

The letter below was sent to Kent, Washington Planned Parenthood Security Manager Linda Simpson and other Planned Parenthood managers to protest their opposition to defenders of abortion rights who gathered outside the clinic to oppose the far-right Patriot Prayer misogynists. In an email to Radical Women, Ms. Simpson stated Planned Parenthood's outlook very explicitly: "We do discourage protesters as well as counter protesters so we treat them alike." Radical Women believes this stance encouraged police to treat feminists as the threat, rather than the thuggish right-wingers. We feel it is urgent to debate this issue with Planned Parenthood and its supporters because if the community is not allowed to show its support for reproductive rights, these rights will surely be lost. There has been no reply as yet from Planned Parenthood.

Radical Women

July 5, 2018

Dear Linda Simpson and Planned Parenthood managers,

As your email acknowledges, the misogynist, far-right protesters outside Planned Parenthood on June 9 were a very small group that was far out-numbered by the 200+ defenders of reproductive justice. Once again, the community showed its support for women's right to control their own bodies. Several neighbors who came over from Fred Meyer to see what was happening joined our picketers and many who walked by expressed their thanks that we were there. We also heard from Planned Parenthood staff who were happy we were present.

Planned Parenthood's view that abortion is just health care, not "political," is sadly, dangerously, out of step with the reality of attacks on the right to abortion, physical attacks on clinics and staff, and continuous efforts to undermine Planned Parenthood's own financial lifeline. Without mass efforts in the streets, on the sidewalks and in the legislatures, abortion would still be illegal. Mass organizing won legal abortion and is the only way it will be saved. This is what has also won huge gains for abortion in countries such as Ireland and Argentina.

Planned Parenthood's line that ignoring the far-right is the best way to defeat it is completely wrong by every historical and sociological standard. Patriot Prayer doesn't just want "attention." It is mobilizing with groups that are outright fascists, white supremacists, racists, anti-Semites, homophobes, and immigrant-bashers. They want to eliminate every aspect of civil liberties and social progress. The subjugation of women is a key part of their platform, and rolling back access to abortion and contraception is key to that effort. Right now, we are facing

a rising right wing in the U.S. and globally that is not only recruiting in the streets but has also been elected to political office. To ignore these forces is to embolden them, because, like all bullies, they thrive on fear. There were some who thought Hitler and Mussolini should “not be given a platform,” and we can see where that led.

Your policy of “treating protesters and counter-protesters alike” led directly to police and sheriffs’ deputies treating the feminists as the enemy. While the anti-abortion contingent had a police escort over your property to the sidewalk, we were shoved with truncheons and pepper-sprayed. Two of our friends had to be taken away for treatment. Apparently, your instructions to the police led to this brutal treatment.

As you know, the Kent clinic wasn’t even open on June 9, so the “privacy” of your patients wasn’t an issue. However, I want to make it clear that we too value patient rights and safety. Many of us have provided clinic escorts over the years and stood arm-in-arm to prevent clinic invaders while cops passively stood by.

But we are also concerned with the long-term safety of your patients through keeping abortion legal and accessible. Planned Parenthood management does not own the issue of reproductive justice. We will continue to fight for your agency’s right to exist, for your funding and the services you provide. We will also continue to defend abortion rights and stand up to encroachers in the way that history and our own experience have shown to be the most effective.

In struggle,
Gina Petry
Organizer
Radical Women- Seattle chapter