



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry

A voice for justice, equality and compassion in New Jersey

Speaking out on Reproductive Justice

Reproductive Justice/Health Task Force Responds to Attacks on Planned Parenthood

July 21, 2015

As Unitarian Universalists we are called to protest violations to basic human rights and support reproductive health/abortion clinics that are experiencing intimidation and spiritual or physical violence. The current attack on Planned Parenthood is deeply disturbing, troubling and misleading. Anti-abortion activists from a group called the Center for Medical Progress recently released a video showing Dr. Deborah Nucatola, Planned Parenthood's senior director of medical research talking to people she believed were representatives of a biotech company. She was describing how Planned Parenthood handles tissue donation from aborted fetuses.

This video is deceptive on many levels. The group who secretly videoed Nucatola edited a 150 minute meeting (60 page transcript) down to eight minutes of detailed medical description. The group is led by David Daleiden, formerly of the anti-abortion group Live Action. Live Action typically releases videos that have been heavily edited to cast abortion providers in an unflattering light. Out of context, the video of Dr. Nucatola can be disturbing for people to hear, however from all of the recent commentary, it is clear that the video in no way represents the work of Planned Parenthood. Dr. Nucatola was discussing the legal donation of fetal tissue to biomedical research laboratories.

In the unedited video of the meeting Nucatola points out repeatedly that donations are only done with consent of the woman receiving services. These women are described happy to do something that contributes to medical research that might one day find a cure for serious diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, AIDS, dementia, diabetes or heart disease. Nowhere was this presented in the edited video. As was stated in a press release from Planned Parenthood, "**...we do [tissue donation] just like every other high-quality health care provider does -- with full, appropriate consent from patients and under the highest ethical and legal standards. There is no financial benefit for tissue donation for either the patient or for Planned Parenthood.**" The small amount of money that Planned Parenthood receives from tissue buyers (\$30 - \$100) covers the cost of storing and shipping samples.

The controversy concerning this hoax is problematic on many levels. Planned Parenthood has a 100 year history as a health care organization serving women who need reproductive health services. Three percent of Planned Parenthood's services are legal abortions. The remainder of provided services are reproductive health services such as cancer screenings, pelvic exams and contraception and abortion care. The patients served by Planned Parenthood are often those who would have difficulty affording the cost of these services in other medical facilities.

The current discussion focuses on the lies that have been perpetrated by a discredited group instead of the very real issues that women face in getting appropriate reproductive health care. Unfortunately, this discussion ignores the core issues of the reproductive justice movement - the right to have children, to not have children and to parent children in safe and healthy environments. This is

a basic human right and at the core of reproductive justice. This right is grounded in the particular experiences, values, priorities and leadership of women of color. It includes accessibility to the complete spectrum of reproductive health services, including legal abortion. Today this right is under attack. As Monica Simpson of SisterSong, a national reproductive justice collective said recently, "The simple fact is that the people who are out there perpetuating myths about abortion providers are not doing so because they care about ensuring the availability of high quality health services. This is about doing whatever it takes, including spreading lies in order to make it so that women can't get an abortion when they need one."

At the Unitarian Universalist Association 2015 General Assembly the delegates passed a Reproductive Statement of Conscience. This statement, a culmination of three years of study by local congregations (Congregational Study Action Issue 2012-2016) calls on UUs to "**center the experience of the most vulnerable, and to bridge the gap between reproductive rights and other social justice movements.**" Supporting Planned Parenthood and standing together when any of the groups standing for reproductive justice is attacked, is essential to protecting the basic human rights at the core of reproductive justice.

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