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CAMPAIGN 2004: TIME TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

by Douglas R. Scott

Planned Parenthood Action Illinois sent the following message to its supporters in September 2004:

For nearly 90 years, Planned Parenthood has been helping women and families make informed, responsible *choices*. This fall, Americans who vote will be presented with a set of *choices* that could determine the future of reproductive rights in this country. So on November 2, we encourage you—our supporters—to *choose to vote*.

If you're not registered to vote, or if you've changed your name or address since you last voted...Fill out our online voter registration form, then print it, sign it, and mail it. Also, many Planned Parenthood health centers have voter registration forms available.

IMPORTANT: In order to vote in the November 2 election, your registration form must be postmarked by October 1, 2004. Be sure your family and friends are registered, too!

[H]elp others register to vote and invite them to sign up to Planned Parenthood Action Illinois. Along with reproductive *choices*, we feel the choice to participate in the American political process is among the most fundamental of individual rights. *It's your voice. It's Your Vote. Register today!*

Similar e-mails have been sent to pro-abortion activists throughout the rest of the country as part of the work of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

Never before in the history of the Pro-Abortion Movement have activists been more organized and determined to defeat a presidential candidate. President George W. Bush is hated by many people. Not just disliked, but *hated*. He has been compared to the likes of Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and even Saddam Hussein.

Leading the Way

"Thank you for making the March for Women's Lives New York such a huge success!" This message was sent out to Planned Parenthood activists who participated in the August 28, 2004, march in protest of the

Republican National Convention. "Together we sent a strong message that America is pro-choice."

The Planned Parenthood-funding *New York Times* estimated that 25,000 "abortion rights supporters...crossed the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan to protest the Bush administration's policies in advance of the Republican National Convention." But the pro-abortion *Los Angeles Times* made it clear that the real aim of the event was to protest what Planned Parenthood calls the "anti-woman, anti-choice" policies of the Bush Administration. The newspaper called the event "the largest abortion rights rally ever held in New York City."

March participants carried signs reading, "I ♥ Pro-Choice NY [New York];" "*Real Sex Ed Saves Lives*;" "It's Your Choice...Not Theirs;" "Reproductive Social Justice for All Women;" "Family Planning Saves Lives;" "Health · Access · Justice · Choice;" "77% of anti-abortion leaders are men. 100% of them will never get pregnant" (the first statistic is far from the truth but they did get the second part right); and the all-too-familiar "pro-health, pro-life, pro-family, *Pro-Choice*." A family with two young children carried a sign that included a photograph of their boys which read, "Boys for Choice."

At the end of the march, actress Kathleen Turner spoke to the crowd. "We are marching for freedom, and choice is a necessary pre-condition for freedom," she said. Sara Breman, a 22-year-old student from Austin, Texas, said, "I'm affected personally, in terms of birth control. I demand and cherish that right." JoAnn Smith, president of Family Planning Advocates of New York State, relied on a common mantra. "We will not go back to a time when women were denied access to birth control...when the narrow beliefs of some created a moral authority for all," she said.

Groups endorsing the event were: Alan Guttmacher Institute, Alliance for Women's Equality, *Altar* magazine, Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro New York, Breakthrough: Building Human Rights Culture, Cen-

ter for Reproductive Rights, Center for the Women of New York, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Choice USA, Communist Party USA-New York Chapter, Community Health Care Network, Concerned Citizens for Family Preservation, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, Feminists for Free Expression, Girls for Gender Equity, Gray Panthers-NYC Network, Guerrilla Girls on Tour, MADRE, National Advocates for Pregnant Women, National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, National Council for Research on Women, National Latina Health Network, National Lawyers Guild-NYC Chapter, National Women's Political Caucus-New York, Pathfinder International, Planned Parenthood of Mohawk Hudson, Refuse and Resist, Republicans for Choice, South Asians for Women's Lives, and Straight Women in Support of Homos.

The March for Women's Lives New York was the kick-off for an all-out campaign to make sure that President George W. Bush and the Republican controlled Congress are defeated in November. "Planned Parenthood wants to help ensure that everyone can participate in the electoral process so that their voices can be heard by lawmakers," reads Planned Parenthood Federation of America's (PPFA) website. "Your vote is your voice. To make your voice heard, you must be registered." A link to register to vote or to update voter registration was provided. PPFA also offered a useful warning:

Even if you think you are already registered, it is very important to be aware of voter registration laws in your state, city, and county. Some states allow same-day registration, while others have deadlines that are weeks or even months before Election Day. So don't delay. Contact the Federal Election Commission or your county elections commission today to find out more about registration laws to make sure your vote is counted.

Get Involved

Once you have registered to vote, you can also stay involved and help share this important message with others.

Counting on Young People

Writing for womensnews.org, correspondent Asjlynn Loder reported on the April 2004 March for Women's Lives, which took place in Washington, D.C. "Young women turned out in surprisingly strong numbers to demonstrate for a woman's right to chose," she wrote. March organizers declared that at least one-third of the protesters were under 25. But Mina Trudeau, director of programs for the Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program at Hampshire College in Amherst,

Massachusetts, claimed that at least two-thirds of the people were 30 or younger.

Loder said the high attendance by youth has "put to rest the fears of many older feminists, who had long worried that the younger generation was complacent in the face of restrictions on choice." Crystal Plati, executive director of Choice USA, a group that trains and supports young pro-abortion leaders, agreed. "I think that no one could say again that young women are apathetic to reproductive rights issues," she said.

"But will they vote?," Loder asked, wondering if the motivation of the younger crowd will "last long enough to elect a pro-choice president in November." She said that work is "now underway to spur those young people [who attended the march]...on to the ballot box." Never before have pro-abortion groups worked so hard to make sure young people vote—and vote pro-abortion.

It is commonly known that Americans between 18 and 24 are the least likely age group to cast ballots. In 2000, only 32.3 percent of the voting population between 18 and 24 went to the polls, while 66.8 percent of voters between 55 and 64 turned out.

Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, told Loder that the number of young voters might increase this year. "I think they will vote in somewhat greater numbers," he said, claiming that the policies of the Bush Administration are "a lightning rod and are not popular among young people."

"Reproductive rights are part of a larger structure of oppression," said Alea Woodlee, executive director of the Pro-Choice Public Education Project. She said that many young men and women are making connections between different causes, including the rights of immigrants and people of color, the war in Iraq, lending policies of the International Monetary Fund, and forced prostitution. Gans said he believes such connections might bring young voters at the polls. "Many young people, in particular those who are more likely to vote, which [sic] are college-attending young people, are not happy with Bush's foreign policy or domestic policy and are a little bit disillusioned by the misinformation and evasion of this administration."

Pro-abortion leaders are hoping young people will vote in great numbers even if it is not "abortion rights" that motivates them. If a voter cares only about the war, they theorize, it will have the same result as if the person cared only about protecting legal abortion, and that is just fine with Planned Parenthood and its

legions. But, of course, if Senator John Kerry, D-Mass., wins in November, pro-abortion groups will claim it was all due to his stand on abortion alone.

“We are training young leaders across the country in how to do voter registration, voter education and how to get out the vote,” Plati said. “We’re making sure that they have the skills they need to get their peers to the polls.” She said that Choice USA chapters are working to motivate and register young voters. In addition to voter registration efforts, The Feminist Majority Foundation has recruited 300 young women to take the “Get Out Her Vote” campaign to their respective college campuses.

Loder reported that “reaching out to the next generation” was a key theme of the March for Women’s Lives. Kate Michelman, who recently retired as executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice America, brought her granddaughter on stage. Kim Gandy, president of the National Organization of Women, was flanked by her daughter. Several other women attended with their progeny. “My grandchildren are so excited,” said Norma Johnson of Poughkeepsie, New York, who marched with her daughter-in-law, 9-year-old grandson and 8-year-old granddaughter. “She’s very much a feminist already,” Johnson said of the 8-year-old. Both children joined the adults in yelling pro-abortion chants. Interestingly, when parents bring the entire family to a pro-life event, pro-abortion people accuse them of brainwashing the children.

Celebrities as Activists

It is no secret that most of Hollywood’s rich and famous are radically pro-abortion. But this year more musicians than ever before have come out of the closet in an attempt to influence the November election. The overriding goal: defeat President Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress.

Singer Bruce Springsteen is leading the pack in support of the MoveOnPAC. The political action committee also includes Jacko Book, Young Buck, and David Browne. The group had planned to organize a “mega concert” to raise funds and have a bully pulpit to trash conservative lawmakers, but they later decided to hold several smaller concerts throughout the United States in what they would call the Vote for Change Tour.

MoveOnPAC’s campaign contributions provide financial support to congressional candidates who “embrace moderate to progressive principles of national government,” reads the group’s Statement of Purpose. “Our intention is to encourage and facilitate smaller donations to offset the influence of wealthy and cor-

porate donors. With the Congressional balance of power hinging on the outcome of a few key races, the candidates endorsed here are crucial to maintaining the balance of power in Washington.”

What will donors to MoveOnPAC get for their money? For giving to candidates through MoveOnPAC, donors are promised a big bang for the buck:

Integrate your efforts with other like-minded citizens, forging one powerful political force—just as the large corporations and well-funded special interest groups are doing.

Inform yourself about critical issues to be debated in upcoming elections around the country by reviewing MoveOnPAC’s research material on political candidates who can make a positive difference to the balance of power in Washington, D.C.

Influence a significant number of important elections with just one quick, simple, secure credit card transaction.

Inspire friends and neighbors to re-engage in a political process that for too long has appeared responsive only to the powerful and wealthy.

You read that correctly. Celebrities are speaking negatively about “the powerful and wealthy.” Why do filthy rich celebrities, who could eliminate the national debt, always want the “ignorant masses” to pay for everything? Some celebrities enjoy such wealth that they have more money than several corporations.

MoveOnPAC was formed so “like-minded, concerned citizens” could influence the outcome of congressional elections. The group claims that its intention is “to provide individuals, who normally have little political power, to aggregate their contributions with others to gain a greater voice in the political process.” In other words, this allows leftists another way to subvert the intent of campaign finance reform, the passage of which they supported.

It would be a mistake to think that MoveOnPAC is concerned only about congressional races. Dave Matthews of The Dave Matthews Band, who will perform at MoveOnPAC concerts, spoke of the group’s mission. “A vote for change is a vote for a stronger, safer, healthier America. A vote for Bush is a vote for a divided, unstable, paranoid America. It is our duty to this beautiful land to let our voices be heard. That’s the reason for the tour. That’s why I’m doing it.”

It was a surprise to no one when The Dixie Chicks issued a joint statement on the project. “As concerned mothers, women and most importantly concerned Americans, we are compelled to do what we can to inspire other voters to get involved in this year’s elec-

tion. We hope our participation in the Vote for Change Tour will be a catalyst for positive change.”

Mike Mills of the band R.E.M. said he is “very happy” to be part of the tour. “This unprecedented coming together of musicians underscores the depth of the desire for change in our country’s direction, and it feels right to use some of the freedoms granted to us in a democracy to try and effect that change.”

Singer Bonnie Raitt said, “There has never been a more important time to band together and bring about real change. I want to see Americans everywhere honor those who have fought and died for our right to vote by getting out to the polls on Election Day. Democracy only works if we work it.”

Rickie Lee Jones told the *New York Post* that the country created by the Bush Administration is “the closest we’ve come to Nazi Germany.” And Jones was not talking about geography.

Of course, the vocally pro-abortion Eddie Vedder spoke of his band’s involvement in the event:

This is the fourth presidential election which Pearl Jam has engaged in as a band, and we feel it’s the most important one of our life time [sic]. We believe in the power of the first amendment [sic], and have always exercised our right to free speech in every aspect of our lives and music. This year there is no more powerful way for all Americans to exercise that right than by voting. Given the extreme political climate of a country at war, we are proud to stand among the many artists involved in this tour and to encourage Americans not only to vote for a president this November 2nd, but to vote for the change they wish to see in the world.”

Expected to join Pearl Jam, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, R.E.M., the Dave Matthews Band, Bonnie Raitt, and The Dixie Chicks on the tour are: Jurassic 5, Death Cab for Cutie, James Taylor, Ben Harper, My Morning Jacket, Jackson Browne, John Fogerty, Keb’ Mo’, Bright Eyes, John Mellencamp, Kenny “Babyface” Edmonds, Crosby, Stills & Nash, Don Henley, P. Diddy, Willie Nelson, and John Prine.

MoveOnPAC announced a grassroots initiative in its campaign to elect Kerry, complete with advertisements that make up what is being called the “10 Weeks Campaign.” The ads include the work of directors and actors including: Matt Damon, Rob Reiner, Richard Linklater, Scarlett Johansson, Kevin Bacon, Al Franken, Rebecca Romijn, Martin Sheen, Margaret Cho, Doug Limon, Darren Aronofsky, Donal Logue, Edie Falco, Ed Asner, Moby, Benny Boom, John Sayles, Allison Anders, Illeana Douglas, and Ione

Skye, among others. Former talk-show host Phil Donahue is also involved with the project. The Roots, Perry Farrell, Daron Murphy, Natalie Merchant, and Janeane Garofalo plan to participate as well.

No one will be surprised by most of the website links on the MoveOn.org webpage: Americans for Democratic Action, American Civil Liberties Union, League of Conservation Voters, National Committee for an Effective Congress, and of course, PPFA.

There is one incident that has surprised a lot of people. Shock-rocker Alice Cooper, who was born Vincent Damon Furnier, publicly denounced the political action committee. He said the rock stars campaigning for Kerry are violating the fundamental rule of rock ‘n’ roll—politics and rock ‘n’ roll do not mix. “When I was a kid and my parents started talking about politics, I’d run to my room and put on the Rolling Stones as loud as I could. So when I see all these rock stars up there talking politics, it makes me sick.”

Cooper said he was disgusted to learn that many entertainers were going on tour with the express purpose of helping to defeat President Bush. “[W]hen I read the list of people who are supporting Kerry, if I wasn’t already a Bush supporter, I would have immediately switched. Linda Ronstadt? Don Henley? Geez, that’s a good reason right there to vote for Bush.”

“If you’re listening to a rock star in order to get your information on who to vote for, you’re a bigger moron than they are,” Cooper continued. “Why are we rock stars? Because we’re morons. We sleep all day, we play music at night and very rarely do we sit around reading the *Washington Journal*.” Cooper called the tour “treason against rock ‘n’ roll because rock is the antithesis of politics. Rock should never be in bed with politics,” he said.

As usual, leftists who apparently cannot understand the printed word or spoken English sought to deflect Cooper’s criticism by claiming he had said the MoveOnPAC crowd was committing treason against the United States. Cooper released a statement:

When I said that rock stars doing concerts for presidential candidates were guilty of treason, I clearly said treason against rock ‘n’ roll, meaning against the spirit of rock and roll, not against the president or the government or the USA. I said that people shouldn’t vote for a presidential candidate just because a rock star says so, and that’s true whether it’s Bruce Springsteen or Alice Cooper.

I stated that, “If you are listening to a rock star in order to get your voting information on who to vote for, you are a bigger moron than they are. Why are we rock stars? Because we’re morons.”

It's true what I said, that most of us dropped out of school to chase girls, drink beer, and play rock 'n' roll, and don't read the *Washington Journal* (which, by the way, doesn't even exist, so you see how much I know).

That doesn't mean we don't have opinions, and it doesn't mean we don't care about our country, or what's going on in the world. It just means I don't think our opinions should matter to anyone else.

We are lucky enough to have free speech in this country, and anyone—rock stars, movie stars, athletes—in the public eye should feel free to express their opinion. I love Springsteen, I mean who doesn't love “Born in the USA” or “Born To Run”?

But I do think that the rebellious spirit of rock 'n' roll doesn't mix well with political fundraisers and electoral campaigning. And that's what I meant when I said it was treasonous to rock 'n' roll. Nothing more and nothing less. Any attempt to read more into it than that is misguided.

Cooper is reportedly a strong Republican who joins Senator John McCain, R-Ariz., at professional basketball games in Phoenix. There has been no word from Ted Nugent, who is also a shock-rock conservative. The opinions of the two rock legends on abortion are unknown.

Apparently, Cooper is not the only person to hold such views. WorldNetDaily reported that Linda Ronstadt was escorted off the property and banned from the Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas after hundreds of people stormed out of her concert when she dedicated a song to Michael Moore, director of the Bush-bashing film “Fahrenheit 9/11.” Ronstadt referred to Moore as “a great patriot” who “cares about this country deeply and is trying to help.”

Aladdin President Bill Timmins spoke to the *Sun* about the incident:

We live in a city where people come from all over the world to be entertained. We hired Ms. Ronstadt as an entertainer, not as a political activist.

Whether you are politically on the left or on the right is not the point. She went up in front of the stage and just let it out. This was not the correct forum for that.

Our first and only priority is the enjoyment of our customers. I made the decision to ask Miss Ronstadt to leave the hotel. A situation like that can easily turn ugly and I didn't want anything more to come out of it. There were a lot of angry people there after she started talking.

If she wants to talk about her views to a newspaper or in a magazine article, she is free to do so. But in a stage in front of four and a half thousand people is not the place for it.

Of course, this is the same Linda Ronstadt who told the *San Diego Union-Tribune* that she does not like to perform for Christians. “This is an election year, and I think we're in desperate trouble and it's time for people to speak up and not pipe down,” she said. “It's a real conflict for me when I go to a concert and find out somebody in the audience is a Republican or fundamental [sic] Christian. It can cloud my enjoyment. I'd rather not know.” Can you say, “bigot”? What if Ronstadt had said that having Jews or Asians in the audience “clouded her enjoyment”?

Don Henley, who had a successful solo career after singing with The Eagles, was booed in Orange County, California, after he expressed support for Ronstadt during one of his concerts. Henley snapped back at the audience that feeds him. “Whoops, Orange County. We used to be able to have civil debate in this country. Not anymore,” he moaned. Sure we can have a civil debate, but it is not a debate when one person has the microphone the entire time and everyone else has to listen or throw away the price of the concert ticket by leaving the venue, which many people chose to do. One freelance writer said that if he had attended Henley's concert, he would have been “tempted to break federal law by wringing the neck of an Eagle.”

Unrelated to MoveOnPAC is the release of a CD titled, “Rock Against Bush, vol. I.” People who refer to themselves as “musicians” released the CD to raise money for groups that encourage young people to vote. The largely unknown bands participating in the project included Sum 41, Offspring, New Found Glory, and Jello Biafra with D.O.A.

A writer for WorldNetDaily quoted some of the lyrics from Offspring's biggest hit, “Self Esteem”:

Now I'll relate this little bit
That happens more than I'd like to admit
Late at night she knocks on my door
Drunk again and looking to score
Now I know I should say no
But that's kind of hard when she's ready to go
I may be dumb
But I'm not a dweeb
I'm just a sucker with no self esteem

“Rock Against Bush, vol. II” featured better known bands, such as Green Day, No Doubt, Rancid, and the Foo Fighters.

Get Out The V-Vote?

Note: Text in this section may be offensive to some readers. Please use proper discretion.

Eve Ensler authored the unbelievably vulgar *The vagina Monologues*, which is based on her interviews

with more than 200 women. As she describes the work, it “celebrates womens’ sexuality and strength” through “humor and grace.”

The Vagina Monologues has been translated into over 35 languages. It has run in theaters worldwide and performed at more than 225 colleges and universities, many of which are “Catholic.” In 2002 *The Vagina Monologues* was nominated for an Olivier Award in the category of “Best Entertainment.” It was the winner of the Obie Award. Ensler’s performance of the work has been shown on Home Box Office.

Ensler’s experience performing *The Vagina Monologues* inspired her to create V-Day—a global movement dedicated to ending violence against females. According to its Mission Statement, V-Day is:

- an organized response against violence toward women;
- a vision: We see a world where women live safely and freely;
- a demand: Rape, incest, battery, genital mutilation and sexual slavery must end now;
- a spirit: We believe women should spend their lives creating and thriving rather than surviving or recovering from terrible atrocities;
- a catalyst: By raising money and consciousness, it will unify and strengthen existing anti-violence efforts. Triggering far-reaching awareness, it will lay the groundwork for new educational, protective, and legislative endeavors throughout the world;
- a process: We will work as long as it takes. We will not stop until the violence stops;
- a day. We proclaim Valentine’s Day as V-Day, to celebrate women and end the violence; and
- a fierce, wild, unstoppable movement and community.

Who could oppose such goals? After all, the V-Day website specifically states that the group exists “for *no other reason* than to stop violence against women (emphasis added).” Well, that is not quite true. Not only does the “V” in “V-Day” stand for “Valentine,” it also stands for “Victory”—and “Vagina.”

“The Vagina Vote is an act of imagination,” the groups literature states. “It is an act of faith. It is the belief that a new paradigm can manifest itself in a political as well as a spiritual form. It is a decision to ask those running for office as well as those already in office to make ending violence, domination, invasion, and occupation the focus of their work on a domestic and international level.” This includes pushing for “comprehensive...sex education in our schools and around the globe, because knowledge is power.”

The V-Vote encourages women to vote, but only if they support the V-Day agenda:

The Vagina Vote is about showing up at the polls and bringing as many women as you know to show up with you in November. It is about being actively involved for the long haul in creating a new system, a new vision, heralded by new leaders who are dedicated to bringing about this paradigm. It is about not giving up if the present candidates don’t measure up but becoming the activists who insist they be better, becoming the leaders who bring about the vagina vision. It is about seizing these times, standing up with a voice, a passion-vagina power.

While colleges and universities have used *The Vagina Monologues* to raise money for V-Day, younger people are also encouraged to get involved via the group’s website. “Many high school students and youth groups have expressed a desire to be involved with V-Day. Currently V-Day does not have a youth campaign; however, below you will find many clever ideas that young people have implemented to support V-Day and to raise awareness and funds to end violence against women and girls,” the website reads.

Suggestions offered to young people include designing and designating a “Rape Free Zone” in the high school, convincing students to add a V-Day website link to their e-mail signatures, and (steady yourself!) having a “Vagina Friendly” bake sale. (To see an example of the unbelievably offense text on V-Day’s website, which is recommended to young people, go to: www.vday.org/contents/victory/success/0302201.)

Since its inception, V-Day has been “graced by the support of extraordinary women,” the group’s literature states. “Our ‘Vulva Choir’ has grown year upon year.” The celebrities have participated in V-Day events, making them members of the “Vulva Choir.” You will note that the list reads like a who’s who of pro-abortion activism:

Mary Alice
Lisa Leguillo
Kirstie Alley
Jenifer Lewis
Dani Behr
Julianna Margulies
Gillian Anderson
Andrea Martin
Marsha Mason
Rachel Blanchard
BETTY
Mary McCormack
Kathleen Chalfant
Ali McGraw
Mary McDonnell

Glenn Close
 Claire Danes
 Natasha McElhone
 Joan Darling
 Soraye Mire
 Viola Davi
 Kathy Najimy
 Linda Ellerbee
 Cynthia Nixon
 Eve Ensler
 Joan Osborne
 Susie Essman
 Pratibha Parmar
 Teri Garr
 Melissa Etheridge
 Gloria Reuben
 Rosie Perez
 Katie Puckrick
 Tonya Pinkins
 Edie Falco
 Winona Ryder
 Calista Flockhart
 Jane Fonda
 Mercedes Ruehl
 Gina Gershon
 Shiva Rose Robin Givens
 Sharon Gless
 Lois Smith
 Annabella Sciorra
 Hazelle Goodman
 Linda Gray
 Brooke Shields
 Lisa Gay Hamilton
 Julia Stiles
 Phoebe Snow
 Melissa Joan Hart
 Meera Syal
 Gloria Steinem
 Teri Hatcher
 Amy Irving
 Sarah Jones
 Mary Testa
 Erica Jong
 Marlo Thomas
 Carol Kane
 Marisa Tomei
 Julie Kavner
 Shirley Knight
 Lily Tomlin
 Lynn Whitfield
 Swoosie Kurtz
 Rita Wilson
 Kimberly Williams
 Sanaa Lathan
 Ricki Lake
 Oprah Winfrey

V-Day leaders say the Vagina Vote “understands that when a society allows women to be raped, beaten and degraded it will become a society that allows for the degradation of life in general.” Yet they are blind to “the degradation of life in general” caused by abortion.

Groups Join to Encourage Women to Vote

Celebrities such as Sally Field and Rosario Dawson helped launch a media campaign to encourage women to vote in November. The event announcing the campaign began with a photo shoot by photographer Roxanne Lowit which featured 50 celebrity women in a group photograph. It will be used in a media campaign called “50 Million Women Count!”

The campaign will use the photograph, which is titled, “50 Women Ask 50 Million More,” to convince women to take ten more women with them to the polls. Organizers claim that more than 50 million women who were eligible to vote in 2000 did not do so. Some 22 million of these women were unmarried. Organizers said that if unmarried women had voted at the same rate as married women, more than “six million more votes would have been counted and women would have been the deciding ‘x’ factor in that very close election.”

Funding the campaign were MoveOn.org, V-Day, and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. “We want women and their opinions to count in the electoral process,” said Laura Dawn of MoveOn.org.

According to V-Day founder Eve Ensler, the “non-partisan campaign” aims to teach women how voting gives them the power to influence issues most important to them. “Political decisions affect our lives dramatically—everything from our personal and economic safety to the air our children breathe,” she said.

PPFA President Gloria Feldt said the campaign emphasizes the importance of women voters in the 2004 election. “It’s more important than ever that women stand up for their rights, indeed their very lives, and participate fully in our democracy,” she said. “Our fundamental freedom to make personal decisions about our health and our lives is profoundly influenced by whether we exercise our right to vote.”

Validating Unfaithfulness

Pro-abortion groups are working more closely than ever before to achieve a common goal. Churches and organizations that claim to be based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, are sending radically mixed messages. Consider as one example of many the Statement of Purpose of Pax Christi USA,

which calls itself, “The national Catholic peace movement”:

Pax Christi USA strives to create a world that reflects the Peace of Christ by exploring, articulating, and witnessing to the call of Christian nonviolence. This work begins in personal life and extends to communities of reflection and action to transform structures of society. Pax Christi USA rejects war, preparations for war, and every form of violence and domination. It advocates primacy of conscience, economic and social justice, and respect for creation.

Pax Christi USA commits itself to peace education and, with the help of its bishop members, promotes the gospel imperative of peacemaking as a priority in the Catholic Church in the United States. Through the efforts of all its members and in cooperation with other groups, Pax Christi USA works toward a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world.

Now one would think that such language would surely include peace and justice for the preborn child. Pax Christi USA lists four areas of priority:

Spirituality of Nonviolence and Peacemaking: Pax Christi USA promotes Christian nonviolence on the personal, communal, national and international levels. Believing in the gospel call to conversion as found in the Beatitudes, Pax Christi USA denounces and resists the evils of violence while striving to reflect the Peace of Christ.

Disarmament, Demilitarization and Reconciliation with Justice: Pax Christi USA members promote nuclear, conventional and domestic disarmament, an end to the international arms trade, economic conversion to a non-military economy, conscientious objection, and nonviolent alternatives to war. Pax Christi USA promotes the just reconciliation of enemies through the United Nations and other channels.

Economic and Interracial Justice in the United States: Pax Christi USA joins the struggle against economic injustice, militarism, and environmental destruction which are particularly harmful to those who are poor, minorities, children, and women. Pax Christi USA works toward eliminating racist structures in the Catholic Church and the country, working toward equality of all people.

Human Rights and Global Restoration: Pax Christi USA promotes universal human rights, both at home and abroad, through solidarity with oppressed and marginalized people struggling for dignity. Pax Christi USA rejects every form of political and economic domination over others and fosters a reverence for all creation.

Certainly the promotion of “universal human rights” includes the child in the womb. In November 2001, Pax Christi USA issued a statement on abortion:

In response to the increased debate...on abortion, Pax Christi USA reaffirms its 1981 Seamless Garment position in support of all life. The consistent ethic of life opposes not only abortion, but also the death penalty, war, the nuclear arms race and anything that threatens life. In addition, Pax Christi reaffirms its goal to work for the full and equal participation of women in the church and society.

This is odd rhetoric. Pax Christi is working for “the full and equal participation of women in the church and society.” What does that mean? Why is it part of the first paragraph of a “Statement on Abortion”?:

Pax Christi’s opposition to abortion is based on a total commitment to the principle of unwavering reverence for human life. We reject, as we have rejected in the past, the claim of any individual, any group or organization, any nation to the “right” to destroy human life, whether singly or as entire populations.

Having made this clear, we agree that our concern must not only ensure saving the lives of the not-yet-born but also include recognizing that every child must be assured the opportunity to meet their basic human need and to develop and fulfill their physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities. The fact that 40% of the homeless in the US are families with children cannot be overlooked in our present debate.

It is important to understand what is being argued here; abortion is wrong but there are other issues about which we should be equally concerned. Remember, this is a “Statement on Abortion”:

We also recognize that, as the debate rages on the abortion issue, the situation of women in our society continues to worsen. One-third of female-headed families live in poverty. Two out of three of all minimum wage earners in the US are women: widows get only a portion of the Social Security payments accorded to their deceased husbands. In the abortion debate, the societal conditions which limit women’s options are often ignored. Women are too often criminalized or condemned by those committed to the unborn or exploited and victimized by those committed to abortion rights. The physical and psychological trauma of abortion on women is minimized and trivialized.

Is it essentially suggested that the debate over abortion should end while the other issues mentioned in the statement are addressed? Once again, keep in mind that this is purported to be a “Statement on Abortion”:

We must recognize that women who are considering abortion often struggle with a complex and painful dilemma. We must ensure that women do not choose abortion because of a lack of economic assistance, child care, health care or emotional support. No matter what decision is reached, they should be received with

loving concern and compassion by the followers of Christ.

Agreed, but should not we work to make abortion illegal as well? And should not repentance and a complete understanding of the nature of the act committed by women who get abortions be necessary for acceptance into the church? There is more:

Our work for nonviolent change should protect the life and the dignity of both the unborn and women. To achieve these objectives, we urge that all parties to the debate conduct themselves in a spirit of compassionate respect for their opponents and not allow the discussion to degenerate into arguments or actions which could lead to, or involve, the threat of physical or psychological violence. Pax Christi USA commits itself to engaging in the debate by promoting dialogue and the search for common ground among those on all sides of the issue.

Treating every human being with basic human dignity is certainly important. But how many times have people said, "I respect your opinion, but I disagree with it"? *We do not and never will respect an opinion that advocates killing!* It is hard enough to respect the people who promote such practices and policies. Do we "respect" members of the Ku Klux Klan even if we disagree with them? Do we "respect" child abusers even if we disagree with them? Do we "respect" Osama bin Laden even if we oppose his agenda and tactics? We cannot "respect" them, their agenda or their tactics. But what we can do is show Christian love. There is a big difference. And, of course, "searching for common ground" translates into, "Let's find the few things we can agree on and forget the rest." Not a chance. Not a chance in the world.

Pax Christi USA gives cover to Catholics who support pro-abortion candidates. Consider the group's carefully worded statement titled, "Called to Embrace All of Life: The Catholic Vote and Catholic Values":

"A Catholic moral framework does not easily fit the ideologies of "right" or "left," nor the platforms of any party... Our responsibility is to measure all candidates, policies, parties, and platforms by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity, and rights of the human person, whether they protect the poor and vulnerable and advance the common good." – From "Faithful Citizenship," issued by the United States Catholic Bishops.

It is a common misperception of politicians seeking office that the Catholic vote can be courted by addressing a narrow range of issues. In reality, the great majority of Catholics in the U.S., in agreement with the U.S. Catholic Bishops, will vote for candidates based "on the full range of issues, as well as on (the candidate's) personal integrity, philosophy and per-

formance" ("Faithful Citizenship," U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2004).

Members of the media—and indeed a few of our own religious leaders—do a great disservice to our church and nation when they attempt to use one or another issue as the benchmark for Catholic identity. To characterize a whole content of our faith in a single issue is inappropriate and unjust.

"The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility toward the common good" ("Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life," Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 24, 2002 and approved by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II).

The Catholic Church teaches that all life is sacred. A candidate for office must understand that the Church stands against any policy or course of action which diminishes life, dignity or the rights of the human person: abortion, capital punishment, war, scandalous poverty, denial of healthcare, mistreatment of immigrants and racism, to name but a few. All are essential issues to a "pro-life" voter.

For over 30 years, Pax Christi USA has raised the immorality and injustice of modern warfare as a serious affront to our Church's proclamation of the sanctity of life. Over the past two years we have seen more than 900 U.S. military and over 15,000 innocent Iraqi civilians killed in what Pope John Paul II repeatedly stated was an unjust and unnecessary war. Contrary to words used in political speeches, a commitment to the sanctity of life must be judged by the actions taken to defend and promote life in all its forms. War is a defeat for the culture of life and political leaders that bring about or perpetuate war sin against God and humanity and cannot be considered in any sense of the word "pro-life."

There are 60 million Catholics in the U.S. We take the responsibility of voting seriously. Each of us will evaluate candidates based on what our conscience—formed by reading the signs of the times in light of the example of Jesus in the Scriptures and the teachings of our Church throughout the ages—demands. We will examine the broad range of issues, measuring "all candidates, policies, parties, and platforms by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity, and rights of the human person, whether they protect the poor and vulnerable and advance the common good" ("Faithful Citizenship," U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2004).

In the gospels, Jesus implores us to love our enemies, to feed the hungry, to bless the peacemakers, to set the oppressed free, and to care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. This November, we will look for and

vote for candidates who take as seriously as we do the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

If you were a pro-abortion activist, would not you just love this statement? The facts are that Catholic bishops have called abortion an intrinsic evil and the right to life is at the top in the hierarchy of values.

Remember when Senator Dick Durbin, D-Ill., compiled a list of Senate votes on issues where the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has taken a position, including banning human cloning, partial-birth abortion, and limiting the use of mercury in thermometers? Despite the obviously vast difference in importance, Durbin weighted them equally.

According to Durbin's calculations, Kerry voted with the USCCB more than any other senator. Who placed second? Durbin did. And most laughable of all is that Senator Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., placed third. All three men not only vote pro-abortion, they vociferously advocate for it while standing alongside some of the most anti-religion bigots in the country.

Misleading Catholics: Just Say "No"

On November 2, Americans will go to the polls to cast ballots for candidates who most closely represent their views on important issues. Yet more than 50 percent of those who identify themselves as "Catholic" habitually vote for candidates who hold positions that directly conflict with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Most of these "Catholics" base their vote strictly on historical family party affiliation or even less significant reasons. Loyalty to party affiliation is seen by some as more important than policy positions taken by candidates. Others are only concerned about how the election will directly impact their pocketbook.

People who vote only for candidates who oppose abortion are disapprovingly referred to as "single issue voters." The goal is to make pro-life citizens feel guilty about being single issue voters. Pro-abortion leaders achieve the goal far too often. Yet citizens who strongly support legal abortion unapologetically base their votes on this one issue while simultaneously criticizing pro-life people who vote according to their life-affirming principles.

Are there any political positions that should automatically eliminate a candidate from consideration? What if a candidate supported the legalization of prostitution and currently outlawed drugs? What if a candidate wanted to relax laws against child pornography? What if a candidate endorsed animal abuse, including cock fighting and dog fighting? Would such a candidate's views on the death penalty, feeding the hungry, tax

policy, or any other issue be sufficient for you to overlook the, shall we say, unorthodox beliefs?

Are there any personal behaviors or affiliations that should automatically eliminate a candidate from consideration? What if a candidate had a history of beating his wife or abusing his children? What if a candidate is repeatedly arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol? What if a candidate were a member of the Hell's Angels? Would such a candidate's views on the war in Iraq, campaign finance reform, health-care reform, or any other issue be sufficient for you to overlook the "personal" behaviors or affiliations?

A candidate who beats his wife is not fit for public office. A candidate who would legalize child pornography is not fit for public office. This is true even if he or she were 100 percent "right" on *every* other issue. Some things are so egregious that they are disqualifiers. Believing it is acceptable to kill a child, regardless of whether that child resides in or out of his mother's womb at the time of death, is surely a disqualifier as well.

A failure to see abortion as *the* priority issue at this point in our history is to misunderstand (or not care about) the social justice teachings of Jesus Christ. As Fr. Frank Pavone wrote, "Disputes among candidates about how to best secure rights that we agree people have (to food, clothing, shelter, education, protection from crime, etc.) are quite different from the fundamental dispute as to whether they have any rights in the first place or even belong to the human community (i.e., the status of the preborn before the law). No issue is more important to the political process than that of who belongs to the political community."

Bishop Thomas G. Doran of the Diocese of Rockford, Illinois, offered some insight in *The Observer*. "It is said that we Catholics cannot be one-issue voters. But as Cardinal [Francis Eugene] George [Archdiocese of Chicago] has pointed out, not all issues can be given equal weight," the bishop wrote. "The issue of life is different from all other issues of social import because all the others are incremental. One can be more or less poor, or have better or worse health care, or have a richer or poorer pension plan. But one cannot be more or less dead."

We are all called to speak out and take action when the sanctity of human life is threatened. We must oppose *everything* that "offends human dignity." This means that we demand the protection of all human life regardless of race, creed, or color, whether in a Petri dish or womb, whether a zygote or embryo, fetus or infant, preschooler or adolescent, middle-aged or old-

erly, strong or weak, intelligent or mentally challenged, emotionally stable or disturbed, healthy or sick, rich or poor, Jew or Muslim, Christian or atheist, free or imprisoned, and even abortionist or pro-life obstetrician.

It is important to remember that *the* most urgent, the most egregious, and the most heinous crime against humanity is the deliberate killing of the most vulnerable among us—the preborn. Our votes for lawmakers should reflect this truth. In those instances when neither candidate is totally opposed to abortion, but one favors some protective legislation, we are bound to vote for the one who will at least limit the evil. If a clear difference cannot be found, it may be necessary to cast no vote in that particular race or make a decision based on other issues.

It's Your Turn

Evangelical Christians are overwhelming pro-life. Faithful Catholics are pro-life. Conservative Jews are pro-life. But far too many do not vote pro-life. Why? Because they do not vote at all. Everyone has his or her own excuse. And an excuse is all that it is.

The dedication of pro-abortion forces is clear. The fate of preborn children is at stake. This is as clear and succinct as we can make it—*be sure you are registered to vote and then cast a ballot!* And when you vote, be proud to be a single issue voter. You are supporting life. You have no reason to be ashamed. None whatsoever. What you are doing is an admirable act of selflessness and kindness. People who advance the culture of death are the ones who should be ashamed. If pro-life candidates lose, let it not be due to our complacency. The price of our failure will be paid by children.

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