

Behind the Fetal Tissue “Scandal”

No, Planned Parenthood is *not* selling baby parts

What happened?

- Undercover videos released by radical anti-choice group (“Center for Medical Progress” – CMP), purporting to show Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PP) violating law by:
 - Selling fetal tissue for profit
 - Changing abortion procedures to facilitate tissue retrieval
 - Not getting proper consent from women
 - Doing a particular illegal abortion procedure, and killing live-born infants
- **But videos show nothing of the sort. No evidence of wrongdoing.**
- Ideological campaign based on total lies. More like a hoax or conspiracy theory.



The Videos

- Short, heavily spliced and edited videos released, followed by “full” videos hours or days later (which far fewer watch).
- Officials from PP, National Abortion Federation (NAF) and others recorded without knowledge or consent. Conned into believing they were talking to experts from legitimate fetal tissue companies.
- Context removed from conversations, manipulated to make it appear they were talking about selling fetal tissue, when it was always about nominal costs for shipping, storage etc.
- CMP actors constantly try to entrap them – ask lots of questions about money, offer to pay exorbitant prices, ask them to change abortion methods, ply them with alcohol.
- At conferences and meetings where actors were undercover, abortion providers reported CMP did lots “gross sales-pitching”, engaged in a “very hard and crass sell”, “anything for a buck.”

The evidence against PP: None

- No evidence in videos of any wrongdoing:
 - Planned Parenthood does not sell fetal tissue for profit.
 - PP does not alter the timing or method of abortion for the purposes of fetal tissue collection (another false accusation).
 - Abortion providers do not break law by “partially delivering” live fetuses. (“partial birth” abortion law)
- Labs, companies, and scientists who want fetal tissue often pay administrative and shipping costs – allowed by law, standard practice across medical field.
- \$30 to \$100 per specimen is not profitable!
- A biotech company who has worked with PP, said that PP goes above and beyond what the law requires for fetal tissue research, and were probably losing money on the program.
- Only six PP clinics nationwide (of over 700 clinics nationwide) participated in fetal tissue donation – now down to two clinics.
- Humanitarian service for women who book abortions and also want to donate tissue; no financial benefit to PP. (And only for 2nd tri’s or later.)
- To make it clear profit was never a motive, PP announced Oct.13 they will start absorbing costs related to fetal tissue donation, and forgo expense reimbursement.

Context: What does PP do?

- America's primary provider of reproductive health care
- Over 700 clinics across the U.S., and 68 affiliates
- Serves 2.8 million people a year, mostly poor women
- Offers free or subsidized services
- 80% of clients seek help preventing pregnancy
- Only 3% of its services are abortion (women must pay)
- Receives no gov't funding for abortion – only for other basic healthcare (contraception, STI testing, PAP smears, cancer screenings, breast exams, well-woman exams, etc.)
- Received \$528 million in government funding in previous last fiscal year — about 40% of its overall budget

Long history of similar harassment

- **Goal:** Defund and destroy Planned Parenthood.
- **Tactic:** Release heavily edited videos on YouTube in order to stoke anti-choice outrage, create media circus, and trigger witchhunt by Republicans.
- **Pattern:** “Anti-choice group hires actors who, with camera in hand, pose as something they are not... The group surreptitiously tapes a conversation, the entirety of which is not clear, edits it into a shorter version (presumably on the assumption that ... no one will take the time to watch the actual unedited version...) and creates a sensationalized “gotcha” video combined with suggestions of implied wrongdoing under the law. They create an equally sensational press release. They release these like chum to the shark-infested waters of social media right-wingers, and the broader media laps it up.”

— Jodi Jacobson, Editor in Chief, RH Reality Check, July 15

Who is “Center for Medical Progress?”

- Fraudulent front group with direct links to criminals and anti-choice terrorists:
 - Headed by anti-choice activist David Daleiden, who was a reporter and director of research for Live Action for 5 years, an anti-choice group that repeatedly targeted PP with similar undercover, heavily-edited videos, dating back to 2006.
 - Live Action tried to entrap PP clinics and abortion providers into violating parental consent laws, not reporting statutory rape, doing sex selection abortion, and not resuscitating babies born alive after abortion. (all failed, no wrongdoing, but still anti-choice “evidence”)
 - Daleiden is associate of right-wing activists James O’Keefe and Charles C. Johnson. O’Keefe produced similar undercover videos of public figures with his group Project Veritas. He was convicted in 2010 on charges stemming from attempt to make undercover recordings at the office of a Democratic Senator. Johnson later released more CMP videos in violation of restraining order by NAF.
 - Troy Newman is on Board of CMP, and acts as consultant. Head of Operation Rescue, defender and employer of anti-choice terrorists, facilitated murder of Dr. Tiller.

Unethical acts or alleged criminal acts

- **By Center for Medical Progress:**
 - Continuous blatant lying from July to now
 - Putting the lives of providers, clinics, PP officials at risk (death threats, clinic arsons)
 - Misrepresenting itself to IRS as a biotech company in its non-profit registration
 - Making false or misleading solicitations for charitable donations; failing to file tax forms
 - Misrepresenting itself to abortion providers, NAF, PP, and other officials involved in fetal tissue donation/research
 - Violating signed confidentiality agreements (contractual)
 - Recording private conversations without consent (illegal in California and 10 other states)
 - Possible forgery, credit card fraud, identity theft, or perjury, by providing fake government ID cards to its actors
 - Possible violation of California's anti-paparazzi statute (trespass to capture personal info – in this case, confidential patient info)

Unethical acts by others

- **By Republican lawmakers:**
 - Grandstanding
 - Holding kangaroo-style hearings to interrogate people
 - Launching groundless investigations with no evidence
 - Using opportunity to pass new abortion restrictions
 - Wasting taxpayer money
 - Republican Presidential candidates fundraised off the issue
- **By anti-choice groups:**
 - Profiting off fetal tissue donation by using issue to fundraise
 - Repeating CMP lies without any scrutiny or correction, ever

Lawsuits, injunctions, investigations against CMP

- Four House Democrats asked U.S. Attorney General and California Attorney General to investigate CMP for possible violation of laws in their “elaborate, multi-year scheme to impersonate corporate officials from a fake biologics company”
- California attorney general investigating whether CMP violated California law “by making false or misleading solicitations for charitable donations.”
- NAF got injunction to stop CMP release of any NAF conference footage, and filed lawsuit against CMP alleging civil conspiracy, racketeering, fraud, breach of contract, and other allegations.
- StemExpress also obtained temporary restraining order and filed lawsuit.
- Some PP officials and abortion providers contemplating lawsuits

Investigations of PP: Witchhunts

- Four federal hearings held so far – “show trials”, McCarthy-like
- Investigations or reviews announced/conducted by Republican state governors without any prior scrutiny of claims or of CMP.
- At least 10 state investigations so far, no wrongdoing found (a few still pending)
- At least two federal bills to defund PP – blocked so far. Another bill would let states defund PP without evidence of wrongdoing.
- 10 states defunded PP prior to videos; more have since defunded or attempted to
- Anti-choice activists and Republicans make false claims that “13,000” other clinics can fill the gap to help women.
- There’s been many *past* investigations of Planned Parenthood—not a single one has *ever resulted* in findings of wrongdoing.

Fetal Tissue Research at Stake

- Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Texas, and other states moving forward with laws to ban fetal tissue research.
- Many other states being lobbied to do so.
- But people have a right to donate their tissue, organs, and body parts for scientific research and to benefit others.
- Donating fetal tissue is pro-life:
 - Fetal tissue has helped lead to development of vaccines for polio, rubella hepatitis A, chickenpox, and rabies.
 - Fetal tissue is used to help find treatment and cures for diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and HIV.

The “ick” factor

- Discussions took place on basis of trust between medical professionals involved in legal fetal tissue procurement and donation.
- Medical professionals routinely have frank clinical discussions amongst themselves that might sound cavalier or insensitive to the public.
- Hearing or seeing details about medical procedures is foreign to the vast majority of us, and makes us squeamish.
- Showing fetal remains in a lab dish, or a fetus being dissected, is done for shock value to horrify the public.
- Surgery of any kind is bloody, and looks icky. Same goes for tissue and organ retrieval for donation.

The real casualties: Truth & evidence, Women's health & rights

- Constant repetition that PP is “selling baby parts” , engaging in “illegal activities” etc.
- Despite no evidence of wrongdoing found so far!
- Evidence irrelevant to them: It's an opportunity to attack PP, abortion rights and access, contraception, women's healthcare.
- The “revulsion” is mostly over abortion itself and any use of aborted fetuses, period – “sale of baby parts” is just the excuse.
- Other repercussions:
 - PP and other “linked” abortion rights groups attacked around the world (eg, in Canada, El Salvador)
 - Ripple effect – incentive to “crackdown” generally on PP, abortion, and providers/clinics – more restrictions, more criminalization.
 - More anti-choice protests, violence against clinics, threats against providers

Why?

- People like to believe the unbelievable – the more macabre the better
- “Selling baby parts” narrative fits right into:
 - Long-standing anti-choice hatred of Planned Parenthood – transcends reason and evidence
 - Anti-choice strategy to focus on fetuses and exploit public discomfort with how abortions are done
 - Belief in feminist / left-wing conspiracies to create “culture of death,” maximize abortions, coerce and victimize women, cover up the truth
 - Long-held suspicions of financial motivations of abortion providers
 - Similar “moral panics” like Satanic sexual abuse scandal of 1980’s
 - Ancient myths about sexual orgies, witchcraft, child sacrifice, the Jewish blood libel

Conclusion

- Part of a highly orchestrated, long-standing campaign to:
 - Discredit, defund, destroy Planned Parenthood
 - Undermine legal and safe abortion
 - Deprive women of contraception and other repro. healthcare
 - Target and harass individual abortion providers and others connected with abortion care
- All people deserve access to the comprehensive reproductive health care that is right for them and their families
- Legal abortion care is a necessary social good
- People who choose abortion can be trusted to make the right decisions about their own reproductive futures

Thank you!

Joyce Arthur, Executive Director
Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada
604-351-0867

joyce@arcc-cdac.ca
www.arcc-cdac.ca

