember that some of these characters are good at misleading the public. They need to be continuously held accountable or a public denunciation becomes a slap on the wrist. If someone has sustained relationships with virulently homophobic people, has continued to distribute the same literature and reward the most reactionary social forces with funding, that person should not be let off the hook until the behavior stops.

One of the most difficult things about closing the accountability loop between the US and Africa is that Americans tend to pay very little attention to international affairs. It almost requires a crisis of this scale—where LGBT individuals in Uganda could have faced execution—to get the mainstream media's attention. It's up to progressive investigators to pay attention so that things don't reach that boiling point. While we're looking at

of the US Christian Right's direct engagement in establishing antigay and antichoice public policy at the highest level, where they enjoy the deference reserved for religious leaders and visiting philanthropists. In these countries, they are forcing harsher laws that will make it almost impossible to decriminalize same-sex relations or reproductive choice, as happened in Kenya.

The appropriate US response to this infiltration, however, is not to mirror the Right's unethical tactics, but to support African resistance to homophobia. Only an authentically African voice can sidestep accusations of neocolonialism and get straight to the heart of the problem, which is creating organic social structures that will further the rights of all Africans equally. US progressives can help by bringing progressive Christians and LGBT activists over to study, equipping them with new knowledge and experiences that will lend perspective to the fights they lead in their home coun-

tries. One of the positive steps in this regard has been that LGBT individuals have come to share their stories before the UN and the US Congress, lending their faces and critical voices to what might otherwise be painted as a merely doctrinal debate.

Research from PRA and other sources has helped US policymakers develop an official response to the phenomenon. The State Department, in particular, has looked to our research and that of other investigators when considering grant monies that may inadvertently flow towards to the sponsors of politicized homophobia.

If there is anything to be learned from the export of anti-LGBT hatred, it's the power of relationships. Our report showed that human rights groups and progressive churches will need to create a much more cautious and nuanced set of narratives that won't play into conservative charges of "neocolonialism." The West still needs to speak out about injustice—social justice and human rights activists in the US have a much larger margin of influence over how conservative church leaders are perceived publicly. This power can also be used on behalf of the people who are brave enough to speak up for LGBT rights in Africa. So when people like Uganda's Bishop Christopher Senyonjo or Malawi's Bishop Brighton Malasa stand up for the human rights of LGBT individuals, progressives in the US need to give them credit.

#### LOOKING AHEAD: AFRICAN "KINSHIP"

A meeting that took place in Cape Town in November 2009 illustrates the possibilities that exist when Africans speak directly with Africans. On this occasion, more than 35 religious leaders—both conservative and progressive—met with 35 LGBT leaders to discuss sexuality. As an Evangelical and human rights activist, I was in a unique position to talk with people from both groups, moving from one camp to the other as they sat on opposite sides. "They're trying to convert us," each faction said to me about the other at first. The conference deliber-

ately featured only African speakers, and this is what I believe to be the secret of its success. By the third day, the two groups were sitting together, sharing meals and talking about homophobia as a shared problem, something that might not have happened between a similar mixture of personalities in the US.

What occurred on a small scale in Cape Town can still happen in the broader African faith community if African voices

Mombo, Kenyan theologian and gender equality activist, are all African voices best placed to challenge the idea that homosexuality is a Western plot. They show that faith and human rights have their own life in African soil, with no need for retellings from the West.

Politicized homophobia may be a particularly virulent episode of Western interference in Africa, but it should not be mistaken as the only threat, or Uganda



Rev. Rick Warren, who frequently meets with African leaders, is pictured with Rwandan President Paul Kagame in 2005.

© REUTERS, ARTHUR ASIMWE, 2005

are allowed to find common ground and create common solutions. To use Chinua Achebe's language, what has fallen apart can be put back together if the clan—Africans, including religious and LGBT communities—are allowed to rebuild their kinship without self-interested conservative churches holding what Achebe might call the "knife" of homophobia.

This is already happening: Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa, Anglican priest Michael Kimindu in Kenya, the Ugandan feminist and lawyer Sylvia Tamale and Esther

as its only outlet. Homophobia demonizes people by attacking the humanity of LGBT individuals. This is certainly not the only front on which the right is battling social freedoms here in the US. Likewise, it remains for future research to draw connections between homophobic extremism and other human rights battles in Africa, such as those around reproductive choice. The battle will finally be won by taking the contest from conservatives' ideological turf and moving the debate to a new, more robust, vision of human potential. ■

# “Made for Life” Turns Bishops into Moral Pretzels

THE NEW VIDEO FROM THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS SUBCOMMITTEE FOR THE PROMOTION AND DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE

By Mary E. Hunt

**T**HE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE of Catholic Bishops Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage video series on marriage continues. Two down, three to go. No suspense involved. The latest creation is “Made for Life,” which follows “Made for Each Other” like “Batman Returns” follows “Batman.” Same basic plot, same intended audience, a few new characters, and a predictable conclusion. It is more of a yawn than an outrage, more insipid than insightful. My advice is to take a pass, a big collective pass, on it.

Loyal readers will recall that “Made for Each Other” featured Barbie and Ken Catholic mouthing platitudes about how men and women are created to fit together for procreative purposes and everything else. (See my review in *Conscience*, Vol. xxxi, No. 3). The creative artists apparently read my review because this time they have included people of color as well as white people, diversified the age cohort (couples in this film have been married from 5 to 35 years) and even tossed in a single mom for good measure. But there the reality basis of the film ends and the fiction begins.

Like Rome, the film is divided into three parts: “Children Are a Gift,” “Fathers and Mothers Matter” and “Sexual Difference Matters.” It begins with predictable biblical passages about being fruitful and

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© ISTOCKPHOTO / SVEN HOPPE, 2008

multiplying, reinforced by fast-forward shots of seeds growing manically from the ground. Ouch.

Of course children are a blessing. But is the miracle just the wondrous process of conception, which most of these couples describe as if infertility were never an issue? Or is it the fact that the human race continues on its merry way with each new person who arrives on the planet? Perhaps it is the fact that the human capacity for love extends beyond what we create ourselves. Or maybe the gift is how we embrace even what is hard to love, or how we value those with disabilities as highly as we do the talented among us. There is no mention of the fact that sometimes the so-called gift is not welcome, wanted or even able to be received. Welcome to patriarchal gift giving—you get it whether you want it or not.

To truncate the meaning and value of children, to limit the enormous goodness of generations following one another to one manifestation—the physical act of heterosexual intercourse and what results from it on occasion—is tunnel vision of the most pitiable sort. The problem is not

so much what the bishops’ producers include in the video as what they exclude. It is all in their desperate effort to keep same-sex loving people from marrying, parenting and doing all the things they think good heterosexuals do.

I personally prefer to think that LGBTQ people bring more to the human table than how we are “just as good as” heterosexuals. Our contribution only begins with some hard-wrought experiences of exclusion that we never want to replicate. Most parents I know report that “how” a child gets here fades like a third grade spelling test in the face of decades of care and nurture that result in a unique human person. But the bishops don’t seem to notice or care about the different paths people can take once they’ve entered the world.

Who would dispute that fathers and mothers matter? All parents matter to children, as do grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents, friends, neighbors, the police and any other adult who is part of the proverbial village it takes to raise a child. But what no one, least of all the bishops, knows is how all of those people interact to be positive (and negative)

influences on a child. To watch “Made for Life” is to catapult back to an America of the 1950s, a time when, after two wars, men began slowly to join in the child rearing that women had carried out—together with other women—for so long.

The bishops’ argument for restricting childrearing to a male and female rests on the biological coming together of sperm and ovum. They reason that if it is good enough for nature, it must be good enough for nurture. The study guide that accompanies the film reads: “It should not require any research to understand that a child is meant to have a mother and a father.” Well, the least little bit of research, which I highly recommend for future films to avoid appearing completely foolish, reveals that children need care

It is fascinating to see how the bishops have to turn themselves into moral pretzels to argue that adoption is good when you are heterosexual and infertile but bad when you are same-sex loving and wanting to be a generous adult. They actually argue that “adoption, as an act of generous love to children in need, is different from deliberately depriving a child of a mother or a father by placing him or her with two women or two men who stand as legal ‘parents.’” They don’t even notice the contradiction in their statement: an orphaned child has no parents so by their logic at least one mother or one father, not to mention two, would be a step forward. The fact is that they do not like to think of same-sex parents as parents at all, hence the quotes around the

Premarital counseling in many Catholic parishes will undoubtedly involve viewing this series. I can only imagine young couples rolling their eyes at the kitschy presentation and elbowing one another to keep from laughing at the parochial storyline. The rest of us can safely ignore it.

Another approach would be to imitate the argument: two women thanking God for how perfectly they managed their own conception; two men waxing poetic about how God gave them the four children they adopted that no one else wanted; a heterosexual couple banking some of his sperm for later and using IVF for now, just as God intended. These are real ways real people form their families whether the bishops like it or not.

Still another way to respond would be

**“Made for Life” follows “Made for Each Other” like “Batman Returns” follows “Batman.” Same basic plot ... and a predictable conclusion.**

and nurture. However, no one, but no one, has figured out the magic formula. Serious studies indicate that children with two moms or two dads, just like children of single parents, can do just as well as those with a mom and a dad.

The bishops write off studies that come to such conclusions because they do not conform to church teaching. “The social sciences, like any other science, require adequate criteria of truth and a proper recognition of their circumscribed methods. The church’s social doctrine is an important reference point here, because it includes respect for the truth and the inviolable dignity of the human person. Just because a study states a conclusion does not always mean the truth has been reached.” That, in a nutshell, is the Catholic bishops’ approach to data: accept it if it conforms to church teaching, reject it if it does not. No wonder they conclude, “In the end, no matter how good and valuable a study is, the impact of a father and a mother is *immeasurable*.” But wait, if you can’t measure it how do you know? I know, stop being logical. Just do what they tell you....

term. The whole argument is so thoroughly biologicistic that marriage for elderly heterosexuals is seen as open to procreation while same-sex unions that could actually benefit from social and religious support in the raising of children are cast aside. It would be funny if it were not perverse.

The same intellectual gobbledygook is repeated in the third section, “Sexual Differences Matter,” which is really just a restating of the first two. Male and female, sperm and egg, daddy and mommy—and all is right with the world. Stating it makes it so, according to this approach: “Sexual difference matters. Moms and dads matter. Marriage matters. Attempts to redefine marriage radically threaten the fabric of life and society.... The difference *is* the difference.” So there. No data, no discussion, no dissent.

How are progressive Catholics to respond to this video? Several approaches occur to me. The first is to ignore these enormous expenditures of the Catholic community’s money and hope they go away. Nothing relegates a film to the dust heap faster than the lack of an audience.

parody. I will leave that for more creative writers. The material is endless—parents who think children are a gift discover that when they divorce they have to fight over who gets the present; the gender of moms and dads matters until it doesn’t—as in, anyone can change a diaper; the difference is the difference until 9 p.m. when most parents fall over exhausted from the day, at which point there is no difference. None of it is especially funny because it is so familiar.

Perhaps the best way to respond is to tell the bishops to cancel the next three films. Tell them that Catholic money—our money and not theirs alone—can be spent more effectively on providing for children who need extended day care, healthy meals, medical care, educational enrichment programs—the things that so many struggling parents of whatever gender constellation try to offer. Suggest that they donate money budgeted for the remaining videos to the single mothers who, like the one in the movie, accomplish herculean feats of child raising with little help from the Catholic church. Then let’s make a movie worth watching. ■



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Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) speaking at a rally on Capitol Hill.

# “We know what our Lord thinks about wishy-washy, lukewarm people”

CHRIS SMITH IS READY TO TELL YOU

By Kim Puchir

“FOR THE MOST PART IN CONGRESS, the name of the game is compromise, but Chris Smith is not one to compromise,” said Jo Blum, former vice president for government relations at the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, now NARAL Prochoice America. The Republican politician has stuck to the same unwaveringly conservative trajectory for the last three decades in the service of his New Jersey constituents and rigid anti-choice ideology—not necessarily in that order. In a 2007 speech, Mr. Smith characterized a list of prochoice legislation as the “screaming lack” of morality and came down against “moral relativism.” Though the representative from New Jersey’s 4<sup>th</sup> district makes no such distinctions when he speaks, there is actually a difference between taking *a* moral stance on an issue, and cornering *the only possible* moral stance. Unraveling Smith’s carefully woven fabric of religious references and human rights-like language reveals that, on at least one occasion, the Congressman has been caught wearing no clothes.

Some of the most lasting harm caused by Smith’s anti-choice activities stemmed

from his instrumental role in blocking funds to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) because he said that it “supports or participates in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization.” These claims have been debunked by several research teams, but Smith was able to keep the UNFPA associated with wrongdoing in enough legislators’ minds to block funding for fiscal year 2000. Besides the impact upon the provision of reproductive healthcare in some of the poorest countries in the world, the maneuver proved the utility of what the congressman referred to as his “tourniquet strategy” in a speech in Vatican City. “By linking pro-life initiatives to ‘must pass’ legislation, or something the Administration thinks it needs, like the UN arrearages, we have restored numerous bans on abortion funding,” he said in 2000, though the tactic is eerily similar to the Republican hijacking of the 2011 budget negotiations.

Smith continues to cling to allegations disproven ten years ago—this February he said in Congress that the UNFPA is “an organization that has made the Chinese killing machine more efficacious and lethal”—perhaps seeking to influence another generation of legislators. He has picked up some new strategies along the way, however. The bill he is currently pro-

moting, “The No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act” or H.R. 3, threatens abortion rights not by going for the jugular—by a frontal assault on *Roe v. Wade*—but more like death by a thousand cuts. A May 10 *New York Times* editorial describes the bill as “driving to end abortion insurance coverage in the private market using the nation’s tax system as a weapon.” The legislation would wage a multi-prong attack on healthcare plans that include abortion coverage and tax credits for businesses that offer such plans, while permanently stripping federal abortion funding from all federal healthcare services, including Medicaid, Medicare and the Indian Health Service.

The co-chair of the Congressional Pro-life Caucus has slightly more complicated views on reproductive rights than his OnTheIssues.org voting record—zero for prochoice, 100 in antichoice metrics—would suggest. Earlier this year, Smith caused public outcry with the “forcible rape” clause he included in H.R. 3 as a way of barring some women’s access to abortion, specifically victims of statutory rape. Yet in a 1991 interview with the *New York Times* titled “Decade of Rep. Smith: Fluke to Tactician,” the New Jersey representative showed more sensitivity to rape victims when he imagined them as one of his daughters. He said that if one of his own

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daughters were raped, he would advocate that she use “high estrogen therapy” to prevent pregnancy.

Within the reproductive choices available 20 years ago, the statement is unmistakably a reference to emergency contraception. Some of the earliest emergency contraceptives (EC) were made of estrogen, while modern “morning after pills” are made with progesterone only or a combination of the two hormones. In 1973 the Food and Drug Administration approved the estrogen preparation dieth-

spring at every stage of their biological development, including fertilization.” In 2001, the same month as his conversation with the *New York Times*, he remarked on CNN’s “Crossfire” program that “human life actually begins at fertilization.” Elsewhere in the 2001 *Times* interview, however, Smith stated, “You can’t tell within an hour, a day, even several days whether an egg has been fertilized.” This implies that a woman (but only if she was his daughter) would be acting morally as long as she made a reproductive choice while

worth of all men and women” which somehow supported the “belief that marriage is an institution between one man and one woman.”

While he has been called out by PolitickerNJ for not owning a home in his district or spending much time there, Smith is known for spending a good portion of his time working on high-profile international issues. For example, he made headlines in 2008 by reuniting two New Jersey girls stranded overseas in Georgia. According to a 2009 post on NJ.com by NJ

**Earlier this year, Smith caused public outcry with the “forcible rape” clause he included in H.R. 3 as a way of barring some women’s access to abortion.**

ylstilbestrol for the purpose of preventing the implantation of a fertilized egg in the uterus.

Unfortunately, Chris Smith has worked tirelessly to prevent the world’s women—other than his daughters—from having access to EC. “Emergency contraception in Peru: shifting government and donor policies and influences,” a 2007 article from Susana Chavez and Anna-Britt Coe, depicts Smith’s involvement in pressuring the USAID office in Peru to drop the provision of EC from its programs. In a 1997 edition of *PRI Review*, a publication from the ultra-conservative Population Research Institute, the Republican legislator objected to the provision of “post coital contraceptives” to refugees because it was “a code phrase for chemical abortifacients.” That the congressman would have a double standard—allowing for his family members to use what he calls an “abortifacient”—shows a much greater degree of flexibility about reproductive rights than he is normally credited for.

Otherwise, Smith has repeatedly attempted to make his view that life begins at fertilization into law. In 1989, two years before the *Times* interview, he co-sponsored legislation, H.J. Res.103, a proposed amendment to the Constitution that alleged the personhood of “off-

maintaining a state of ignorance about whether the egg had been fertilized. Ultimately, he says, “it is a question of intent.”

Chris Smith’s brand of human rights is just as arbitrary as his doling out of reproductive choice. Though he is chairman of the Africa, Global Health and Human Rights Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, when he speaks about human rights Smith is often talking about God-given rights, or what he called “the Prime Lawgiver’s law” in a speech delivered at the Conference on Globalization, Economy and the Family in Vatican City in 2000. Since these are not truly human rights—ones that apply to all humans—Smith unapologetically bestows more freedom to some people than others. Thus, his antichoice views grant a fetus more rights than a woman. In addition, he has voted against every piece of gay marriage legislation that has come before him. In fact, the only right for LGBT individuals Smith is on record as defending is their right not to be killed. Mark Leon Goldberg of UN Dispatch posted a 2009 letter signed by Smith and four other Republican legislators. The message asked Uganda’s president to reconsider legislation that would have put some LGBT people to death, while at the same time affirming the “inherent dignity and

Star-Ledger columnist Bob Braun, these activities betray Smith’s media savvy:

“Despite his protestations, Smith understands the power of the media to generate interest in issues steeped in emotion anyway—like children.... He has a gift for embracing issues that touch nerves and generate publicity.”

Smith tends to be drawn across international boundaries by issues he’s passionate about—though he is quick to call out others for doing precisely that. Recently, he condemned the Obama administration for supporting Kenya’s constitutional process in violation of the Siljander Amendment, which prohibits the use of foreign assistance funds to lobby for abortion. It also prohibits lobbying against abortion, but, as documented by *Mother Jones*, Smith took a taxpayer-funded trip to Kenya in early 2011, where he gave a speech about “pro-abortion NGOs” and called for a “world free of abortion.”

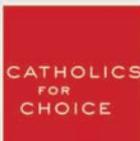
Chris Smith’s tendency to push his own agenda has not gone unnoticed. In 2004, when he was attending a United Nations conference in Puerto Rico as a special guest, the congressman was criticized for breaching protocol when he sent a fax on Congressional letterhead to Guatemalan president Oscar Berger,

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**CONSCIENCE Magazine Raises Questions about President Obama's Prochoice Record**

In an unprecedented move, *Conscience* magazine asked leading authors to provide a comprehensive analysis of President Barack Obama's prochoice record. Many in the progressive reproductive rights and women's rights field have whispered it, some have murmured it, but *Conscience* has finally broken the silence about the administration's abysmal failure to take action on choice issues. [Read more.](#)



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asking him to reconsider his stance on UN reproductive rights legislation. Yet for the most part, he has continued to preach in his self-acclaimed voice of morality at home and abroad. This April, less than three months after his offensive “forcible rape” clause, he received the American Jewish Committee’s Leadership Award for his human rights work.

Perhaps the secret to Smith’s endurance was embedded in the speech he gave at the awards ceremony. He told the story of how he got involved in advocacy for the Jewish community:

“[The] doubletalk [about Jewish rights] by Soviet officials was both numbing and motivating. Many of us got angry and I for one decided in Moscow that I was ‘all in.’”

Progressives can relate to Smith’s “numb” feeling: listening to his worldview can be enervating. But his torrent of words with their misappropriation of human rights language ennobles us also. He is, after all, not a political inevitability. He is merely skilled at claiming the moral high ground and then refusing to let it go, sometimes forcing his opponents on the defensive. From this height, Smith depicts all other viewpoints as less valid, though positioning himself as the antichoice defender of women takes some fancy footwork.

By venturing into the forest of Bible references, scientific citations of varying validity and other rhetorical devices he uses, we quickly discover that the congressman is just one man, albeit one who uses his public position to make his highly personal viewpoint a reality. In a 1997 commencement speech delivered at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, Smith shared his motto: “We know what our Lord thinks about wishy-washy, lukewarm people.” And if we don’t, Smith is happy to tell us his version of what the Lord thinks. The prochoice lobby has long been in vehement disagreement with Chris Smith’s claim to be residing on the moral high ground. But the more we read and learn about Smith’s self-serving use of religion and rights to further his own sanctity, the smaller he will become in all our eyes. ■

[www.CatholicsForChoice.org](http://www.CatholicsForChoice.org)

# Molehills from Mountains

By Ruth Riddick

## There Be Dragons (Encontrarás Dragones)

2011

Directed by Roland Joffé

THE SETTING IS SPAIN IN THE 1930s—Catholic Spain, a center of ecclesiastical privilege since Ferdinand and Isabella forcibly substituted holy inquisition for infidel civilization. After four hundred comfortable years, the political scene has become volatile. A popular government has been elected with an agenda anathema to this privilege. By contrast, elsewhere in Europe, fascism is on the rise with the tacit support of the Roman Catholic Church. Tensions are palpable and will soon be concentrated on this backwater country. Spain will erupt into the first continent-wide ideological war to follow the Bolshevik revolution, itself not yet 20 years old.

Welcome to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A lot of not-so-good things are brewing.

Enter Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei, by any standards a monumental figure. At this point in a career which would see him elevated to sainthood, Escrivá, already a priest, is studying law and serving as a private tutor in Madrid. He is at the political epicenter of the coming confrontation, poised, no less than Spain itself, to step into the historical moment. Escrivá is likely already a confidante of the fascist military rebel Francisco Franco, future Roman Catholic dictator of Spain who

seized power in a putsch known to history as the Spanish Civil War.

Exciting times, events that have us on the edge of our seats awaiting *There Be Dragons* (2011), the movie that promises a ringside view as these consequential events and personalities unfold. And there's a bonus! A terrible secret will be revealed—in Technicolor!

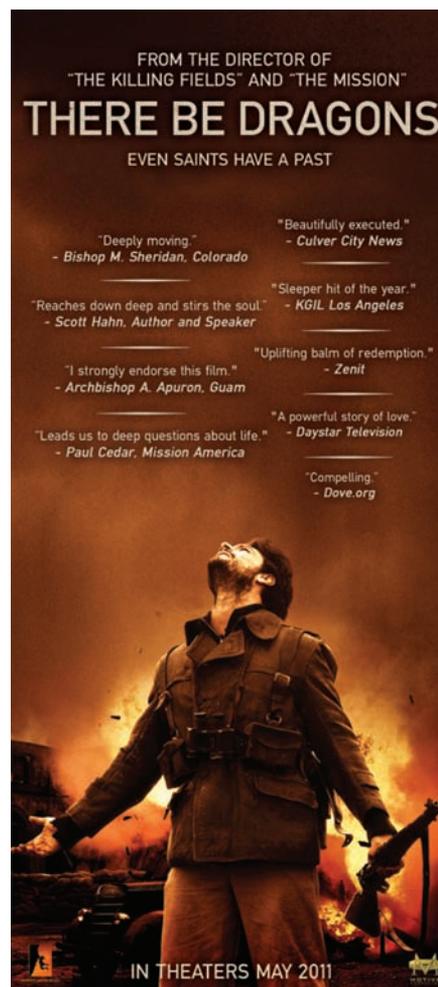
For auterists, Roland Joffé's name alone would be enough to guarantee interest. Consider, for example, his Oscar-nominated work on *The Mission* (1986), which has Robert de Niro, Jeremy Irons and Ray McAnally duking it out in an 18<sup>th</sup> century Latin America replete with Jesuits, imperialists, indigenous tribes and interesting dialogue by veteran Robert *A Man for All Seasons* Bolt. Or another Oscar nomination: the unforgettable *The Killing Fields* (1984), a story of Pol Pot's Cambodian genocide. Here is a director who knows the territory, we think. His movie will be engaging, entertaining, educational. It will have high production values. It will be *about something*.

But no.

The achievements of this fiasco are of a lesser order, even as its stated ambitions could hardly be more lofty. "What intrigued me the most about the film was that it has profound messages," gushes star Charlie Cox (or his ghostwriter). "I think Roland's message is a lesson in how we can go beyond the ego, transcend the human flaws that we all live with and threaten to imprison us. I think it's about how can we do that not just as people, but as societies. There are

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Writer and poet RUTH RIDDICK is former Press Officer of the Cork International Film Festival. She regularly reviews books and films for Conscience, most recently Ireland's Hidden Diaspora (2010).



huge lessons in the film for countries in conflict." Wow. That's heavy, man.

Cox impersonates the young Escrivá in a performance that can charitably be called nice; the spectacles he sports are memorable, if not in a symbolic Great Gatsby way. (He may be seen as an Irish mobster contemporary to Gatsby in HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*.)

The rest of the cast features real heavyweights including Sir Derek Jacobi, Charles Dance and Geraldine Chaplin, alongside youngsters Dougray Scott and Ana Torrent. Olga Kurylenko's performance is uncomfortably reminiscent of Ingrid Bergman in the film version of Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943), another perspective on the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway

was among many prominent Americans later dubbed “premature anti-Fascists” for their participation on behalf of the Spanish Republic. Escrivá did not minister to them when they were persecuted by the House Un-American Activities Committee and McCarthyism.

The tagline “based on true events” gives the filmmaker a lot of room. Joffé claims his script is “an intimate story of love and forgiveness.” We are asked to believe that, as young men, Josemaría and Manolo (Wes Bentley) formed a true friendship shattered by the latter’s actions during the civil war—the shocking secret that Manolo’s biographer son investigates on the eve of Escrivá’s canonization. (The chronology here is chopped up in a manner suggesting that non-linear storytelling has become a refuge of artsy scoundrels. Fortunately, we have production notes to keep us on track.) In a movie of this kind you may expect that the anticipated “secret” involves an all-too-credible accusation of clerical sex abuse—but not a blonde with a bullet belt right out of the pulp fiction world this movie more rightly inhabits.

What do we learn of Josemaría Escrivá from these clichéd shenanigans? Frankly, nothing. Is our understanding of the genesis, meaning and operations of Opus Dei deepened? Are we offered insight into how this pleasant-looking cleric with the fashion-statement glasses wound up a (premature) saint? If history is irrelevant here, what about emotional truth? Do these characters resonate? Do we care about them at any level?

*There Be Dragons* answers all of these questions firmly in the negative. Critics generally have dismissed it. Stephen Holden summarizes the film in the *New York Times*: “*There Be Dragons* belongs to a realm devoid of flesh and blood, where vacuous oratory reigns and religiosity passes for faith.”

No matter that the film is a failure; behind it lies an interesting production story. If Robert Redford can make a dull historical film with an agenda (as he did

with 2010’s *The Conspirator*), why not Opus Dei? *There Be Dragons* is reportedly financed to the relatively modest tune of \$35 million by Opus Dei supporters, which would account for its refusal to give us Escrivá as a problematic public figure with a contested legacy. Why fund your opposition’s controversies? It’s also been suggested that the movie is meant as a rebuttal to *The Da Vinci Code*, another limp effort.

Meanwhile, the producers express gratification at employing Joffé, an “agnostic Jew.” Opus Dei, for their part, took no chances and supplied an adviser during filming, Fr. John Wauck. Former editor of the *Human Life Review* and speechwriter for conservative American politicians, Wauck is professor of literature and Christian faith at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. (His core curriculum was aired as a 13-part television series on EWTN, the Global Catholic Network, in 2005.) He blogs energetically and has denounced *Da Vinci* author Dan Brown’s work. Perhaps Fr. Wauck was on the set to monitor the auteur’s orthodoxy.

**T**HERE BE DRAGONS IS A PROJECT of Motive Entertainment, last heard from in these pages as promoters of Mel Gibson’s enormously successful, if decidedly controversial, *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). (Unlike Opus Dei, Gibson isn’t squeamish about his radical Catholic agenda, cheerfully restoring the blood libel and embracing—homeroetic?—sodomachoschism.) At the time we wrote that the marketing strategy developed for Gibson would surely come to be taught as a business model.

Motive Entertainment would agree, boasting of this success in its sales pitch: “Stunning both Hollywood and the world, *Passion* earned \$125 million in its first five days (the highest box office gross ever for a five-day period starting on a Wednesday) and became one of the top 10 movies of all time, grossing over \$1 billion worldwide in box office and DVD.” This for a film disliked by critics, including *Conscience*, and uniformly

ignored for major-category international awards.

Founded by maven Paul Lauer, Motive Entertainment focuses on niches within what it characterizes as “the Faith and Family market.” These niches include such non-traditional movie marketing targets as churches, regular church attendees and so-called faith-based organizations.

As they explain, “When Motive’s business plan was created in 2002, our central premise was that ‘the same consumers who are already consuming faith-based and family-friendly books, music, TV and radio will likewise consume high quality values-based, faith-based and family-friendly films. The film/video product category is ripe for explosive growth within this category ... a goldmine for the company that can deliver.’”

Motive has honed its “cause marketing” approach in campaigns for recognizable titles including *United 93* (2006), *Chronicles of Narnia* (2005) and *The Polar Express* (2004), with mixed results. *There Be Dragons* is currently in release in the US (it earned \$705,500 gross receipts for the May 8 opening weekend, whereafter it quickly disappeared from New York screens) and in Spain, where the March opening weekend clocked in at \$1.25 million. Distribution deals for the UK and China have been announced.

Let the Irish have the last word; we so often do. As if there weren’t enough political bitterness back home, Irishmen (and, for the most part, they were men) fought passionately on both sides of the Spanish conflict. This division soured relationships in Ireland for decades. Nearly thirty years after the events of *There Be Dragons*, celebrated Dublin playwright Brendan Behan famously told a reporter while visiting Spain that the sight he most wanted to see on this occasion was “Franco’s funeral.” He was immediately repatriated. The Generallissimo outlived him.

It is to Franco’s arid wasteland that this spoiled film—as Escrivá himself—most surely belongs. ■

# The Concept of Fetal Life: Politics Drives Perception

By Ann Furedi

## Ourselves Unborn: A History of the Fetus in Modern America

Sara Dubow

(Oxford University Press, 2011, 320 pp)

978-0195323436, \$29.95

**R**ECENT DISCUSSIONS ABOUT the permissibility of later abortions have raised interesting questions about how we regard the fetus. How much value do we accord to life that has been conceived but not born? Has the way we assess this changed? Does our expanding knowledge of the science of fetal development mean that it should?

For decades, opponents of abortion have called on us to “confront the reality of abortion,” asking us to admit that the embryo is “human and alive” and that abortion “stops a beating heart.” They have accused the prochoice movement of devaluing the fetus, of denying that it is different than any other “blob of tissue” or of likening it to an unwanted growth, a “cancer” or a “parasite.” Their assumption, on the level of rhetoric or conviction, has been that prochoice politics is built on ignorance of what the fetus truly is. Today their challenge to us is this: as modern science tells us more about human development, as 4D scans show us the true face of the fetus, how can we allow its ending through late-term abortion?

ANN FUREDI is chief executive of bpas, the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, and author of *Unplanned Pregnancy: Your Choices*.

Indirectly, implicitly, this book addresses that question.

*Ourselves Unborn: A History of the Fetus in Modern America* is not an argument about abortion, nor a vehicle for the beliefs

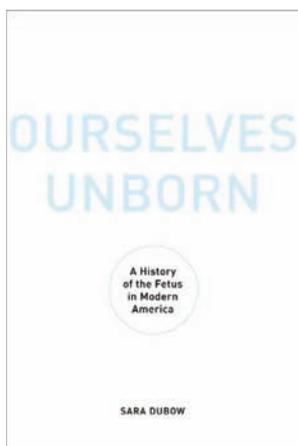
of the prochoice movement. Sara Dubow, a historian at Williams College in Massachusetts, has written a detailed and scholarly study of the way value has been attributed to fetal life over the last century. “A fetus in 1870 is not the same as a fetus in 1930, which is not the same as a fetus in 1970, which is not the same as a fetus in 2010,” Dubow says. The change, she

explains, is not driven by knowledge about the fetus, but by the emotional and political investment people have in it. Through their approach to the status, development and significance of the fetus, “people—individually and collectively—expressed their assumptions about personhood, family, motherhood and national identity.” How we understand and relate to the fetus is driven by social values and political circumstances far more than by biology or theology.

The book dismisses the idea that the advances in our knowledge about the developing fetus should shape our attitude to fetal status in respect to abortion. It shows that the fascination with fetal feeling, experience and appearance,

which seems newly stimulated by today’s scientific discovery, has been a part of the medical, cultural, social and political discourse for more than a century. The form that this discussion takes and the conclusions that are drawn from it have been driven by cultural values and not by accumulated knowledge or new discovery. Throughout modernity, support for women’s choice about the future of her pregnancy was *never* built on ignorance of fetal life. Instead, it was based on the understanding of the fetus partnered with the concept of what pregnancy, giving birth and raising a child means for a woman.

Today’s commentators assume that, regarding fetal life, our trajectory has been to accumulate evidence that there is little difference between the unborn and the born. Dubow’s first chapter demonstrates how untrue this is. The progression of scientific thinking in relation to the fetus, from Aristotle until the mid-nineteenth century, was not so much a journey to discover how *alike* babies and fetuses are, bringing us closer to a view that the fetus is deserving of more respect. Rather, she illustrates that the voyage has been one to discover the *differences* between embryo, fetus and baby. A famous late-fifteenth century drawing by Leonardo da Vinci is generally regarded as the first accurate presentation of the fetus in utero (in “fetal position”). While feminists have criticized the accuracy of da Vinci’s representation of the uterine context (which appears opened like a Fabergé egg), there can be little criticism of his rendering of the fetus. It is astonishingly similar to the photographs we see today in modern scans and medical textbooks—we are touched by how much it looks like a born “baby.” But in 1487, many would have been surprised by how un-like a man it was. Before then, the fetus was typically illustrated by various kinds of imagined homunculi—little humans—or cherubic infants. (A rich collection of illustrations is included in Karen Newman’s essay, *Fetal Positions: Individualism, Sci-*



ence and *Visuality*, published in 1996 as part of Stanford University Press's "Writing Science" series.)

Twenty-first century science's knowledge of the fetus has not exposed the reality of fetal life, nor has it made public support for later abortions untenable. As Dubow reminds us, the Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson first started to gain recognition for his photographic images of the fetus in the early 1950s.

**N**ILSSON'S ICONIC SERIES OF FETAL photographs, which first appeared in the 1965 *Life* magazine article "The Drama of Life before Birth," have become the classical reference for feminist discussion of fetal imagery. They employ all manner of deliberate technical

the organizer was arrested and charged with the illegal transportation of human remains. Dubow discusses in some detail the changes that had occurred in the intervening decades—how the preserved fetus had turned from a scientific specimen to an emblem of the American family. My point is more straightforward: for more than a century people have known that in later pregnancy fetuses look like babies, and yet they have continued to make legal, moral and public policy decisions related to abortion regardless.

Just as there has been a long-standing interest in what the fetus looks like, so there has been similar interest in what fetuses feel and know. Dubow writes of research at the Samuel S. Fels Research

the Supreme Court Decision in *Roe v. Wade* had provided a relatively liberal framework for abortion, this case was complicated by tensions around race, class, ethnicity and concerns about the unchecked authority of doctors and scientists. In a hysterical environment excited by allegations that elective abortions were producing a supply of fetuses for research purposes, some of which were supposedly "kept alive" for experiments, Edelin was accused of causing the death of a fetus. He was said to have deprived a 24-week-old fetus of air after he had carried out an abortion by hysterotomy—by making an incision in the uterus. Edelin denied he had asphyxiated the fetus after delivery, but he was unashamed about his actions as an abor-

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**The challenge we face today** is to understand the context in which our appreciation of the fetus is currently framed, and our task is to shape that context....

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presentation and descriptive techniques to evoke "fetal personhood." And yet, despite the photographer's intent to dramatize life before birth, just two years later in Britain, and nine years later in the US, abortion was legalized.

In truth, the public has been exposed to, and fascinated by, accurate representations of the fetus for well over a century. Dubow cites the displays of anatomically correct wax models of human embryos, the centerpiece of an 1893 Chicago exposition that attracted crowds of visitors. Forty years later, the fetus was still a public draw, motivating exhibitors to go further to meet the audience for realistic representation. In 1933, some 20 million visitors paid 10 cents each to see a "graduated set of human embryos and fetuses" preserved in formaldehyde "to illustrate the development of an unborn baby from the first month to the eighth." At this time they were seen as scientific curiosities—educational specimens. Times change, however, and Dubow recounts that, when a similar exhibition was mounted in 1977,

Institute for the Study of Prenatal and Postnatal Environment in the late 1940s, which attempted to address social, psychological and physiological aspects of fetal behavior. She documents studies of "prenatal life" reported in the popular press of the time, such as a magazine article suggesting the new questions being researched: "What happens to a baby before he is born? Is he sometimes uncomfortable? Does he feel motions? Can he hear? Can he think? Is he capable of learning?" Dubow suggests that "prenatal psychology" got a stamp of approval as early as the 1940s, though without any implication of a protected status or fetal life.

The controversies regarding second-trimester abortion in the 1970s illustrate most clearly how politics and advocacy are not framed by scientific or medical perception—it is politics that drives perception.

On April 11, 1974, Boston City Hospital physician Kenneth Edelin was indicted for manslaughter following a second trimester abortion. Although

tion doctor, which were not intended to result in a live birth. Under cross-examination he confirmed his belief that he owed no duty to the fetus. He was not concerned whether the fetus was live or dead at the start of the procedure since his only concern was for "the mother," and even if he had thought that the fetus was alive after delivery he would not have called a pediatrician because "this being an abortion before viability," he thought that an attending pediatrician would have been "number one, contrary to the patient's wishes, and number two, contrary to good medical practice."

Edelin was convicted following a sham of a trial, which Dubow describes in detail. The account is fascinating, but even more astonishing were the media reports, which gave unequivocal backing to the abortion doctor. The *Boston Globe* described Edelin as "a victim of judicial inadequacy that no society should tolerate." The *Washington Post* wrote that the Edelin conviction brought "disgrace and shame" to the State of Massachusetts and the

entire judicial system ... and warned that the impact of the decision ‘on the practice of medicine and on medical research in Boston, and elsewhere, is likely to be enormous.’” The *New York Times* called the decision “unbelievable” and feared that “it will now become more difficult than ever for women to obtain abortions when they are in the second trimester after conception.”

The case caused the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) to issue a statement reaffirming their support for “unhindered access by women to abortion services,” and warned that the profession, “must guard against local jurisdictions or vocal minorities imposing their ethical positions for medical care on family planning and abortion on patients and doctors who do not hold those positions.” The Planned Parenthood Federation of America worried that the decision “will make doctors fearful of performing abortions.” The National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) was concerned about the affect on “women with no financial means or alternative options.”

Edelin’s conviction carried with it a maximum sentence of 20 years, but he was sentenced to one year of probation, suspended until the anticipated appeal. In 1976, a unanimous ruling by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts overturned the conviction.

We can ask—if Edelin were to come to trial today, what chance would there be that the media, ACOG, Planned Parenthood and abortion lobbyists like NARAL would stand together in unequivocal, unapologetic support for a second-trimester abortion doctor found guilty of manslaughter?

Sadly, I think we have to concede that many would say—even if convinced of the righteousness of the doctor’s actions—that public support would be unwinnable. Today, late abortion is something even some who call themselves “prochoice” will no longer defend. Their retreat is not because they have learned more about the fetus, but

because they have failed to learn what they should about women’s lives.

Dubow’s work shows that, from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century, “the fetus has been a vehicle through which people have wrestled with assumptions about science and religion, anxieties about demography and democracy, beliefs about feminism and motherhood, and ideas about conservatism and liberalism.” This will be as true for the future as it has been for the past. *Ourselves Unborn: A History of the Fetus in Modern America* tells a story beginning a century ago, when the fetus was framed in a historical context during which, “embryology became a science, obstetrics became a profession, abortion became a crime, birth control became a movement, eugenics became a cause and prenatal care became a policy.” The challenge we face today is to understand the context in which our appreciation of the

fetus is currently framed, and our task is to shape that context and not passively accept it.

In 1996, Edelin, who went on to become a chairman of Planned Parenthood, addressed the matter of whether the loss of a fetus in abortion was always a tragedy. He wrote: “Many women choose abortion because of the tragedies in their lives and in the circumstances surrounding their pregnancies. For these women, abortion is not a tragedy; instead it liberates them from tragic circumstances. Women must never be left out of the abortion debate, or the debate about fetal research, medical progress or moral politics.” He was right. Dubow provides the evidence: it is not fetal science that teaches us what we know to be right. Instead, through the years we interpret and understand that science in the context of what appears right from our own and society’s perspective. ■

## Bookshelf

### **God is Subversive: Talking Peace in a Time of Empire**

*Lee Griffith (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011, 179 pp)*

Author Lee Griffith begins with some common binaries—justice/injustice, violence/nonviolence—and shows that they are not merely two ends of a continuum, but entirely different ways of behaving in the world. While deconstructing our age’s systematic violence and injustice (“empire”), he moves easily from the Old Testament to the red light district of town. In *God is Subversive* the honesty of social realism frequently gives way to wonder at living examples of something radically different—peace.

### **The Religious Factor in the 1960 Presidential Election: An Analysis of the Kennedy Victory over Anti-catholic Prejudice**

*Albert J. Menendez (McFarland, 2011, 271 pp)*

Dissecting the 1960 presidential votes by region, state, ethnicity and sometimes by town, author Albert J. Menendez discovers the religious forces working for and against candidate John F. Kennedy. *The Religious Factor in the 1960 Presidential Election* paints a much more nuanced picture than the triumph over American fears of a Catholic president. Instead, Kennedy’s race was part of America’s long contest between church and state, a challenge very much alive in today’s politics. Menendez’ skillful depiction of 1960’s politics reveals some of the ironies that have developed in US politics since then—among them that Kennedy was more successful at distancing himself from the Catholic hierarchy than many policymakers are in confronting today’s politicized bishops. This book is a data-driven examination of “the Catholic vote,” religiously-themed propaganda and other campaign topics that have been the source of much speculation ever since Kennedy.

*(continued on page 49)*

# From Theocrats to Secularists: Moving toward Women's Autonomy

By Sivananthi Thanenthiran

## Control and Sexuality:

### The Revival of Zina Laws in Muslim Contexts

Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Vanja Hamzić

(*Women Living Under Muslim Laws Network*, 2010, 235 pp)

978-0-9544943-9-1, £12 through [WLUML.org](http://WLUML.org) online store

**T**HE PUSH FOR GENDER equality across the world has resulted in higher levels and standards of women's educational attainment, economic participation and political participation. Some of these accomplishments have come through national governments' recognition of the socioeconomic value in investing in women. We have also seen progress stemming from development agendas and international frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals (2000); the Beijing Platform for Action (1995); the International Conference on Population and Development (1994); the Vienna Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993); and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).

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**SIVANANTHI THANENTHIRAN** is Programme Manager of Information, Communications and Research at the Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW), a regional partnership organization which works to promote and defend women's rights and needs, particularly in the areas of health and sexuality, and reaffirms women's agency to claim these rights.

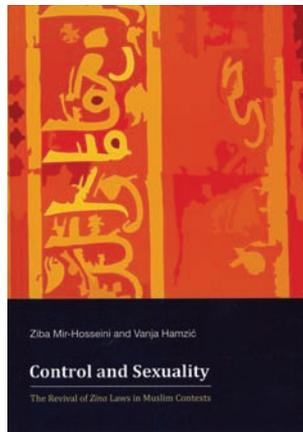
Undeniably, women's burgeoning freedom poses a threat to those who wish to maintain the status quo. In most developing countries, cultural and religious rights are used to justify imposing curbs on women's liberties and social roles. Sometimes, these arguments are brought out almost exclusively in the context of women's rights. In many developing societies—not just ones shaped by Islam—religion continues to be the organizing force in society. Religious leaders show their socially conservative side by trying to limit women's roles and freedoms and punishing them for transgressions. And nothing seems to threaten the status quo more than women (and men) having autonomy over their sexual and reproductive lives.

*Control and Sexuality* brings together perspectives from Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey to demonstrate how the state has reintroduced ancient zina laws in these Muslim societies in order to control women's sexuality. The analysis highlights key aspects of these zina laws—historical, cultural and political—across countries, and details the local resistance to these laws.

One of the critical contributions made by this book occurs in territory that is always difficult to navigate: the overlap between religion, culture and politics. Within a religious, cultural, traditional rights framework, governments have often assumed sovereignty to determine issues pertaining to women's sexuality and reproduction. However, this movement can often be challenged if there is a critical mass within those societies that can both represent the voices of women on the ground and subvert this determination of cultural/religious/traditional rights of women. In the countries examined by the authors, women's rights activists who focused on harsh punishments meted out for transgressions—the stoning and whipping of women—proved to be pivotal in attacking the encroachment into women's lives and bodies. The fact that these punishments were meted out through extrajudicial means—in parallel legal systems or in the private sphere—also helped to move the frame of the debate from a cultural, traditional or religious lens to a human rights lens.

*Control and Sexuality* also captures the importance of working within and across borders—through domestic partnerships and with like-minded international partners such as sister organizations or activists/experts dealing with similar Muslim and non-Muslim contexts. The book explores the future trajectory of this work, which will require strengthening women's voices; promoting and supporting gender-just religious research and legal frameworks; and holding the state accountable for breaches of human rights. In addition, crafting an integrative discourse on gender justice in Muslim contexts; rejecting cultural justifications for gender-based violence; and resisting oppressive interpretations of the right to freedom of religion are also presented as necessary steps forward.

It may prove interesting to broaden the book's focus and look at what cultural and religious hegemonies are at



work in other countries, especially beyond the Muslim world and developing nations. Limitations on women's sexuality and reproduction in the name of religion and culture are proposed or imposed in many places, including the United States. Many religions are patriarchal, and as such continue to be tools for perpetrating and maintaining the patriarchal status quo.

It might have also been useful if the authors could have examined the idea that political instability works a catalyst for the revival and persistence of the zina laws. Globally, there has been a trend in which governments—weakened by bad economies and ineffective economic and social policies—align themselves with

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**Limitations on women's sexuality and reproduction in the name of religion and culture are proposed or imposed in many places, including the United States.**

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religious parties and authorities in order to strengthen their position with the people and win the next election. It should come as no surprise that these governments then go on to adopt positions and policies that favor cultural and religious frameworks. Moreover, promulgating simplistic, religious frameworks helps move the citizens' attention away from the structural issues of government and into the black hole that is the morality of private behavior.

The divide between secularists and theocrats is as obvious today as the divide caused by wealth and race, and it will be a defining trend in global politics in the years to come. The important question, then, is how can we work together to resist and subvert this trend at the national, regional and global levels? ■

## Bookshelf

*(continued from page 47)*

### **Habits of Change: An Oral History of American Nuns**

*Carole Garibaldi Rogers*

*(Oxford University Press, 2011, 344 pp)*

*Habits of Change* is a collection of stories depicting the lives of American nuns in their own words. Far from leading lives of quiet retirement, this diverse group of women has been even more deeply affected by Vatican II and the upheavals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than most women in the US. The book illustrates the different kinds of leadership roles women can be called to within the church.

### **Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teachings, Fourth Edition**

*Kevin D. O'Rourke, OP and Philip J. Boyle*

*(Georgetown University Press, 2011, 332 pp)*

*Medical Ethics* is an A to Z of Catholic teachings on bioethics. Primary sources such as statements from the pope, bishops' conferences and the Catechism are selected for easy reference. The authors have also written a summary of Catholic teachings about personhood, health, informed consent, justice and conscience.

### **Reproductive Health and Human Rights:**

**The Way Forward** (Paperback)

*Laura Reichenbach and Mindy Jane Roseman, editors*

*(University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, 304 pp)*

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994, was a milestone in the development of reproductive rights in theory and practice. *Reproductive Health and Human Rights* sheds light on the context surrounding the reproductive health movement at the time of Cairo. At the same time, it signals the challenges that must be surmounted if rights-based reproductive health policies are to be integrated into global policy moving forward. These critical essays by scholars and practitioners help the reader grasp the practical implications of adopting one type of policy language over another when dealing with reproductive health issues.

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# A Killer and the Culture that Watered his Fanaticism

By Bill Williams

## The Wichita Divide: The Murder of Dr. George Tiller and the Battle over Abortion

Stephen Singular

(St. Martin's Press, 2011, 357 pp)

978-0-312-62505-4, \$26.99

ON A SUNDAY MORNING IN 2009, anti-abortion crusader Scott Roeder calmly entered a church in Wichita, Kansas, looking for Dr. George Tiller, who ran a local abortion clinic. Roeder drew a gun, approached the doctor and shot him in the head in front of horrified church members.

Roeder later said his only regret was that he had not killed the doctor sooner.

*The Wichita Divide* is a thoroughly researched history of Roeder's crime and the broader issue of violence in society. The book's most compelling chapters chronicle the events of that fateful day.

When a church usher pursued Roeder and tried to block his escape, the killer threatened to shoot him, too. Roeder drove away and then stopped for gas and pizza. When police caught him hours after the crime and charged him with Tiller's murder, it "filled him with relief. The doctor was dead. The mission had been accomplished."

Roeder was convicted of murder and sentenced to 50 years in prison without

parole, which for a man in his fifties amounts to a life sentence.

The author interviewed numerous friends and associates to gain a fuller picture of Roeder, who as a young man had been hospitalized with early signs of schizophrenia. Over the years he had drawn closer to fringe, anti-government groups. He viewed abortion as murder and began to vandalize abortion clinics, but eventually became frustrated because the tactics were not stopping abortions.

For a decade he thought about killing Dr. Tiller.

Tiller was a crusader for women's rights, believing he had a mis-

sion to provide women with safe, legal, late-term abortions. He prided himself on keeping his clinic open despite threats and vandalism.

A woman once approached Tiller's car outside the clinic and fired six shots from a handgun, hitting him in both arms. After that he wore a flak jacket, and for six weeks traveled to and from work in a Brink's armored truck. On another occasion, someone pipe-bombed his office, prompting Tiller to install gates, fencing, floodlights, metal detectors and bullet-proof glass.

For years demonstrators marched in front of the clinic, Women's Health Care Services, shouting at women

entering the building and waving signs with graphic pictures of aborted fetuses.

Tiller was known nationally because he was one of a handful of doctors who performed late-term abortions. Months before he was assassinated, he was tried on charges of violating Kansas law regarding late-term abortions. He was found not guilty. This was one of a never-ending series of attempts to put him out of business.

In 1998 the state legislature had outlawed abortions on viable fetuses at least 22 weeks into gestation without a documented referral from another physician, and then only if both physicians determined that an abortion was necessary either to save a pregnant woman's life or because continuation of the pregnancy would "cause a substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function of the pregnant woman."

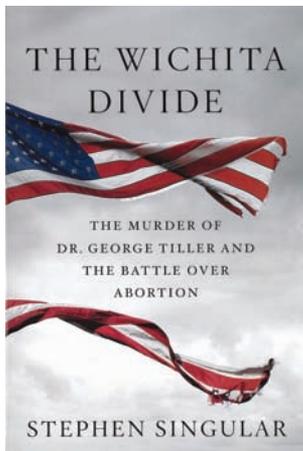
We learn that between 1998 and 2008 Tiller performed 4,800 late-term abortions. About 2,000 of them involved fetuses unable to survive outside the womb because of genetic defects or fatal illnesses. The other 2,800 involved viable fetuses, including some with severe abnormalities.

Despite Singular's careful research, we do not get a full picture of Tiller's inner life or personality. He is quoted as telling one protestor, "Too bad your mother's abortion failed," which makes him sound arrogant and spiteful. Was that the real Dr. Tiller? From the author's account we cannot tell.

The book also fails to convey the heartache, doubts and confusion that many women experience when weighing late-term abortions, and we learn little about Dr. Tiller's own confusion or doubts, if he had any.

One notable exception is the too-brief account of a Catholic couple from Louisiana who learned that cystic masses covered their 27-week-old fetus' left lung. Even in the best outcome their child would be on life support for months. The couple opted for an abortion.

When they arrived at the clinic, Dr. Tiller prayed with them about their



**BILL WILLIAMS** is a freelance writer and former editorial writer for *The Hartford Courant* in Connecticut. He is a member of the *National Book Critics Circle*.

decision and told them how they could memorialize their child. They decided to go ahead with an abortion, even as demonstrators called them murderers. But the anecdote ends abruptly, with little additional light shed on Tiller's discussion with the couple.

**S**ingular weaves through the book the story of the rise of Christian fundamentalism, militia movements and conservative rhetoric that compared abortion to the Holocaust. Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly regularly called the doctor "Tiller the baby killer." Undoubtedly, O'Reilly and others helped to create an atmosphere in which abortion was stigmatized to such an extent that handful of fanatics felt emboldened to shoot doctors and bomb abortion clinics.

Singular has been writing about domestic terrorism for more than 25 years, and in this account he relates numerous instances of violence directed at federal buildings, schools and other facilities.

But it is a stretch to assert that domestic terrorism now permeates "our entire society, in our media, politics, culture and religion." And it seems a bit extreme to refer to the fight over abortion as "the new civil war," comparing the fatal shot fired at Dr. Tiller with "the shots fired at South Carolina's Fort Sumter in January 1861, opening the War Between the States."

The author also fails to sufficiently distinguish between the small band of deranged fanatics who advocate assassination of physicians, and the millions of law-abiding people who oppose abortion while denouncing violence against doctors.

Regrettably, the book has no footnotes, index, timeline or list of principal characters, which would have assisted readers.

Nevertheless, *The Wichita Divide* succeeds in giving us a readable account of the life and beliefs of an unrepentant killer and the culture that watered his fanaticism. It excels as a piece of reporting, but falls short on analysis and nuance. ■

# Reports Worth Reading

## **Abortion Surveillance: United States 2007**

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011*

This report, which reflects the most recent data about the number of abortions performed in the US, breaks down the overall figures by variables such as age, location, race/ethnicity, procedure type and gestational age. By all measures—the total number of abortions, along with the number of women who accessed the procedure and the number of abortions performed compared to live births—abortions decreased in 2007 (by 6 percent, 7 percent and 14 percent, respectively). These numbers are still not as low as they were in 2005.

## **Unsafe Abortion: Global and Regional Estimates of the Incidence of Unsafe Abortion and Associated Mortality in 2008, Sixth Edition**

*World Health Organization, 2011*

This World Health Organization (WHO) report is an overview of the myriad of conditions which affect the availability of safe abortion around the world. It also examines the way unsafe abortion relates to unmet family planning needs and maternal mortality. Trends are broken down by region, contrasted with earlier data and presented in graph and table form. While WHO findings suggest that the incidence of unsafe abortions increased over the last five years, this seems to be due to a growing number of women of reproductive age, as the rate stayed at 14 unsafe abortions per 1000 women—the same as 2003.

## **Calculated Injustice: The Slovak Republic's Failure to Ensure Access to Contraceptives**

*Center for Reproductive Rights, 2011*

Slovakia, which has many government figures hostile to contraception and a powerful Catholic hierarchy, is an example for any region where women's access to contraception is considered a low priority. Since the price of contraception, unlike other pharmaceuticals, is not regulated by the Slovak government, women must pay out of pocket. A healthcare system set up to make getting these prescriptions more difficult is coupled with misinformation—or no information—about family planning. This scenario is contrasted with existing European legal statutes that protect women's right to reproductive healthcare. The report examines the effect of these policies on the everyday lives of women of different ages, backgrounds and income levels.

## **Parliamentary Advocacy Interventions in Response to the HIV Epidemic in the Caribbean**

*Inter-American Parliamentary Group, 2011*

This report provides an analysis of the impact of HIV/AIDS in six Caribbean nations as well as recommendations for improving that region's response to the epidemic. One of the most notable themes is the relationship between discrimination against LGBT individuals and people living with AIDS, on the one hand, and a higher incidence of risky behaviors and transmission on the other. In countries without homophobic laws, such as Cuba, Suriname, the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men is much lower than the rest of the Caribbean, where the prevalence is only exceeded by that of Sub-Saharan Africa.

*“Canon Law allows for leniency, especially when the person in question is elderly or recognized for his merits.”<sup>1</sup>*

—Vatican Cardinal Jorge Medina about the sanctions imposed on Fr. Fernando Karadima, a Chilean priest found guilty of sexual abuse and ordered to retire to a life of prayer and penitence.

*“Don’t trust me.”<sup>2</sup>*

—Robert W. Finn, Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph, acknowledging that the diocese should have removed a priest known to possess child pornography.

*“Homosexuality is not the same as normal sex in the same way that anorexia is not a normal appetite.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“When you mistreat human love, perhaps it winds up taking vengeance.... This epidemic [AIDS] is a sort of intrinsic justice.”<sup>4</sup>*

—Archbishop André-Joseph Léonard on LGBT individuals and AIDS.

*“The best explanation I can come up with is a profoundly misguided idea of what is in the good of the church. They were paying more attention to its public image than to the spiritual, emotional and physical welfare of the faithful.”<sup>5</sup>*

—Phil Lawler, editor of CatholicCulture.org, referring to the bishops’ practice of transferring abusive priests rather than handing them over to civil authorities.

*“I wish if people were changing to the Roman Catholic Church, they’d find a better reason than the non-ordination of women. I find that bothersome. I really don’t want to cause division in the church, but what I have real difficulty with is that some subjects are not for discussion. I don’t see how we can be that certain of things – celibacy is another – which I don’t see as belonging to the essence of the Christian message.”<sup>6</sup>*

—Rev. William Walsh, retired Bishop of Killaloe, Ireland about his questions regarding celibacy.

*“It is no exaggeration to say that [Legion of Christ founder] Marcial Maciel was by far the most despicable character in the twentieth century Catholic Church, inflicting more damage on her reputation and evangelizing mission than any other single church leader.”<sup>7</sup>*

—Fr. Richard Gill, former member of Maciel’s congregation, the Legion of Christ

*“Among the twelve apostles, there is one Judas. Out of many priests, there are also a few who betray.”<sup>8</sup>*

—Archbishop Emeritus Oscar Cruz condemning members of religious orders in the Philippines who support the Reproductive Health bill.

*“I don’t know why the Italian translation reads as it does ... but it should be fixed to reflect, without ambiguity, the church’s teaching that contraception is evil.”<sup>9</sup>*

—Mark Brumley, president of Ignatius Press, responding to the flap over an Italian version of the youth catechism known as Youcat.

<sup>1</sup> Catholic News Agency, “Priests Not Immune from the Devil, Cardinal Warns,” April 4, 2011. <sup>2</sup> Joshua McElwee, “Bishop Admits Failure in Priest’s Child Pornography Case,” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 23, 2011. <sup>3</sup> “Bishop Leonard Compares Homosexuality to Anorexia on [RTL-TV] ‘Controversy,’” RTL.be, January 24, 2010. <sup>4</sup> Claire Roseberg, “Belgium’s Catholic Primate Faces Homophobia Charge,” Agence France-Presse, November 2, 2010. <sup>5</sup> Stephan Faris, “Vatican Gets Tough on Child Abuse, but Not Tough Enough,” *Time*, May 18, 2011. <sup>6</sup> Kathy Sheridan, “The Bishop Who Speaks His Mind,” *Irish Times*, November 6, 2010. <sup>7</sup> *New Oxford Review*, “The Legion of Christ: Operation Rescue,” April 2011. <sup>8</sup> Candice Montenegro, “Priest Likens Church Pressure vs. RH Bill to the Inquisition,” *GMA News*, March 16, 2011. <sup>9</sup> Carol Glatz, “Youth Catechism’s Italian Edition Suspended After Translation Error,” Catholic News Service, April 12, 2011.

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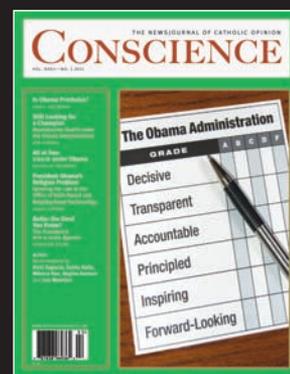
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## Index: Annual Revenue for Conservative Catholic Organizations

There are a host of conservative Catholic organizations that seek to restrict access to reproductive health services in the US and abroad. Some have significant budgets; others do not. The budgets for some of the better-known follow:

<b>American Life League</b> .....	\$6,734,391 (2009)
<b>Catholic Answers</b> .....	\$6,317,556 (2008)
<b>Catholic Answers Action</b> .....	\$632,497 (2008)
<b>Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute</b> .....	\$1,323,766 (2009)
<b>The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights</b> .....	\$3,566,901 (2009)
<b>Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good</b> .....	\$685,842 (2009)
<b>Democrats for Life of America</b> .....	\$89,902 (2009)
<b>Human Life International</b> .....	\$3,457,736 (2009)
<b>Priests for Life</b> .....	\$10,873,913 (2008)
<b>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops</b> .....	\$145,247,325 (2009)*
<b>World Youth Alliance</b> .....	\$576,325 (2009)

\* Total operating revenues, gains and other support, as listed in the Consolidated Statement of Activities for 2009.