WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA DARE?
CONFRONTING ANTI-ABORTION TERRORISM
AFTER 9/11

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INTRODUCTION

Anti-abortion terrorism blatantly exemplifies the contradiction of claiming human rights for the unborn while denying them to women and clinic workers. When so-called pro-lifers began, paradoxically enough, to kill for life in the early 1990s, pro-choice advocates screamed "hypocrisy," but anti-abortion organizations barely suffered. On the contrary, the most militant pro-lifers were emboldened and began to openly air their apocalyptic ideas that abortion is a sign of the "End Times" of humanity and life itself. Few pro-choice organizations understood the significance in the shift away from "rescue" and toward apocalypse. Feminist scholars were busy examining the fetus as text in popular culture and the public sphere or seeking, in the name of gender analysis, if not coalition building, compromise and common ground among pro-life and pro-choice women.

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1 The term "pro-life" is used herein as a historically accurate label for anti-abortion sentiment as it has been institutionalized throughout late twentieth-century United States. Specifically, the term is distinguished from "right-to-life" arguments about abortion, and refers to political efforts to use opposition to abortion as a way to promote conservative values and policies. For a fuller discussion of this distinction between "right-to-life" and "pro-life," see CAROL MASON, KILLING FOR LIFE: THE APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVE OF PRO-LIFE POLITICS 15-21 (2002).


3 See BARBARA DUDEN, DISEMBODYING WOMEN: PERSPECTIVES ON PREGNANCY AND THE UNBORN 51-53 (1993) (providing examples of feminist scholarship on the fetus as text in
Moreover, the federal government largely turned a blind eye to the pro-life killings and the apocalypticism that motivated it.\textsuperscript{5} However, in the wake of the attacks on September 11, 2001, the federal government, for the first time, characterized the attacks on clinic personnel as terrorism.\textsuperscript{6} Historical developments since 9/11 offer pro-choice advocates and abortion providers new opportunities—and new pitfalls—for claiming abortion rights as human rights. This Essay reviews the established parameters of the abortion debate and examines the newer considerations that must be factored into a transnational fight for an all-inclusive reproductive freedom.

\section{I. FEARING THE FETUS}

Feminist scholarship still focuses on the fetus as text, rather than the newer guerrilla strategies of the pro-life movement because the visual politics are so powerful. Analyzing the visual representation of fetuses has yielded much understanding and many valuable insights into the ideological power of medical imaging and the semiotics of subjectivity. As decades of examining “the fetus” have demonstrated, anti-abortion images are very powerful, but not impervious. I like to tell the following story to people who seem overwhelmed by the effects of anti-abortion signs. It is a story about the early 1990s, before anti-abortion militants began killing doctors and clinic workers, and it opens early one summer morning: \textsuperscript{7}
It was six a.m. in a Minneapolis suburb where a group of us had come to defend a woman’s clinic against protesters. We wanted to be waiting for them, despite the hour, to show them that we, as a community, were serious about preventing the kind of siege Operation Rescue had pulled off in Wichita. We were not leaving it to the police or to the clinic staff. It was citizen power, people power, in direct action. Despite these principled intentions, we were hardly a fiery bunch that morning. We joked quietly that our fiercest chant at this point in the day could only be “mumble mumble mumble, mumble mumble mumble—coffee!”

However, by ten o’clock tensions were escalating. The anti-abortionists were parading in an elongated circle with all sorts of weird images, with Christian songs eerily sung out of tune, and with rosaries and accusations that we were abetting murder. The police had billy clubs and stern faces. Shouting matches erupted then fell away, leaving a residue of rage if not hatred in the air. It was time for a break.

I walked to the nearby convenience store to buy a beverage. At the checkout counter, I saw that Big Foot had made the front page of a large tabloid newspaper again. It was a blurry picture of a being that could be man, could be beast, could be monster, or could be missing link. I bought it. My heart raced as I approached the clinic; the crowd had grown.

I stepped into the parade of pro-lifers and held the paper above my head as they held their fetus signs. I walked with the protesters and raised my voice, “Big Foot is alive. Here’s proof—an actual photograph. No trick photography here,” I told them. “No,” I said with more emphasis, “this is no mere representation; it is the Truth! Big Foot is alive. If you see it, it must be true! Big Foot is alive! Big Foot is a life!” The clinic defenders laughed, egging me on. The protesters were stymied. The police, despite themselves, hung their heads to hide their smiles. Then a clergyman came over and threw holy water on me and prayed. A man from my side got into the act. He knelt before me and clasped his hands in pleading prayer. “Praise be to Big Foot! Big Foot is the Light and the Truth and the Way.” It suddenly was too much, too mocking. I stepped out of the protesters’ march and joined my friends. The comic relief was palatable, I thought. At the very least, I felt relieved of the desire to tear up every one of those false, misleading, fetus pictures.

By two in the afternoon, the protesters had walked back to their buses and cars. Some of my friends found tickets on their

windshields for bogus traffic and parking violations, which were later waived in court hearings because they were obviously politically motivated. Did cars with fetus bumper stickers receive any such citations? In this case, the fetus may have acted as an identifier for certain corrupt police officers who decided to punish women for defending their access to reproductive health care and abortion, as well as serving as an icon of protest in a politics of aversion.

According to conventional pro-choice wisdom, the image of the fetus has been the most devastating weapon that abortion opponents wield. Laurie Shrage's book, *Abortion and Social Responsibility: Depolarizing the Debate*, epitomizes this common wisdom. Shrage reviews feminist scholarship claiming visibility rather than viability as the crux of abortion politics and provides examples of new ways to upset the iconography of the fetus. But this strategy is hardly new or revolutionary; "[t]he spectacle is vulnerable," as Laura Mulvey once said. In other words, as my impromptu street theater attests, it is easy to disrupt the "referentiality" of the fetus.

Disrupting the fetus image is practically a parlor game for clinic escorts, who need to cut the tension of their job, and for academics, like me, who enjoy deconstructing visual texts. For corporate nonprofit pro-choice organizations, it is a more professional effort, involving publicists, focus groups, and designers who are paid big money to develop compelling media campaigns that undo the supposed damage of the fetus as image. But as recent scholarship examining women's responses to intrauterine imaging suggests, women do not make decisions about whether to terminate pregnancies based on fetal images in the public sphere or the doctor's office. According to Carol Stabile, "despite the rhetoric about 'bonding' by anti-choice advocates of ultrasound, and despite the cultural predominance of fetal images, women make decisions based . . . on their everyday lives and concrete situations. Despite the pervasiveness of fetal images, women are much more than passive recipients of sexist ideologies," which produce the autonomous fetus-image. Thus, those who fear the effects of the fetus to the point where they believe they can change the abortion debate by providing a new visual rhetoric are

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9 *Id.* at 82 ("[T]he imagery draws our attention to either the fetus's rights or the woman's rights and obscures the social conditions that make life and choice possible.").


11 *See generally Fetal Subjects, Feminist Positions* 99–113 (Lynn M. Morgan & Meredith W. Michaels eds., 1999) (specifically addressing the manipulation of the fetal image).

really only perpetuating the debate, participating within its parameters, which were set so long ago.

The rules of playing the abortion debate game are well established. First, forget the history of radical feminism. Second, forget about race and ethnicity. Third, focus on the visual politics of anti-abortion propaganda rather than primary written documents. Fourth, buy the lie that anti-abortion extremists and the anti-abortion mainstream have nothing in common. Fifth, operate under the fear of conservative "backlash." Even while presenting exciting new insights about material that has not thoroughly or previously been analyzed, Shrage (like many feminist scholars) mostly plays by these rules in Abortion and Social Responsibility. Her book helps illuminate these parameters and their limits.

First, and most saddening, Shrage elides the history of radical feminism and women's activism in the 1950s and 1960s with the litigators and legislators who fashioned various bills to ease the existing restrictions on abortion.13 She distinguishes between those who wanted to reform the laws and those who wanted to repeal them without further distinguishing the feminists from the lawyers.14 Relying mostly on standard histories written by Lawrence Tribe and David Garrow, Shrage assumes that feminists who discussed repeal rather than reform did so under a libertarian rationale of individual rights.15 She does not explore the radical rationale of fighting abortion restrictions as a first step in freeing women as an oppressed class or the humanist rationale of providing humane medical treatment to women seeking abortions. Without acknowledging these important aspects of women's history, Shrage lumps all advocates of repeal together. According to such logic, there is no distinction between, for instance, Barry Goldwater or most republican party members at the time who never opposed abortion and activists like Rowena Gurner, Pat Maginnis, Lana Phelan, or radicals such as Shulamith Firestone and Ellen Willis.16 Consequently, Shrage asserts that the Roe v. Wade decision represents a near-total win for those who favored and fought for repeal.17 Further, Shrage argues that Roe went too far and what we

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13 See SHRAGE, supra note 8, at 3–40 (discussing the viability of Roe v. Wade).
14 See id. at 8 ("Proponents of reform sought to expand the life-saving exception in most existing criminal statutes . . . . Proponents of repeal wanted existing criminal statutes to be struck down . . . .").
15 See id. at ix ("[S]how that the minimal, libertarian regulatory structure advocated by the repeal forces is not morally and politically well justified.").
17 410 U.S. 113 (1973).
18 See SHRAGE, supra note 8, at vii ("The regulatory framework outlined in Roe was a significant victory for those who sought repeal rather than reform . . . . [T]he balance Roe struck be-
need now is a compromise that scales back the right to terminate pregnancies, specifically those in the second and third trimesters.\(^{19}\)

However, according to women who fought for repeal and who do not consider themselves “moderate” feminists, which is how Shrage describes herself,\(^ {20}\) Roe was a compromise in several ways. For example, Roe discusses the privacy issue as one between a woman and her doctor, situating women’s decision making in the context of being approved by the medical profession.\(^ {21}\) In addition, radical feminists and abortion activists who were repelled by mere libertarian arguments warned that reform legislation would divide women against one another along class and race lines. Radical feminists such as Lucinda Cisler questioned whether Roe and other cases pending at the time really were efforts to repeal.\(^ {22}\)

In her 1972 essay, Abortion Repeal (sort of): A Warning to Women,\(^ {23}\) Cisler suspected that the alacrity of legal change was threatening women’s solidarity on the issue of reproductive freedom. Cisler predicted that reform laws (including Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton,\(^ {24}\) which she referred to as the Texas and Georgia cases that were under consideration as she wrote) would placate middle-class women to the point where they would cease struggling for women’s liberation.\(^ {25}\) But the new reform legislation now being proposed all over the country is not in our interest either: it looks pretty good, and the improvements it seems to promise (at least for middle-class women) are almost irresistible to those who haven’t informed themselves about the complexities of the abortion situation or developed a feminist critique of abortion that goes beyond “it’s our right.”\(^ {26}\)

Going beyond a rights discourse, radical feminists had little in common with libertarians of the time.

The radical feminist goal was not only to get the government “off our backs” but also to obtain social justice in the form of a redistribution of economic and social power. Radical feminists exposed the
futility of seeking equal rights in an unequal society; as Cisler wrote, there was more at stake than "stylish liberalism" and reactionary libertarianism that sought rights for the individual. But, Shrage absolutely overlooks such radical women's history, assuming that all advocates of repeal, including feminists, were intent on individual rights rather than social justice on a larger scale encompassing women as an oppressed class. Without the history of radical feminism, which takes us beyond a libertarian "rights" rationale, the abortion debate is maintained as a fight between the rights of the woman and the rights of the fetus, rather than as a battle between women and the state.

Ensnored in the parameters of a debate over competing rights, Shrage also ignores race and ethnicity as key factors of abortion politics. Even with the Genocide Awareness Project, an anti-abortion campaign that visually equates abortion with slavery and the Holocaust, the extent of Shrage's examination is to show that this recent propaganda renders the pro-choice approach to reproductive rights irrelevant. Adding her voice to many feminists who have critiqued the individual "choice" approach as based on a convenience and consumerist mentality, Shrage makes important indictments of advocacy for liberal reproductive policies.

But Shrage's insight into the inadequate focus on "choice" is a blind spot to the racial implications of the Genocide Awareness Project, a well-funded campaign led by white men and initiated in conjunction with the Promise Keepers, a Christian men's group that has been criticized for its regressive racial politics. Even when dealing with artwork that references how abortion doctors are portrayed in anti-Semitic terms, Shrage follows the established parameters of the abortion debate. She provides neither philosophical rumination nor institutional research into how racial and ethnic arguments have developed historically or how they operate currently in anti-abortion discourse. That is not Shrage's purpose; instead, she wants to

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27 See Lucinda Cisler, Unfinished Business: Birth Control and Women's Liberation, in SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL 245–46 (Robin Morgan ed., 1970) ("Without the full capacity to limit her own reproduction, a woman's other 'freedoms' are tantalizing mockery that cannot be exercised.").

28 See SHRAGE, supra note 8, at 80 figs.3.4, 3.5 (depicting posters produced by the Genocide Awareness Project).


30 See Joe Conason et al., The Promise Keepers Are Coming: The Third Wave of the Religious Right, NATION, Oct. 7, 1996, at 11, 14 ("Promise Keepers has deliberately chosen the word 'reconciliation' as its rhetorical focus on race rather than the word 'equality.'").

31 See SHRAGE, supra note 8, at 109 ("In addition, abortion rights posters could expose the hypocrisy of 'pro-life' extremists who applaud the deaths of abortion providers by juxtaposing images of clinic bombings with various 'pro-life' slogans . . . .").
construct a new visual rhetoric that reunites maternal and fetal bodies, supposedly eradicating the mythical autonomy of the fetus, and otherwise create semantic confusion “so that ‘our truths’ will sit somewhat uncomfortably with ‘their truths.’”

But, by relying on visual rhetoric as the bearer of “their truths,” some feminist scholars have a weak grasp on what “pro-life truths” actually are. Revealing those “truths” entails a redirection of feminist research.

To redirect feminist analysis beyond the parameters of the abortion debate, in *Killing for Life*, I historicized the visual rhetoric of the anti-abortion movement by reading primary materials written by and for pro-life strategists and activists. I found that the much-analyzed politics of visibility, said to be the most dangerous tool of pro-life forces, were all the more intriguing in the context of a well-wrought pro-life narrative that portrayed the slavery of Africans and the Holocaust of Jews as precursors to the “worst crime against humanity”—abortion, the supposed genocide of (white Christian) life itself. This apocalyptic narrative not only makes sense of the Genocide Awareness Project’s emphasis on lynching and Hitler (which supposedly prefigure the persecution of white Christians that supposedly is abortion); it also accounts for why those militants who began killing clinic workers were conspiracy-minded white men, some with ties to white supremacist groups and all expressing the idea that abortion is a sign of the End Times (of America’s humanity, of the white race, and/or of Christian life).

Looking deeper, this apocalyptic narrative, all the variations of which produce a sense of urgency to act, is the ideological link between the so-called extremists and the mainstream anti-abortion movement. Being narrated—and narrating themselves—in a time of apocalyptic conflict, pro-lifers are motivated to take action. Whether that action is to write a check to an anti-abortion politician or to take arms against the forces of evil (those providers and seekers of abortion) is a matter of personal influence, circumstance, psychology, and ethics.

Shrage dismisses feminist work that focuses on these pro-life politics because it supposedly is a “defensive strategy” aiming to “challenge reactionary attacks on women’s recent civil rights gains.”

Shrage assumes that the result of such scholarship is merely to demonize or humiliate those who oppose abortion. But the point is rather to elucidate those anti-abortion assumptions and “truths” she seeks to upset with her new visual rhetoric and to recognize that pro-life politics have gone far beyond the fetus, beyond reactionary.

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52 *Id.* at 113.
53 See generally MASON, supra note 1 (reviewing primary materials throughout).
54 SHRAGE, supra note 8, at vii.
attacks, and beyond backlash. To my Marxist pals, I explain this by suggesting that pro-life politics have become revolutionary—proactive, not reactionary. To my Foucauldian friends, I say that pro-life politics are not solely repressive, but productive as well. In both cases, I mean to convey that the onset of pro-life murder, of literally killing for life, signals a transition away from merely protesting progressive social changes made since the 1960s and toward seeking retribution, sometimes via domestic terrorism. My efforts to convince people of this shift unfortunately became far easier after September 11, 2001.

II. FEARING THE FIRST WHITE AMERICAN BABY

Virginia Dare is on record as the first white Christian baby born in North America. Such inauguration was dubiously honored in the letters that took responsibility for anthrax threats sent to women's clinics in November 2001. The "Army of God, Virginia Dare Chapter" sent the letters so soon after the hijackings of planes that felled the World Trade Towers and damaged the Pentagon, and so soon after lethal traces of anthrax were discovered in media offices, raising fears of biological terrorism. On behalf of the first white Christian American-born child, someone sent to abortion clinics nationwide more than five hundred letters that notified recipients that they were now exposed to anthrax and would die. It was a hoax; no actual anthrax was delivered. But the proximity of this anti-abortion anthrax scare to 9/11 ensured that it would be taken seriously—more so than other pro-life anthrax scares of the past.

Although clinics had experienced anthrax scares on a smaller regional scale in 1998 and 1999, the 2001 stunt received more attention from government officials and the news media. For the first time,

55 Born in 1587, Virginia Dare was the "first white child of English parents to be born in America. She was the daughter of Ananias and Elenor Dare, members of Sir Walter Raleigh's ill-fated colony that settled Roanoke Island on the North Carolina coast." Dare, Virginia, in COLUMBIA ELECTRONIC ENCYCLOPEDIA (6th ed. 2003), http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/people/A0814653.html (last visited Feb. 5, 2004). According to Chip Berlet, recent right-wing efforts to demonize immigrants and dismiss the "fantasy of racial equality" use the name Virginia Dare to personify American purity and promote white racial consciousness. Chip Berlet, Into the Mainstream, INTELLIGENCE REP., Summer 2003, available at http://www.splicenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=50 (last visited Feb. 28, 2004).

56 See Frederick Clarkson, High Priority to Anti-Abortion Anthrax Mail, WOMEN'S ENEWS (Nov. 9, 2001) (explaining that anthrax threats to abortion clinics were underscored by the FBI until after the attacks of September 11, 2001), at http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/717/context/archive (last visited Feb. 4, 2004).

57 See MASON, supra note 1, at 51 (describing a rash of anthrax scares at abortion clinics that received letters alleging that they had just been exposed to anthrax).

58 See id. at 50–51 (comparing the anthrax mail scares at abortion clinics in 1998 and 1999 to the scares following the attacks of September 11, 2001).
Attorney General John Ashcroft was forced to define such attacks on clinics as domestic terrorism, although he refused to meet with pro-choice representatives because he is staunchly anti-abortion. When the perpetrator of the anthrax scares, Clayton Waagner, was apprehended, Ashcroft loudly denounced him and his actions, but not his motivating anti-abortion stance. Clayton Waagner fit the bill for those who support the anti-abortion movement but deny its murderous aspects.

Like the pro-life murderers who have killed seven doctors and clinic personnel since 1993, Waagner was presented as a criminal "kook" acting alone. Ashcroft and others could easily dismiss him as a single source of the anthrax scares, despite the fact that the sophisticated look and delivery of the letters suggested an effort by more than one man, especially a prison escapee running from the law like Waagner.

Instead of being seen as a crazy convict, Waagner acted as if he wanted to be seen as a hero, a reluctant revolutionary divinely inspired to stop abortion at any cost. He visited Neal Horsley, creator of the notorious website called the Nuremberg Files, which lists names and addresses of abortion clinic personnel. Horsley posted messages for Waagner on the World Wide Web, publicizing his plan to kill particular clinic staff unless they resigned their jobs as abortion providers. Especially in describing himself as a member of the Army of God, Waagner seemed to want to perpetuate the romantic mystique of snipers and bombers who target abortion providers and clinic workers.

This romantic view of abortion terrorists was most pronounced in the case of Eric Rudolph, the suspect sought and later apprehended

59 See Clarkson, supra note 6 (characterizing Ashcroft's allegiance to the Christian right).
60 See Press Release, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Statement on Announcement by Attorney General John Ashcroft About Anthrax Threats (Nov. 29, 2001) (suggesting that to win the battle against terrorism there needs to be equal emphasis on both overseas and domestic terrorism), available at http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about/pr/011129_Ashcroft.html; see also An Antiabortion Fugitive on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List Says He Is Responsible for Hundreds of Anthrax Threats Sent to Abortion Clinics Last Month (Democracy Now! radio broadcast, Nov. 30, 2001) (discussing the Attorney General's actions), available at http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=03/04/07/0219259.
61 For a history of abortion-related violence, including murders, see generally Baird-Windle & Bader, supra note 7.
64 See Clarkson, supra note 42 (providing an account of Waagner's plans to kill).
65 Id.
for bombings in 1996, 1997, and 1998 that were, like the 2001 anthrax scares, accompanied by letters signed by the Army of God. As a representative of the Army of God, Rudolph became a sort of folk hero because he eluded police, supposedly in the dense terrain of Appalachia. The Davy Crockett of the pro-life movement, Rudolph was represented as a mountaineer survivalist outwitting the big city leaders of a high-tech manhunt. It was a young local police rookie, not federal agents, who happened upon Rudolph one night behind a store in a small North Carolina town, presumed him to be a burglar, and arrested him. In accounts of his capture, reporting the locals' romance with Rudolph was just as prevalent as reporting his white supremacist ideas and murderous anti-abortion and anti-gay attacks.

To my knowledge, no news media ever reported that the bombing strategy used at the abortion clinic in Birmingham, Alabama, for which Rudolph is being charged, was essentially the same strategy that collapsed the World Trade Towers. The strategy is to deploy one bomb about twenty minutes before deploying the second, in hopes that media will record the devastation and that medical personnel, firefighters, or law enforcement investigating the first blast may be killed by the second. Despite this similarity in terrorist practice, Eric Rudolph was not taken to camp Xray at Guantanamo Bay.

Therefore, despite Ashcroft's reluctant admission that some anti-abortion tactics constitute terrorism, none of those white Christian American men actually charged with or convicted of anti-abortion terrorism have been treated like foreigners merely suspected of terrorism. Moreover, the portrayal of the Army of God as an aberrant, yet homespun, source of violence has put feminists and pro-choice advocates in a peculiar position. To address the double standard that privileges pro-life terrorists from the United States, feminists have to take into account several things.

First, presuming that the Army of God is an actual organization with members and meetings, and therefore should be legally denounced as a terrorist organization, is a troubling prospect. On one hand, there seems to be some compelling similarities between the leaderless resistance style of anti-abortion militants and the cell-based structure of some terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda. Another similarity is the apocalypticism that appears to justify both types of

46 See MASON, supra note 1, at 27-32 (describing the allure to abortion terrorists of Eric Rudolph's evasion from the police by hiding out in the Appalachian mountains); Tony Horwitz, Run, Rudolph, Run: How the Fugitive Became a Folk Hero, NEW YORKER, Mar. 15, 1999, at 46 (describing fugitive Eric Rudolph's evasion of police).

47 See Jeffrey Gettleman & David M. Halbfinger, Suspect in '96 Olympic Bombing and 3 Other Attacks Is Caught, N.Y. TIMES, June 1, 2003, at 1 (depicting the arrest of anti-abortion bomber and fugitive Eric Rudolph).

48 Id.
religious violence—some pro-life groups advertised an “Embryonic Jihad” as early as 1994. But, on the other hand, going after the so-called Army of God per se is not likely either to flush out or shut down those people willing to kill for life or to garner support for abortion provision. The problem is that the people who are publicly rallying under the banner of the Army of God are doing so to gain publicity and, in effect if not intentionally, they divert attention from pro-lifers who may or may not be planning terrorist acts. It is possible (and let us hope) that pro-life violence has peaked and that, especially in the post-9/11 culture of security and suspicion, would-be pro-life snipers and bombers are less likely to carry out their plans. Those currently identified in the news and entertainment media as the Army of God are not quite, I believe, the organized terrorists they are presumed to be.

In the media, reports of the Army of God alternate between the sensational and the humiliating, portraying a particular group as part of an “underground organization” whose shadowy members supposedly act without direct instructions from a particular leader. Primarily, Donald Spitz, Michael Bray, and Neal Horsley are considered spokesmen for the Army of God. In the context of these men, many define the Army of God as a group of defenders of lethal force against abortion who come together at least once a year during a White Rose Banquet. A Home Box Office (“HBO”) production called Soldiers in the Army of God, a titillating film edited to portray pro-life ideology as merely absurd rather than a coherent narrative of religious retribution, featured this gathering. In addition, because of the editing of the film, pro-life men are presented as backward “rednecks” prone to violence.

Especially in focusing on Southern men filmed in the backwoods of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, the documentary often visually implies that anti-abortion militancy is a product of Appalachia and the deep South, which is stereotypically seen as a culture of poverty full of

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50 See REITER, supra note 3 (discussing the portrayals of the Army of God); Soldiers in the Army of God (HBO Undercover Series 2000).

51 Soldiers in the Army of God, supra note 50; see also MASON, supra note 1, at 68–71 (discussing retribution as pro-life logic).
trigger-happy hillbillies.\textsuperscript{52} Briefly on location in Kansas City, Missouri, the film maintains the overriding image of hillbillies with footage of father and son walking through the woods, toting shotguns. The HBO portrayal thus dovetails with the image of Eric Rudolph hiding out in his “mountaintop lair” by documenting a clinic bombing in Asheville, North Carolina, for which Rudolph was the key suspect. Due to these editorial decisions, the film only mentions the suburban pro-life sniping in Amherst, New York,\textsuperscript{53} entirely ignores the urban pro-life massacre in Brookline, Massachusetts,\textsuperscript{54} and largely ignores the widespread harassment of abortion providers nationwide. Consequently, \textit{Soldiers in the Army of God} presents not only pro-life terrorism, but also the Army of God in particular as an aberrant fact of nature, both freakish in its religiosity and frightening in its capacity for violence.

With this image freshly drawn by various media, progressive and pro-choice groups have called for the denunciation of the Army of God as a terrorist organization or network.\textsuperscript{55} But as Chip Berlet, co-author of \textit{Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort}, has said, this approach is misguided because the Army of God “doesn’t exist as a specific entity.”\textsuperscript{56} Different people have used the name “Army of God” for different purposes. With no historical perspective of the term, the HBO movie and some journalistic accounts of the most recent activity attributed to the Army of God give the impression that it is an established coherent group or chain of command with a strategic plan. However, the \textit{Army of God} manual itself, an underground book detailing methods to close abortion facilities, makes it clear that the “army” is not a militia or conspiracy.\textsuperscript{57} The manual attests to the fact that the Army of God is a fantastic way of envisioning oneself in the midst of a holy war against evil. While it is true that the manual has inspired people who have committed and been convicted of pro-life violence, it is also important to realize that the

\textsuperscript{52} See \textsc{Anthony Harkins}, \textsc{Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon} 173–204 (2004) (discussing the representation of the hillbilly); \textsc{J.W. Williamson}, \textsc{Hillbillyland} 1–17 (1995) (same).

\textsuperscript{53} For discussion of the murder of Barnett Slepian, see \textsc{Mason}, \textit{supra} note 1, at 103.

\textsuperscript{54} For discussions of John Salvi’s pro-life massacre, see \textsc{Berlet & Lyons}, \textit{supra} note 3, at 297–99. See also \textsc{Frederick Clarkson}, \textsc{Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy} 148–51 (1997) (looking at the “theology of vigilantism” in the context of the John Salvi case).

\textsuperscript{55} See Clarkson, \textit{supra} note 6 (“Working Assets ... has mounted its own letter-writing campaign to get the Justice Department to designate the Army of God as a terrorist group.”).

\textsuperscript{56} Telephone Interviews with Chip Berlet, Senior Analyst, Political Research Associates (Nov. 2002 & July 2003) (on file with author).

\textsuperscript{57} See \textsc{Mason}, \textit{supra} note 1, at 22 (“[The manual claims] ... that the Army of God is ‘not a real army, humanly speaking ...’.”).
existence of the book presents no evidence that pro-life terrorists ever collude with one another.

In other words, rounding up Bray, Spitz, Horsley, and others featured on the HBO film and in various articles would too hastily presume they are conspirators with the trigger men of pro-life terrorism. This does not mean that Bray, Spitz, and Horsley deserve impunity from disdain and scrutiny. However, it does mean that the ideological ties that bind those who attend the White Rose Banquet to the pro-life snipers and bombers are more potent than any actual organizational ties that would constitute a group called the Army of God.

The ideology shared by those calling themselves the Army of God and those who have killed for life is basically the same pro-life ideology that well-respected and high profile pro-lifers share. Essentially apocalyptic, this ideology narrates "life" not simply as the opposite of death, but as a divine property to be defended and as an American principle to be promoted. This is as true for George W. Bush as it is for Neal Horsley or Eric Rudolph, despite the fact that Rudolph embellishes the basic narrative with antigovernment and anti-Semitic overtones, and Horsley adds antigay sentiments to the story. All three men share the sense that we live in fatalistic times and that abortion is an absolute "national sin" signaling the demise of American culture and devaluing Christian life. Bush's deployment of the pro-life narrative meshes neatly with his pro-war rhetoric because his millenialist belief in Bible prophecy has given him a Manichean worldview in which the "evildoers" are rising up.

Various sources have delineated Bush's apocalyptic mindset, his view of world events as an unfolding narrative authored by God, his sense of himself as a man of Providence, and his understanding that the fluke of his "election" was not his brother Jeb Bush's doing but Jesus Christ's. Bush thinks he is the elect and that abortion is part of

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58 See id. at 191–93 (discussing Bush's millennialism); id. at 1–4 (discussing Horsley's millennialism); id. at 27–31 (discussing Rudolph's millennialism).

his war against terror. Renaming the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* as National Sanctity of Human Life Day, Bush also redefined abortion as terrorism, depicting it as another sign and additional evidence of "evil" sweeping the world over. He said, "On September 11, we saw clearly that evil exists in this world, and that it does not value life... . Now we are engaged in a fight against evil and tyranny to preserve and protect life." This quotation implies that, for life's sake, we must deter the evildoers. This logic follows the apocalyptic theme deployed by anti-abortion organizations and militants for more than thirty years. With this logic, Bush and other pro-lifers are not simply reacting to social changes since the sixties or creating a backlash against women. Especially in Bush's case, his pro-life, pro-war ideology involves a bold new agenda of unprecedented measures.

As feminists in a post-9/11 era of the Patriot Act and abortion-terrorism, we can recognize that a vague and indeterminate, yet supreme, notion of "life" deserves our scrutiny every bit as much as fetal imagery. That is to say, analyzing the visual representation of "the fetus" can only be enhanced by understanding the (apocalyptic) narrative representation of "life." As apocalyptic themes and mentalities saturate and shape our world, the notion of rescuing or saving individual babies evolves into a notion of the unborn avenger who waits for no rescue. The nationalist nostalgia for Virginia Dare, for America as a New World where the first white Christian baby heralds a dominant white Christian culture presiding over all of North America, is also "nostalgia for the future." To fear the Virginia Dare Chapter of the Army of God is to fear a fantasy.

**III. FROM COMMON GROUND TO COMMON STRUGGLE**

Acknowledging this fantastic aspect of Virginia Dare does not alleviate the real threat of anthrax scares. The Army of God, as mindset rather than membership, proves that fantasy is powerful stuff. So, we need to construct carefully a demand for the

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60 On electism generally, see *Lee Quinby, Millennial Seduction* 3 (1999). She explains that "electism is cast overtly in oppositional terms in keeping with the fierce battle between the forces of good and evil envisioned in Revelation." *Id.*


63 For the longevity of apocalyptic pro-life rhetoric, see *Mason, supra note 1*, at 130-57.


65 For compelling discussions of "life" as well as fetal images, see *Duden, supra note 4*, at 50-51.

66 See *Linda Kintz, Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions That Matter in Right-Wing America* 8-9 (1997) (discussing fantasy and the emotional life of believers of
we need to construct carefully a demand for the prosecution of pro-life terrorists as well as a demand for reproductive freedom. In so doing, there are particular pitfalls to avoid and opportunities to grasp.

Feminists need to avoid playing the role inscribed for us by the notion that pro-life terrorism is a monstrous fluke of nature, a product of a lunatic fringe hiding out high in the mountains, the Appalachian heart of darkness of America. In the media story of pro-life terrorism as the product of backward crazed rednecks or Rambo/Crockett fugitives from a corrupt world, feminists are, at best, situated as civilizers of savagery. In this scenario, feminists are members of the modern world that supposedly never reached those parts of Alabama or North Carolina, where wild things such as pro-life terrorists grow. Like some human rights literature that represents “a modernized First World that should go in and rescue those facing yet another crisis in the Third World, always imagined as ‘a region of aberrant violence,’” justifications for preventing pro-life murder and prosecuting anti-abortion terrorists are tricky.

Such justifications can unwittingly reinscribe particular stereotypes and social assignments to those involved. Pro-life suspects are, as I have been arguing, portrayed as dumb, criminally insane “rednecks.” Pregnant or fertile women who are battling for access to reproductive health care are often misrepresented as uneducated, pathetic victims in need of supervision and charity. And feminists come off as privileged, myopic maligners of religion who are selfishly focused on “our rights” during a time of grand-scale global terrorism.

One way to avoid this is to put anti-abortion terrorism in the context of religious violence as a global phenomenon. This does not mean equating Eric Rudolph with Zacharia Moussoui or the Army of God with Al Qaeda. Such one-to-one comparisons are untenable and...
irresponsible without historical analysis of the institutions, affiliations, and ideologies involved in each case. Understanding pro-life terrorism in a global context means, instead, taking advantage of the greater public awareness of, and interest in, the role that apocalypticism plays in religious violence and fundamentalist ideology. While scholars like Laurie Shrage are right to point out that Christian pro-life organizations "are not [the] only source"60 of anti-abortion organizing, researchers have made compelling cases that apocalyptic millennialism has been the basis for pro-life killings.70

Moreover, while apocalypticism may not be the origin or the cause of the anti-abortion controversy in America, the abortion "debate" has been described in (both secular and religious) apocalyptic terms so often that we consider it a civil war, a clash of absolutes, and a conflict in which you are either with us or against us. Calling for compromise or common ground only reestablishes this dichotomous view of the controversy by suggesting that we must move away from conflict. Callers for compromise often presume that the controversy is a natural, perhaps inevitable, conflict over the rights of the mother/woman and the rights of the child/fetus.

But there are those of us who believe that the abortion "debate" is a manufactured moral divide, constructed in increasingly apocalyptic terms as a fundraising and election vehicle of cultural conservatism.71 This view requires an understanding of the institutional history of various pro-life organizations and campaigns (which I partially provide in Killing for Life). It does not require a denial of any individual or general ambivalence about particular circumstances or motivations for obtaining or providing abortions.

For example, one need not embrace the idea or the actuality of terminating pregnancy during the final stages of gestation in order to recognize, as cold hard fact, that the banning of so-called partial-birth abortions is a political strategy that first created what it sought to

60 Shrage, supra note 8, at viii.
70 See Berlet & Lyons, supra note 3, at 11–13, 323–44 (tracing the roots of Christian apocalypticism and millennialism and their roles in right-wing populist movements); Mason, supra note 1, at 2 (suggesting that the "apocalyptic narrative is what gives ideological coherence to the vast variety of individuals and institutions that describe themselves as pro-life"); Reiter, supra note 3, at 253 (providing a personal account of the violent anti-abortion movement and noting the relationship between antiabortion assassinations and the Armageddon); Risen & Thomas, supra note 3, at 125 (1998) (discussing militant theological arguments "designed to wake fundamentalists from their long slumber"); Kaplan, supra note 3, at 128 (describing the "violent activism" the millenarian movement adopted in place of "non-violent witness").
prohibit. The name "partial-birth" was created with corresponding images, and what never before existed in the medical books became, through the power of cultural conservatism, seemingly self-evident proof that abortion provision is degenerate, savage, and increasingly out of control.\textsuperscript{72} Despite the fact that the abortion rate has dropped,\textsuperscript{73} anti-abortion organizations point to so-called partial-birth abortion with horror and "I-told-you-so" disgust, implying an \textit{acceleration} in the "evil of abortion." While the images of the partial-birth campaign are designed to repulse, it is the underlying \textit{narrative}—which purports that late-term procedures signal an increase in inhumanity, an influx of evildoers, an unprecedented devaluation of life, and a culture of death that threatens the world—that gives the campaign credibility and produces an apocalyptic zeal to take action. Feminists who recognize the overt manipulation of the partial-birth campaign are reluctant to find common ground with those who so blatantly manufacture the "truth."

Instead of seeking common ground or compromise, now is the time to articulate fully the political differences that distinguish United States feminism not only from conservatism but also from liberalism, in which individual women seek to advance their own personal station in society. We also need to distinguish ourselves from men and women who say they are working on behalf of poor and oppressed women throughout the world, but are actually advancing a socioeconomic system that privileges wealthy white Westerners. At this time I think it is clear that anti-abortion politics embrace and perpetuate a worldview that assumes a metaphysical evil is on the rise and that a culture of death (epitomized, if not inaugurated, by legal abortion) is sweeping the world.

This apocalyptic narrative may provide justification for three intolerable situations, resistance to which should help distinguish United States feminists from conservatives and liberals. The first situation is ignoring domestic terrorism aimed at reproductive health care providers. For instance, in the midst of the anthrax attacks of November 2001, a Brooklyn clinic administrator received letters purporting to contain anthrax and authorities ignored him, taking up to a week to determine whether he had been exposed to the deadly bacterium.\textsuperscript{74} Earlier in 1984, William Webster, former director of the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{72} See \textit{MASON}, supra note 1, at 80–88 (describing how "by coining this phrase, pro-life strategists created a purely political, neological category of late-term abortion").}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{73} See, e.g., Patricia Anstett, \textit{U.S. Abortion Rate Hits 29-Year Low, Study Shows}, \textit{DETROIT FREE PRESS}, Jan. 10, 2003 (explaining that the U.S. abortion rate "fell 19.3 percent between 1973 and 2000"), available at 2003 WL 2540646.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{74} Frank Monck discussed the lackadaisical treatment he received from the FBI when he informed them about the anthrax threats in an interview with Amy Goodman on a Democracy Now! radio broadcast. \textit{The FBI Catches Fugitive and Self-Described "Anti-Abortion Warrior" Clayton}
FBI, "bluntly declared that bombing a 'bank or a post office is terrorism. Bombing an abortion clinic is not an act of terrorism." The second situation involves perpetuating a double standard that privileges white American Christian men who commit (or are charged with) lethal acts that may be deemed terrorism as well as murder or manslaughter and, conversely, subjects non-white, non-American, non-Christian men to extralegal tactics of investigation, detention, and trial. The final situation involves evading and dismissing (rather than directly responding to) established arguments for abortion rights, including:

(1) the right to be free from social coercion on matters of personal importance, such as procreation, (2) the freedom to follow one's conscience on reasonably disputable moral matters, (3) freedom from involuntary servitude, which encompasses the right to refuse to provide help—even critically needed assistance—to others, and (4) freedom from bodily invasion and injury.

In response to these situations, we need to directly address the apocalyptic assumptions that underlie pro-life politics and attitudes. That would necessarily entail indicting the racial, ethnic, and imperial implications of pro-life propaganda, especially the signs, films, novels, websites, and magazines that present abortion as the third most atrocious "crime against humanity." For instance, a huge sign from a pro-life march featured in Soldiers in the Army of God reads, "Three Times in Modern History the Word Person Has Been Redefined." A slave auction notice, a swastika, and a NOW placard reading "Keep Abortion Legal" are displayed from left to right on the banner. Instead of taking issue with the word "person" and arguing about the personhood of the fetus, we should directly address the historical narrative that the banner purports. For the apocalyptic believer, it suggests that not only are these things alike, but also that they are part of a progression of evil, that "modern history" is a time of increasing corruption, and that God's wrath awaits those who enable the satanic forces. One implication (or subliminal message) of such apocalyptic logic is that abortion is worse than slavery or Nazism because white Western Christian babies are now the victims. While


SHIRAGE, supra note 8, at 41.

See FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER & C. EVERETT KOOP, WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE HUMAN RACE 17 (1979) (establishing the trend of pro-life propaganda in the late 1970s); see also MASON, supra note 1, at 115–80 (describing Schaeffer's and Koop's book and film of the same name and how they moved pro-lifers to action).

Soldiers in the Army of God, supra note 50.
people of color in the United States and worldwide may have legitimate concerns over abortion as part of genocidal tactics against them, the argument that abortion is genocide here in the United States is perpetuated largely by white men. Specifically, it is an argument put forth by white supremacists who consider abortion to be a Jewish-engineered conspiracy against the white race. Moreover, arguing that abortion is genocide is the specialty of those white men who dreamed up the Genocide Awareness Project as an appeal to the Promise Keepers, who seek women’s submission and who want to take back their families and their country for Jesus Christ. This imperial attitude is manifest destiny writ small, a miniature version of the United States pro-war imperialism that put troops in Iraq in 2003.

Especially because pro-life propaganda is infused with apocalypticism and has become increasingly overt in its religiosity, feminists have an opportunity to make the case for access to safe, funded, and legal abortion under the (heretofore unlikely) rubric of religious freedom. Subjecting the thousands of women who terminate pregnancies to restrictions and regulations based on the apocalyptic view that not only is abortion sinful, but also that it is evil, and, moreover, that the increase in evil imperils the earth, is to subject a whole class of people to an incredibly specific and limited religious view. The president and the pope alike decry a “culture of death” and a “devaluation of life”; these are profoundly religious assumptions. Recognizing this bolsters the idea that reproductive freedom is religious freedom.

79 See MASON, supra note 1, at 38–45 (discussing the views of American white supremacists who believe that unborn white generations are the victims of genocide).
80 See id. at 32–38 (describing the argument of white supremacists that Jews are responsible for abortion in the United States).
81 In a similar vein, Jakobsen and Pellegrini use religious freedom to argue for religious tolerance for homosexuals. JAKOBSEN & PELLEGRINI, supra note 21, at 104 (suggesting that disestablishment and free exercise mean that the state should not interfere with the free exercise of sexual expression by forcing a person to emulate religious ideologies that demonize homosexuality).
82 William Saletan describes George W. Bush’s equivocation on the abortion issue, recognizing his ability to pay “lip service to an abortion ban while effectively ruling it out and focusing instead on popular restrictions.” WILLIAM SALETAN, BEARING RIGHT: HOW CONSERVATIVES WON THE ABORTION WAR 251 (2003). However, Saletan does not address the apocalyptic images and phrases that Bush uses to pay such lip service. Bush has used the ideas of “culture of death” and “devaluation of life” in various speeches, including his decision to support cloning research on August 9, 2001, George W. Bush, Remarks by the President on Stem Cell Research, Address to the Nation (Aug. 9, 2001), at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/20010809-2.html, and in his companion opinion essay, George W. Bush, Editorial, Stem Cell Science and the Preservation of Life, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 12, 2001, at 13. For discussion of papal uses of apocalyptic phrases and themes in encyclicals, see MASON, supra note 1, at 166–71 (discussing the indeterminacy of the term “life” in the encyclical).
As for claiming abortion rights as human rights, at this juncture in history it can only direct conversation back to the question of the fetus and its humanity. In the context of the prevailing apocalyptic narrative of pro-life politics, such discussion carries with it the message that humanity—on a cosmic scale even more so than on an individual “baby” scale—is imperiled because of abortion. Some feminists and pro-choice professionals who insist that we should consider morals and lead with our hearts rather than our heads seem also to be under the impression that fighting for reproductive freedom has reduced our humanity. I do not believe that morals and emotions have been absent from even the most militant push for abortion without apology or abortion on demand. Nor do I agree that there exists some grievous and wholesale disregard of human life in feminist advocacy of legal, funded abortion provision. These charges against the feminist demand for abortion are a softer, secular variation on the theme that abortion is evil and corrodes our individual or collective moral core. Articulating abortion rights as human rights may seek to challenge these assumptions and to assume instead the moral high ground. But discursively such an approach only reestablishes what it aims to resist because it sits so very comfortably with the pro-life assumption that abortion provision is a gauge of America’s or the world’s humanity.

This overriding question of humanity is what I think made my comparison of the fetus with Big Foot funny. The parody reconfigured the concerns over what qualifies as human life in a context that most of us (Big Foot believers excluded) find absurd. But what drove away Operation Rescue and prevented a Wichita-style siege that summer was not my silly stunt or any demonstration of our humanity. What stopped the potential closing of the clinic was not the police or the clinic staff. It was the fact that we stood up early in the morning, with humor and community spirit, to those who would have liked to have scared us away. After 9/11, we can recognize this type of solidarity not only as standing up for women beleaguered by protesters and legal restrictions, but also as not giving into terrorism—the terrorism of Clayton Waagner, Eric Rudolph, and others who feel justified in killing abortion providers and subordinating women.

As long as feminists play by the rules of the abortion debate—representing it as a clash of moral absolutes and a matter of competing rights, focusing primarily on the fetus, and avoiding historical perspective—we who believe in reproductive freedom as a matter of social justice for women, not the social responsibility of women, still have our work cut out for us. We need to re-articulate how access to abortion, as one aspect of reproductive freedom, is imperative for wresting women from subordination in societies that devalue us. Recognizing and articulating common struggles among those who are subjected to apocalyptic ideologies and imperialist regimes, rather
than compromising with those who perpetuate them, is how to confront anti-abortion terrorism and fight for reproductive freedom now.