

Friend or Foe? Planned Parenthood and the Public Good

By Gerald McDermott and Carol Swain

Planned Parenthood enjoys a good reputation. Many Americans think it performs necessary services—screening for sexually-transmitted diseases, forestalling teen pregnancy, and controlling family size.

But there are some disturbing realities behind the scene. For example, Planned Parenthood's confidentiality principles (it promises not to tell anyone of a teenager's problems) conflict with laws in every state that require health care workers to report suspected sexual abuse or statutory rape to law enforcers. Not surprisingly, investigators are finding a national pattern of failure to report sex crimes against under-age teens. In 2002 Life Dynamics, a pro-life group based in Texas, called 800 abortion clinics around the country, many of them run by Planned Parenthood (PP). The caller said she was a 13-year-old girl whose boyfriend was 22, and she needed an abortion. 91% of the clinics told the caller they would give her an abortion, but warned her not to reveal her boyfriend's age.

Americans may be surprised to learn that PP has plenty of money and taxpayers are contributing a large part of it. In 2005-06 it took in nearly a billion dollars, and boasted a surplus of \$55 million. More than one-third of its income--\$305 million—came from government subsidies. Its president receives an annual compensation of almost \$1 million.

In a time when abortions nationwide are declining, PP is performing more abortions than ever—264,943 in 2005-06. These abortions bring in at least a third of its \$345 million in clinic income.

Because PP is America's biggest chain of abortion clinics, it is unsettling to learn that of the six American women who have died after taking the abortion pill RU-486, four got the pill from a PP clinic. Yet PP affiliates often refuse to comply with FDA guidelines, permitting women to take the drug at home rather than at a clinic as the FDA advises.

There are also disturbing racial disparities. National numbers from the Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), a research arm of PP, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reveal that the overwhelming majority of abortion clinics are located in metropolitan areas. Some analysts have placed the percentage in minority neighborhoods at greater than 75%.

That may help explain one of the best-kept secrets in America—that the majority of abortions are now performed on black babies. According to the AGI, there were 1.2 million abortions in 2005, and black women were 4.8 times as likely as non-Hispanic white women to have an abortion. Hispanics were 2.7 times as likely. That means 683,000 black babies were aborted, or 56% of the American total—despite the fact that blacks are only 13% of the U.S. population.

Walter Hoye, director of community relations at Progressive Missionary Baptist Church in Berkeley, says “abortion is the Darfur of the African-American community.” He calls for the end of taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood.

Recently questions have been raised about racism at PP clinics. Documented in a widely-circulated recording and transcript, a

UCLA student researcher for a pro-life magazine hired a professional actor in the summer of 2007 to call PP clinics around the country, offering donations to “lower the number of black people” by targeting black babies for abortion. She found PP clinics in seven states that agreed to take the monies. Not one PP employee objected to the caller’s racist remarks or purposes.

Planned Parenthood has been active in the political arena in ways that many taxpayers may not be comfortable with. Partial birth abortion strikes many as a particularly hideous way to kill a baby, yet Planned Parenthood lobbied against a ban on that practice. The Born Alive Infants Protection Act, passed into law in 2002, defined a viable fetus surviving the abortion process as a person entitled to medical assistance. Nurses testified that babies who survive a botched abortion are sometimes of the same size and condition of those successfully treated in neonatal units across the country. Typically, they were left to die. Nurses reported that some managed to survive for hours. Planned Parenthood lobbied against this bill as well.

One must wonder, then, whether taxpayers should continue to support an organization that is flush with money, has been willing to skirt or ignore laws intended to protect the people it claims to serve, and may be targeting minorities with a practice many Americans believe immoral.

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