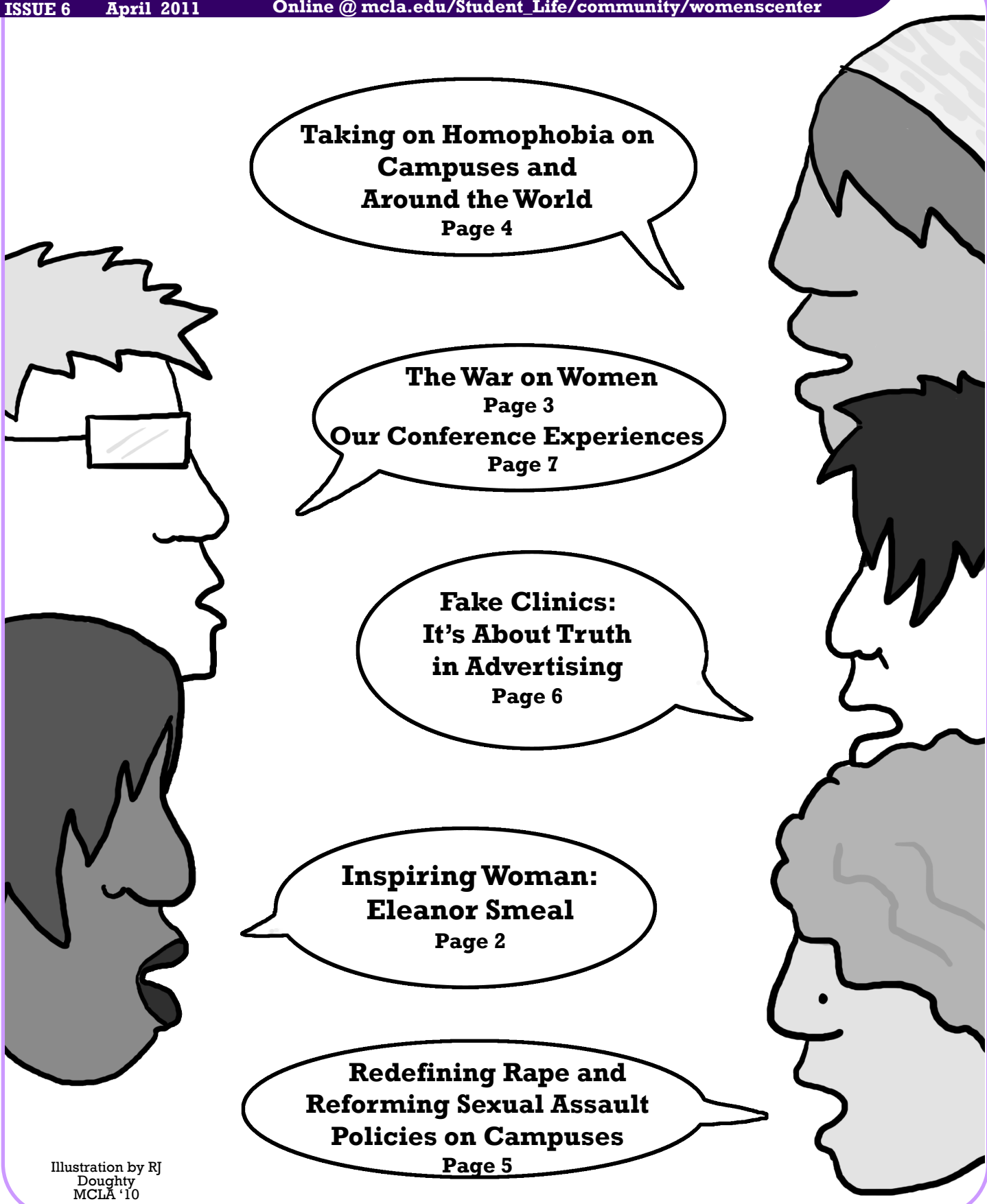


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NEWSLETTER**

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## **Inspiring Woman: Eleanor Smeal** **Expanding the Boundaries of Feminism for Three Decades** by Hallie Jackson

The recently proposed cuts to Planned Parenthood have left many feminist activists extremely upset and extremely vocal. Some of the most vocal voices have come out of the Feminist Majority Foundation, particularly from the president of the organization, Eleanor Smeal. Smeal has been working as a feminist activist for three decades. She joined the National Organization for Women in 1970, serving as president of the organization from 1977 to 1982. After a three year break, she again acted as president from 1985 to 1987. While working with NOW, Smeal organized the first national abortion rights march, drawing 100,000 activists to march for the cause and taking abortion rights to the forefront of American politics.

In 1986, when the media reported that 56 percent of women in America said they called themselves feminists, Smeal joined the Feminist Majority Foundation and remained politically active in a variety of women's issues, including the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, both of which demand that women feel safe in their reproductive cycles and the ability to take control of their own reproductive health.

Even if someone has never heard of NOW or the Feminist Majority Foundation, they have probably heard the term "gender gap" in regards to politics. Smeal was the person who identified the gender gap in terms of how women and men vote differently in elections in her book [How and Why Women Will Elect the Next President](#), published in 1984. Her theory is now considered to carry weight among most political analysts. Smeal also helped to identify a wage gap between the genders that persists today and she is one of the leading activists working for pay equity. She also pushes to make Social Security pay equal across the gender gap and even proposes that the government further promote gender equality by developing a feminist budget.

In addition to all of the work Smeal has done for women in the past, she continues to promote women's rights today through strategizing and grassroots campaigns. Smeal remains an influential force in America by changing with the times. Using the internet and encouraging young feminists to find their voices, Smeal continues to push beyond both the gender gap and the age gap. Once she tackled several gender issues in the United States, Smeal decided it was time to go global. Recognizing that the world progresses further toward globalization every day, Smeal began to work for women's rights in Afghanistan with the Campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid.

What's left to do for a feminist who has been so influential in gender equality, both domestically and internationally? Become a media powerhouse, of course.

In 2001, the Feminist Majority Foundation became the publisher of the largest feminist publication in the world, *Ms. Magazine*. Smeal is tremendously dedicated to achieving equal rights for women and uses *Ms.* as a discussion board for the many issues that encompass the fight for gender equality around the world.



Photo Courtesy of David Patrick  
 Columbia's New York Social Diary.

Smeal's efforts have not gone unnoticed. She has appeared many times before congress and has made appearances on *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, and *The Larry King Show*. In 1983, the World Almanac proclaimed Smeal to be the fourth most influential woman in the United States. She holds a master's degree in political science from the University of Florida and an honorary law degree from Duke University.

Why is Eleanor Smeal an inspiring woman? She has been a powerhouse in the women's rights movement and continues to campaign for gender equality all over the world. If you have ever been pregnant and not had to worry about losing your job, thank Eleanor Smeal. If you have ever walked into a reproductive health clinic and not feared for your safety, thank Eleanor Smeal. In the future, if you choose Planned Parenthood for your reproductive health, you can thank Eleanor Smeal and hundreds of other feminist activists around the country and the world who have devoted their lives to women's rights and to human rights.

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## **The War on Women** by Brianna Vear

In the United States, we hear about the “War in Iraq”, the “War in Afghanistan” and the “War on Terrorism” but what about the “War on Women?” The government, on both the federal and state level, has been attacking the rights of women for years now. Within the last few months they have picked up the pace launching a series of attacks on women, especially in regards to their reproductive rights.

Currently one of American women’s greatest enemies is Representative Mike Pence from the 6<sup>th</sup> district of Indiana. Rep. Pence has been leading the charge in restricting women’s reproductive rights for the last three congressional sessions. During these terms, he has introduced bills that would take all federal funding from health care providers that perform abortions with private funds. Luckily, he has not yet succeeded. Not so luckily, his newest proposal calls for a cut to eliminate Title X family planning funding altogether [2].

The cuts to Title X have been all the rage in the media, but the discussion has been slightly misleading. Many people know about the cuts to Planned Parenthood that fall under Title X, but they do not realize that other clinics are affected as well. There are 4,527 clinics that benefit from the federal funding, including Tapestry Health right here in North Adams [1].

The reasons that our Republican-run House of Representatives and Rep. Pence are choosing to cut the money to family planning are two-fold. The first is that they are anti-choice and do not want to aid any organization that provides abortion services, but there are serious flaws in this argument. The first flaw is that under the Hyde Amendment, passed by Congress in 1976, it is already illegal for any federal funds to go to abortion services. Second, not all of the clinics that are aided by Title X (like Tapestry Health) even provide abortion services. Even for Planned Parenthood, abortion related services constitute only 3 % of their overall services [1].

The House’s second reason might sound OK at first, but then worsens when looked at more closely. As we are all aware, the United States’ debt is at a record high, however many moderate and progressive economists do not believe that massive funding cuts to publicly funded services are necessary. This, however, is a complicated argument best saved for another place. For argument’s sake, let us assume here that some budget cuts are necessary to reduce the debt. The problem is that they can only come from the “discretionary” spending segment of the budget and are being aimed primarily at programs designed to benefit women and children.

The programs under attack include family planning, WIC, Head Start and aid to international organizations

like UNFPA and USAID. Discretionary spending only makes up 12% of the budget in the first place, and cuts there can do little to reduce the debt. There is also the fact that for every one dollar that goes into family planning, four dollars in Medicaid expenditures on prenatal and maternal care are saved. Defense, Medicaid, and Social Security make up the largest chunk of the budget. In order to make real change in the budget and in our debt we would need to cut funds from one of these areas. But in true US fashion, we are always concerned with the next election so no one is talking about these topics in fear of losing votes [1].

Why are the cuts to family planning so bad? Taking a look at just Planned Parenthood, there are 827 clinics in 49 states (North Dakota does not have even one.) They use the money from Title X to give affordable care to 2,605,529 recipients. Most of the care (90%) is preventive and includes affordable contraception for almost 2.5 million patients, 1 million cervical cancer screenings, 830,000 breast exams, and 4 million tests and treatments for STIs. There were 2.2 million

Pap smears, 2.3 million breast exams, and 6 million tests for STIs total at the clinics not associated with Planned Parenthood that received Title X funding last year. Last year alone roughly 40,000 American women died of breast cancer and 4,000 died of cervical cancer. Without the millions of pap smears and breast exams given to women through Title X funded clinics, imagine what that number would be [2].

Another problem, though arguably less serious, is that by defunding the 4,527 clinics there is a likelihood that many of them will have to close, which in turn, would cause thousands to lose their jobs. It seems counterintuitive that a congress that vowed during elections to create millions of jobs, is now taking them away.

As mentioned earlier, family planning is not the only area that is under attack. Funding to Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Head Start have also had huge cuts. The Republican budget proposal would cut \$758 million from WIC and \$2 billion from Head Start. Like Family Planning, WIC and Head Start primarily serve young impoverished mothers and their children, who are unable to afford these things on their own [1].

What is most troubling about the cuts to Head Start and WIC is that while they are taking away affordable forms of contraception by giving no money to Title X and family planning, the cuts are also taking away a nutritional aid that would be needed by those mothers to help support any child born due to the lack of affordable contraception. Then to top it off, they are cutting the early childhood program Head Start, which would otherwise help



Image courtesy of PunditKitchen

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Image Courtesy of Menstuff.org

## Taking on Homophobia on Campuses and Around the World by Alex Nichipor

Homophobia, domestically and internationally, is a pressing feminist issue. Homophobia is closely linked to gender discrimination: gay men are disparaged and mocked for being “woman-like,” lesbians are erased or targeted for harassment because of their gender, and trans, bisexual, and gender-queer people are attacked for not conforming to the binaries of gay/straight, male/female. Any system that disenfranchises people based on immutable characteristics is unacceptable to feminists, and homophobia is a particularly onerous monster.

I was privileged to be able to attend a workshop at the National Young Feminist Leadership conference called “Taking on Homophobia on Campus and Abroad.” The first portion of the workshop was moderated by Sarah Reece, project director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, an organization that campaigns for the civil rights of GLBTQ people.

Reece highlighted non-discrimination legislation as her major focus. Non-discrimination bills prohibit discrimination against GLBTQ people in the areas of employment, education, housing, and credit. Sounds pretty basic, right? Unfortunately, only 8 states ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and only 13 states ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (2).

Non-discrimination bills have faced serious hurdles, beginning in 1977 with the “Save Our Children” campaign. A conservative religious coalition spearheaded by singer Anita Bryant, “Save Our Children” sought to overturn an anti-discrimination bill in Miami, Florida; the movement stated that gays were child-molesters and a threat to morality, and that the non-discrimination bill would allow them to “convert children to homosexuality” (5). “Save Our Children” is remembered as the first instance of organized opposition to non-discrimination policies. Following “Save Our Children,” gay activists realized the importance of starting early and working with large groups to stop repeal of non-discrimination legislation.

Reece pointed out that transgender people often bear the brunt of anti-nondiscrimination campaigns. In one instance she cited, the opposition stated, “Do you want men in dresses raping your wives and daughters in women’s bathrooms?” This is fear-mongering at its worst, and it damages lives.

Next, Anushay Hossain, the Global Programs Coordinator for the Feminist Majority Foundation, discussed homophobia in the international community. Much of the discussion focused on Uganda, due to the

“Kill the Gays” bill that is currently before parliament there. The bill would make being GLBTQ punishable by life in prison, and would mandate the death penalty for people found guilty of “aggravated homosexuality” (which includes being a sexually active GLBTQ person who is HIV-positive—quite common in Sub-Saharan Africa), having sex with a minor (even if the “perpetrator” is a minor himself/herself), or is convicted of “multiple counts of homosexuality” (4). Queer sex is already illegal in Uganda, and punishable by up to 14 years in prison. The bill also punishes “helping, counseling, or encouraging a person to engage in a homosexual act” with up to 7 years in prison. This means that the friends, families, or employers of gay people, along with therapists, activists, and those working at non-profits that serve GLBTQ people, could be penalized for supporting their loved ones or doing their jobs.

Homophobia is a serious issue in Uganda: in one survey cited by Hossain, 97% of the population utterly rejected the idea that homosexuality was acceptable. This translates into serious violence in the lives of GLBTQ people. Lesbians are subject to “corrective rape.” Gang-raping and beating a lesbian with the intent to “turn her straight” is widespread throughout Africa. In October of 2011, a Ugandan newspaper called *The Rolling Stone* published the photographs and addresses of Uganda’s “Top 100 Homosexuals” with text reading “HANG THEM.” Gay activist David Kato was found bludgeoned to death in his home shortly thereafter. Many of the other people featured on the list have quit their jobs and are now in hiding (4).

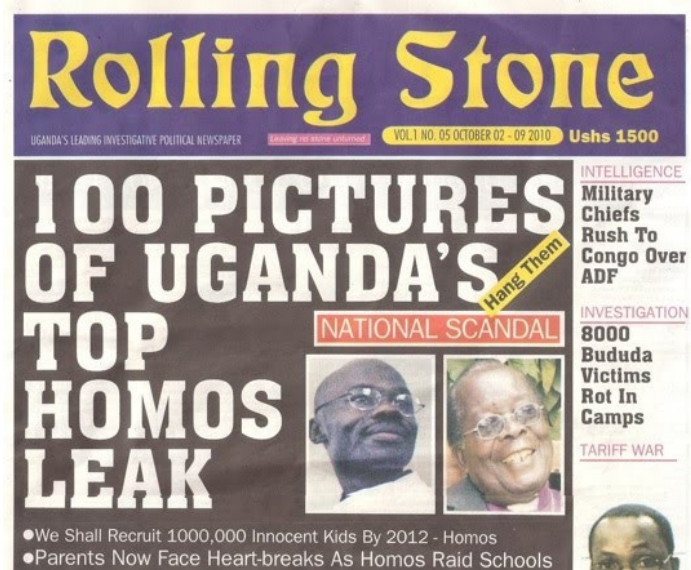


Image Courtesy of Rolling Stone Tabloid, World Aids Campaign.

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## **Redefining Rape and Reforming Sexual Assault Policies on Campuses** by Skyla Seamans

The legal definition of rape has not changed since 1930. The crime of rape is generally referred to as non-consensual sexual intercourse between a man and a woman that is committed through physical force, threat, or injury (1). Rape has always been legally defined to require sexual intercourse, meaning the penetration of a penis into the vagina, but leaves out the fact that rape can involve objects and other body parts. The offense of rape is gender specific in this definition because it is saying only women are raped, although this is not always the case. At the Feminist Majority Leadership Conference I attended with three other MCLA students, one workshop in particular stressed the importance of not only redefining rape to make it less limiting, but also of changing the way officials respond to the crime of rape.

The first step is to confront rape on college campuses, where one in four women today have been victims of rape and nearly 90 percent of them knew their rapists, according to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (2). Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER) is an organization that battles sexual violence by promoting student-led movements to reform sexual assault policies. SAFER is an all-volunteer group which focuses on helping students reform the rape policies on their campuses because policy reform creates a legacy of change, according to the Campus Accountability Project Coordinator of SAFER, Erin Burrows. SAFER encourages students to ask the question: What would my community look like if everyone felt safe?

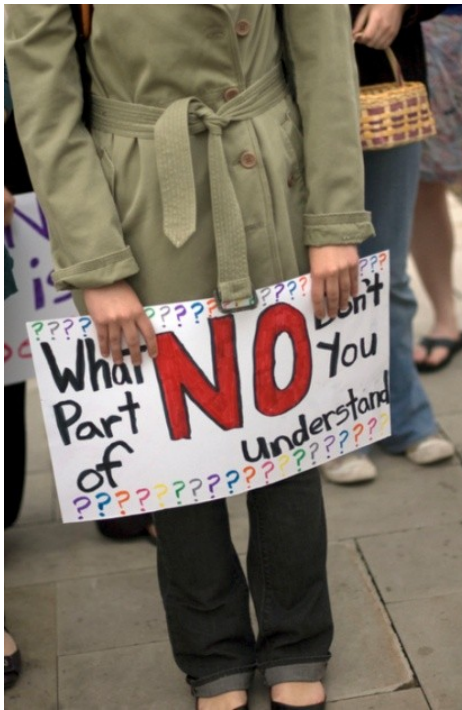
MCLA's Students Taking Action for Gender Equality (STAGE) club is currently reviewing the college's sexual assault policy and locating where reform is needed. A sexual assault policy should define what rape, sexual assault, and consent mean. It should also list prevention programming, crisis services, reporting, disciplinary procedures, and long term survivor support. Rape is the most common violent crime on campuses, according to RAINN, and SAFER looks to help students challenge and change this through policy reform.

When a woman is raped and chooses to report it, the process she goes through is long and painful. She is sent to a hospital emergency room where she may wait hours for a medical examination to collect evidence needed to convict a suspect. She often has little privacy

while she waits and is asked to tell her story several times. When she is moved to a private interview room, separate from the hospital emergency room, a counselor asks in detail what happened during the rape. The woman may be asked what she was wearing before the rape, if alcohol and drugs were involved, and about her sexual past. These topics may seem irrelevant, but this is what the courtroom and the media may focus on. The victim would then be led into the examination room and asked to undress while standing on a large sheet so that, if anything falls from her clothing or body, it can be carefully collected as potential evidence. Then the victim would be examined by a gynecologist and her body would be scanned with an ultraviolet light to find undetectable semen or saliva that might contain the assailant's DNA. Finally, the police officer on duty will drive her home and all evidence will be gathered into one sexual offense collection kit (3).

The National Victim Center estimates that only 16 percent of rapes in the United States are reported each year. Nearly 90,000 people reported being raped in 2009, but this represents only a small fraction of rape victims and survivors. A program called Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE), established originally in Oklahoma, seeks to treat the emotional, physical, and legal needs of rape victims with greater care. SANE now has chapters in many other states as well. In the program, female nurses are trained to handle the physical examination of the victim and to obtain physical evidence using a sexual offense collection kit, also known as a rape kit. Unfortunately, those rape kits aren't always tested (4).

The National Institute of Justice estimates that at least 400,000 rape kits are sitting untested in police stations and crime labs across the country. In Los Angeles alone, more than 7,000 sit in refrigerated storage, waiting to be tested. Los Angeles officials blame this on a lack of resources, but no one has insisted on budget increases to address the rape kit buildup. Rape victims never know whether their rape kits were opened or tested. They may assume the silence from the police meant that the crime lab did not find any DNA or none that helped identify the assailant. Although not every rape kit leads to a database match, when New York City processed all of its backlogged rape kits in 2003, it led to about 2,000 hits (5). Across the country, the arrest rate in rape cases was only 25% in 2009, and aggravated assault reached 51% and murder was 79%. On



Take Back the Night, Image Courtesy of the National Organization for Women

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## Fake Clinics: It's About Truth in Advertising

by Emily Follin

It happens. One night of unprotected sex, and now you think you're pregnant. You don't know what to do and you are not in a position in your life where you want anything to do with a pregnancy. Where do you go? You see an ad for a crisis pregnancy center that says "Pregnant? Need Help? You Have Options! Call 1-800-XXX-XXXX". You call the number and make an appointment to go in for testing and counseling expecting to find a legitimate medical clinic where you can discuss the full range of options available including, but not limited to, abortion. However, this is not the case, and far too many women fall for these fake clinics.

Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) are facilities that pose as women's health care centers that are focused on family planning. They locate themselves near college campuses and near other legitimate medical centers such as hospitals or real family planning centers such as Planned Parenthood. They advertise free pregnancy testing and options counseling, and with this ruse, they reel in unsuspecting low-income women who may be pregnant.

Often, CPCs are located just across the street from comprehensive clinics that do offer abortions, or at least abortion referrals. Studies indicate that the proximity to a CPC raises the risk of violence towards a comprehensive clinic. It's been shown that 33% of comprehensive clinics that are located near CPCs are the targets of severe violence in comparison to only 11% of those not located near CPCs (3). Violence can include anything from clinic blockades to invasions, bombings, arson, bombing and arson threats, death threats, chemical attacks, stalking, physical violence, and gunfire (2).

Women have been followed down the street by CPC workers while on their way to a legitimate comprehensive clinic. At the National Young Feminist Leadership Conference that I attended over spring break, one woman shared a story of a woman she knew who had mistakenly gone into a CPC while looking for an abortion clinic. After filing paperwork that asked for non-medical background information, she realized she was in the wrong place and left to find a real abortion clinic and had her abortion. On every anniversary since her abortion, the CPC to which she went first sends her a postcard with a red splotch, supposedly symbolizing her "murder" of her "baby". Not every CPC goes this far, but reports of harassment and stalking are a common complaint that women have about CPCs.

When you find yourself pregnant and you don't know what you're going to do, the last thing you want is to have someone else's beliefs shoved down your throat. Despite their claims at being unbiased

medical institutions that exist to make things easier for women going through an unplanned, and probably unwanted, pregnancy, CPCs almost always filter all of their information through a very Christian lens. Women have been given Bibles and plastic "fetuses" upon leaving a CPC, and the counseling services CPCs provide is based heavily on a Christian viewpoint of God, sex, and abortion (5). Women are counseled to think of their unborn "child's" as well as their own salvation when thinking about an abortion and to pray to Jesus and ask for his guidance without regard for the woman's own personal beliefs.

They push Christian morals with regards to sex, insisting that these women practice abstinence rather than provide them with the information they need to prevent a future pregnancy. They do not offer information about contraception which seems illogical considering that their clients are typically young, low-income, women who have already demonstrated a lack of knowledge about contraception and who are clearly not abstaining from sex. However, they stand by the old tried and failed policy of teaching abstinence-until-marriage (1). These women are the proof that this sexual education policy fails, yet CPCs tell them that God wants them to wait. No wonder women who have one unplanned pregnancy are likely to have another.

One might be able to accept the Christian slant of CPCs if they were privately funded by the Church or another organization. However, CPCs are usually funded primarily by the government. In the past, they have received Title V funding that goes to support abstinence-only sexual education programs. They also receive about half of the funds that are supposed to go to

Image Courtesy of Catholicnewsagency.com.



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## **Our Experiences at the National Young Feminist Leadership Conference**

### **Emily Follin:**

The National Young Feminist Leadership Conference was a truly eye-opening experience. We met young feminists from around the country and heard stories very different from our own. We met two women who had come all the way from Idaho to speak to one of their congressmen about the defunding of family planning services. My heart went out to them when they told us how their meeting with him didn't go very well. They told us that he didn't even listen to their side of the argument and shot them down at every point. Their story made me grateful to live in a state that is more progressive. Our meeting with John Olver's women's issues representative went very well and she was very open to what we had to say and gave us some ideas about how to help Congressman Olver fight to defend women's rights in Congress. The conference left all of us feeling extremely pumped and ready to do our part and participate in the democratic process.

### **Alex Nichipor:**

As a proud and outspoken feminist, I often find myself in the minority in any room; I discover I need to provide people with the most basic lessons on sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination in society.

At the National Young Feminist Leadership Conference, I found myself surrounded with people who shared my philosophy. I was able to discuss food politics and body image with another aspiring young professor, and I met an HIV counselor who inspired me to seek volunteer work at a family planning clinic. I went to workshops where I learned about homophobia, reproductive justice, and birth control/abortion. I was also able to connect more closely with my fellow MCLA feminists. It's hard not to bond when wandering the streets of D.C., desperately looking for a restaurant that serves vegetarian, tomato-free, AND non-spicy food.

Marching to Capitol Hill was the most thrilling part of the conference. We weren't sure what to expect, but we conducted ourselves well and spoke our truth clearly to politicians.

"Democracy" derives from the ancient Greek words, "Demos," meaning "people," and "Kratos," meaning "power." In a democracy, the ones in authority don't hold power over the people – the people themselves hold power! This experience taught me that I can have influence over what goes on in our country.

### **Skyla Seamans:**

I have always wanted to visit Washington DC. I have also always wanted to come together with hun-

dreds of other young men and women who share the same passion for feminism that I have. The Young Feminist Leadership Conference provided me with the perfect opportunity to fulfill both of these wishes.

Being at the conference, I felt more at home than I often do when I actually am at home. Having the chance to meet a variety of strong feminists from leadership roles around the country was an enlightening experience. Learning about what I can do to face gender issues, like the wage gap and reproductive health, gave me a feeling of hope and determination. After attending a number of sessions on feminist issues, listening to the voices of women in power, and talking to young feminists about what they are doing on their campuses and in their communities, I was ready to face Capitol Hill. With the three other strong women from MCLA, we let Senator Brown and Congressman John Olver's women's issues representatives know that this is what a feminist looks like. There are no words to describe my gratitude towards those who made this experience possible.

### **Brianna Vear:**

Call: "Show Me What a Feminist Looks Like." "This is what a feminist looks like", responded over 500 young women who were attending the Feminist Majority Leadership Conference. This conference was, and will remain, one of the best experiences of my life. The speakers were motivating, the workshops fascinating, and the lobbying empowering, but it is those 500 young women that left me with a feeling that will be hard to come across again. For all my life I will remember the energy, the empowerment, and the camaraderie. We were instant friends with all those around us, connecting on something that is so misunderstood. This friendship wasn't only at the actual conference but on the subway, at the hotel, and in the streets as we got lost in D.C., twice. Everyone was clad in "This is What a Feminist Looks Like" gear. Those pink letters became a beacon calling us in where we found a judgment free zone, encouragement about what we are planning, and a helpful hand to find the mixer. This was a great change from those in the airport who actually harassed us for wearing our pin with pride, but of course this did not stop us.

It is often generalized that young people are apathetic, with little desire to get out and do something about the injustices in the world. The wonderful young women who attended the Feminist Majority Leadership Conference easily proved everyone who believes that wrong. They lobbied Congress, created clubs and women's centers, they changed their schools' sexual assault policies, and they raised money to help end domestic violence. They are speaking out about gender based injustices and are making real change in their worlds. With them, I felt a sense of acceptance that often takes years to achieve, but here it was instant. I thank all those who helped make it possible for me to attend this conference.

## The War on Women, continued

give those lower income kids a leg up in the world.

The House did not stop their assault on the reproduction rights of women here in the U.S. No, they continued on to attack the meager amount of international funding we allocate annually (only 1% of the total federal budget goes to international aid). UNFPA, the United Nation's Population Fund, was hit the hardest. Rarely does Congress call out an organization by name, but for UNFPA they made an exception, claiming that UNFPA should receive no funding. This may be due to UNFPA's alleged dealings with, and encouragement of, China's one-child policy and alleged forced abortions (which have been disproven), or that UNFPA's funding goes mostly to help women gain reproductive freedom in impoverished nations. Or maybe it is simply because the House hates women. Around the world, 1,000 women die each day in childbirth, and for every woman who dies, there are 20 more who suffer from severe complications. Thus, 1,000 children are left motherless [4].

For fiscal year 2010, UNFPA received only \$50 million and USAID and Family Planning and Reproductive Aid received a combined total of \$648.5 million. The House has proposed cutting all funding to UNFPA and cutting the others by 39% (\$440 million). Currently 529,000 women and girls die, and 10 million more endure serious pregnancy related injury and disease every year. Another 70,000 women and girls die from botched abortions. The leading cause of death for girls 15-19 in developing countries is complications from pregnancy and child birth. Approximately 215 million women would like to delay or prevent pregnancy, but are unable to do so due to lack of resources. If they *were* able to access such resources, what would be the result? We would prevent 53 million unplanned pregnancies, 25 million induced abortions, 600,000 children losing their mothers, and 150,000 maternal deaths due to pregnancy-related complications [5].

Organizations like UNFPA and USAID are calling for an increase in funding to roughly \$1 billion. Although it may seem like a lot, it would still only account for .02 % of the budget. It would save the lives of hundreds of thousands of women and infants and would result in 8 million fewer abortions annually [5]. So why isn't the "pro-life" Republican House all for it?

The federal budget isn't the only area where family planning is seeing cuts. Like many governors across the U.S., Deval Patrick of Massachusetts is calling for a cut to family planning. Patrick's state budget proposal would eliminate \$25 million in funding for the Department of Public Health. It would also cut 21 % of the budget for family planning, 2 % from HIV and AIDS services, and 21 % from WIC [1].

The attacks on women don't end here. The bill, HR 358 "Protect Life Act" or as it is fondly being called in the feminist world, the "Let the Women Die Act" is calling for the discretionary power of hospitals to refuse to give women a life saving abortion. This act would put

into law that doctors have the right to choose whether or not they wish to save a pregnant woman should an abortion be required to do so. The bill's real name "Protect Life Act" does no such thing. These abortions would not save the fetus, which would die along with the pregnant woman [1].

HR3, "No Tax Payer Funds For Abortion" (which is being called "Stupak on Steroids" by those who oppose the bill) calls for change in the Hyde Amendment. It uses the original language from the Hyde Amendment, but calls for a forcible rape clause. This means that you can only receive funding for an abortion if the rape was forced. Only 30% of rape cases use force and the act would not include cases of statutory rape, rape when the victim is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or anything of that nature. It would also ban the use of tax benefits for abortions. If a 13 year old girl was impregnated by a 26 year old man (statutory rape) she would be refused an abortion using Medicaid benefits and her parents would also not be able to pay for one using a tax exempt health care savings account. "This bill takes us back to a time when just saying 'no' wasn't enough to qualify as rape," says Steph Sterling, a lawyer and senior adviser to the National Women's Law Center [1].

The attacks on women continue in Wisconsin where the right to collective bargaining is under question. At first glance it would seem that this attack is not a gendered one. Of the seven public unions in Wisconsin three were exempt from the bill. However, the three unions exempt from the bill cover state troopers, police, and firefighters (traditionally male jobs), while the four under attack were nurses, teachers, childcare workers, and home healthcare workers (traditionally women's jobs). The Wisconsin government seems to be saying that women do not have the right to collectively bargain. Since Wisconsin's legislation passed, 744 bills targeting unions have been filed across the U.S.- one in almost every state [1].

Feminists and activists across the country are not taking these attacks lightly and neither should you. As Steph Herold, the creator of the blog IAmDrTiller.com, pointed out, "We are not the future, we are the now" [1]. Now is the time to take a stand. Call your senators and representatives. Let your voice be heard. Tell them this is NOT acceptable and that the women of the United States are NOT going to take it. Do it for your mothers, sisters, friends, daughters, but most importantly do it for YOU.

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## **Taking on Homophobia on Campuses and Around the World, continued**

Many Africans view homosexuality as an import of Western colonialism, which partly explains the intense anti-gay bias on the continent. However, it seems that *homophobia*, not queerness, was a result of colonialism. The above-mentioned laws punishing gay people with up to 14 years in prison date back to British rule, and seem to have been spurred by English intolerance for "abnormal" sexual practices. Male-male and female-female sex, along with variant gender expression, was common in Africa before colonial contact. Anthropologist E.E. Evans-Pritchard reported that among the Zande people, it was considered "as very sensible for a man to sleep with boys when women are not available or are taboo. [...] It was the duty of the husband to give his boy-wife a spear and a shield when he became a warrior" (1). The Maale culture recognized a third gender called *ashitame*, transwomen who had sex with men. In the tribes of the Tswana people, "lesbian practices are apparently fairly common among the older girls and young women, without being regarded in any way reprehensible" (1).

The final speaker at the workshop was Je-Shawna Wholley, the president of Afrakete (the GLBTQ student group) at Spelman College. She spoke of the difficulty of reconciling her multiple identities – queer, black, female – in the face of intersecting biases. Feminist and queer groups often view her as "other" because of her race, and she faces homophobia (sometimes quite intense) from members of black communities.

As a student leader, she discussed what students can do to combat homophobia on campus - and make no mistake, even at liberal arts colleges, homophobia still exists. She highlighted the importance of fully understanding homophobia, a basic step that we still have yet to make. Homophobia is not merely the demonization of GLBTQ people; it also lies in stereotyping queer people, and in treating heterosexuality as the default for everyone. She also discussed the positive impacts of having heterosexual people experiencing homosexuality. This could involve a straight person wearing rainbow jewelry, and dealing firsthand with homophobic comments. It could also include participation in an event such as the Day of Silence. At MCLA, BGLAD held a Day of Silence on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

There has been much celebration over the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," but we still have a very long way to go in combating homophobia. The progress of GLBTQ rights has been halting and uneven. One queer male feminist at the conference expressed his frustration that (post-DADT) the US government can expect queer people to kill and die for a country that doesn't guarantee them the right to physical safety at

home, nondiscrimination, healthcare, or marriage to the person whom they love.

No one should have to experience hatred and violence for being who they are. The task of dismantling homophobia is not an easy one, but it is a mission that we must undertake.

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Image Courtesy of Kato, University of Cambridge, Centre of Governance and Human Rights.

## **Redefining Rape and Sexual Assault Policies, continued**

a national level, a bill has been proposed in Congress to require the testing of all rape kits to help get offenders behind bars, but this is just the beginning.

Currently, media discussion around what constitutes as rape is taking place partly because of the bill H.R. 3, also known as "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act." The current definition of rape simply states sexual intercourse with a person without that person's consent. People often associate force with rape and most dictionary definitions include the word force. When someone hears the word rape, he or she often pictures a woman walking down a dark alley with a man sneaking up behind her. When she turns around, the man forces himself onto her while she unsuccessfully tries to fight him off. However, this is a very narrow definition of rape. Lack of consent can occur without physically fighting back. Sexual intercourse with anyone incapable of giving consent due to drugs, alcohol, mental ability, or minor status is also rape. Any pregnancy resulting from one of these situations would currently be covered through federal abortion funding provided for rape, incest, or to prevent the death of the mother. However, this new proposed amendment does not abide by this definition (6).

By adding the term "forcible," a victim would have to prove force was involved in sexual intercourse to deem it rape and to obtain federal assistance for an abortion. One major criticism of the bill is that rape does not have to be enacted by force. Rape victims should not have to prove they fought back because some men and women simply can't; it all depends on each specific instance and it may sometimes be dangerous to fight back. Redefining rape in this case leaves out 70% of actual rapes that would not be defined as forcible (7). Narrowing the definition of rape denies victims care; what needs to happen is a broadening of the definition to include all sorts of rape cases, from incest to attacks involving drugs and alcohol.

The bottom line is that we need to take rape seriously. Have you ever heard a friend say something like "That math exam totally raped me" or yell out "rape" jokingly when around a crowd of people? Jokes about rape are widespread and often uttered without a second thought. However, one does not know who will be offended by these comments or who around him or her has experienced sexual assault or rape. At the Feminist Majority Leadership Conference, during my workshop session, we were asked to raise our hands if we or someone we knew was raped or sexually assaulted. Almost every hand went into the air. Rape is a serious issue; it's not something to joke about. Some of the factors which contribute to women's vulnerability to rape include: a lack of information and understanding of rape, women's subordinate relationships to men, socially reinforced physical passivity, and isolation

from other women in their communities.

Prevention means more than just reducing the incidence of rape or providing security for some women. Prevention means eliminating rape so that all women and men will be free from the threat of sexual assault. Men and women can come together to redefine rape in terms that are more widespread and become knowledgeable about the offense thus making it a more public issue. Deconstructing our patriarchal society and redistributing power equally between both men and women will lead to more respect for each other and a common understanding that rape is unacceptable. Women must recognize the ability they have to assert their rights but men also need to encourage this and step aside in order for it to happen. Women's safety needs to become a community priority, but men need to stand behind them the entire way and recognize that the elimination of rape is something they have primary responsibility for. These strategies will increase our strength, independence, and freedom as women and human beings (8).

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Take Back the Night, Image Courtesy of the National Organization for Women



## **Fake Clinics: It's About Truth in Advertising, continued**

medically approved family planning centers under Title X (2). This reduces the money available to legitimate family planning centers such as Planned Parenthood or Tapestry Health. Our constitution prohibits the government from endorsing the beliefs of one religion over another, but by federally funding clinics that favor religious doctrine over scientifically proven medical facts we are doing just that. One clinic, the Elizabeth New Life Center, receives about three quarters of its funding from the government, and while they swear that none of the taxpayers' money is going towards religiously based services, it is enough to raise suspicions to the contrary (2).

When CPCs do provide medical or contraception information, it is often false or exaggerated. They exaggerate abortion risks and make it seem like it's a long and difficult procedure. Most women don't realize an abortion procedure only takes five to seven minutes, and that the entire time spent in the clinic totals only an hour and a half to two hours. A later term abortion may take as long as fifteen minutes, and recovery time takes longer, but even a second trimester abortion only takes about three hours. CPCs may not specifically give a longer time estimate, but they tend to portray abortion visits as long, emotionally and physically painful, and draining. This is not necessarily the case.

Frequently, CPCs will warn women that contraceptives are actually abortifacients, especially emergency contraception such as Plan B (1). They argue that because emergency contraception, and indeed any contraception, is designed in part to thicken the cervical wall and prevent the implantation of an already fertilized egg that it is the same thing as aborting a pregnancy. They claim that scientifically, a woman is pregnant at fertilization, and that medical intervention at this point is scientifically the same as abortion (1). However, this is not true. A woman is not considered pregnant until implantation. Contraceptives will not interfere with an already existing pregnancy, and therefore cannot be termed abortifacients. Plan B is not the same as the abortion pill and will not cause an abortion. For CPCs to discourage women from protecting themselves during future sexual encounters it is incredibly irresponsible and, because they use lies and scare tactics to achieve this goal, unethical.

CPCs do everything in their power to manipulate women to carry the pregnancy to full term. They advertise free pregnancy tests, so women who think that they might be pregnant go in for testing, and while they wait for their results, anti-abortion propaganda is pushed on them. These women don't even know for sure that they are pregnant yet, and already they are told all the negative, and often untrue, effects abortion will have on them mentally, physically, and spiritually (2).

If you look CPCs and their sponsors up online,

there are warnings about people who would force you into having an abortion and links for support groups for women who are being pressured into choosing abortion (1). They make it sound like the women who get abortions don't do it of their own free will and that someone has to force them to do it. They frequently refer to the obstetricians and gynecologists who perform abortions as abortionists rather than doctors in order to make them seem like they aren't medically licensed doctors who have the woman's health at heart (2).

After a possibly pregnant woman has been given propaganda and been misled to think that abortion is a far worse procedure than it actually is, the CPC may still give her a false pregnancy test result. Women have walked out of CPCs, relieved to hear that they were not pregnant, only to find out later that they actually were, often at a point too far into the pregnancy to legally and safely obtain an abortion (2). False negatives are very common from CPC pregnancy tests, and one must wonder whether they are deliberately lying to ensure that the woman does not receive an abortion or if they even test for pregnancy at all.

Regardless of your stance on abortion, medical facilities must be held to medical standards and should not be able to lie or mislead in their advertising. CPCs withhold important medical information from patients and use Christian teachings to counsel clients. They should not be able to receive taxpayer money and they should have to make it clear that they do not offer abortions or contraceptives or referrals for abortions or contraceptives. It's not about abortion. It's about truth in advertising.

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**Pictures from  
the Conference**

