

Advice to Leslie Hanks: face the reality of illegal abortion, sell your glass house, and quit whining

Dear Editor,

In her Oct. 11 letter, Leslie Hanks of Colorado's Right to Life whined about the way The Colorado Statesman chose to cover the recent NARAL election rally, charging that The Colorado Statesman lacked balance in its coverage because they didn't mention that anti-abortion extremists chose to crash someone else's party. I find her whining to be disingenuous and childish because the media, in general, tends to cover the sensational antics of anti-abortion extremists far more often than abortion rights activities.

For example, when the anti-abortion extremist group Justice for All came from Kansas to Colorado State University last April and erected 18 feet high steel girded pictures of alleged aborted fetuses, Life and Liberty for Women provided an alternative view for students. Our display consisted of 10 science project size cardboards featuring an enormous amount of facts about illegal abortion and challenges to false anti-abortion claims about legal abortion, some specific to the claims this particular group plastered on their steel panels. Our display also featured graphic pictures of the consequences of illegal abortion.

Rahaf Kalaajii, a reporter for the Fort Collins Coloradoan, covered the

event. She browsed our display. I asked if she had any questions, believing she was a student, having no idea she was a reporter. She said no. She wasn't professional enough to introduce herself and own the fact she was a reporter and she wasn't unbiased. She never inquired about our organization or why we decided to provide this display in contrast. Her story never mentioned our presence. When confronted her response was that a student she quoted in the story expressed our views. Considering the unprecedented historical view of illegal abortion our display contained and how outside the norm in the way abortion rights organizations typically respond to this type of anti-abortion presence, our absence from the story was very telling.

I've a question for Ms. Hanks. When Life and Liberty for Women crashes her next anti-abortion rally with our graphic pictures of illegal abortion, will she "desperately seek to cover our signs that portray the ugly reality" of illegal abortion that claimed women's lives and didn't save babies and will she be as critical of the media for not providing balanced coverage if they

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leave us out of the coverage of her event?

Hanks is right.

Abortion stops a beating heart, but so does illegal abortion which history confirms also places women's health and life at risk. Surely Hanks recognizes that reducing unintended pregnancies reduces the number of abortions without endangering women's lives.

Further, anti-abortion extremists have a record of using deception to portray alleged aborted fetuses. In the July 1992 issue of Life Magazine, for example, the Reverend Robert Schenck carried what he alleged was an aborted fetus into a demonstration outside a New York abortion clinic. When he was arrested after the fetus was dropped to the ground, the county coroner determined the fetus was a 20-week stillborn fetus, not an aborted fetus.

Additionally, in January 2000 one of my board members and myself appeared outside of a local church where Larimer County Right to Life gathered with their families to bemoan the anniversary of Roe vs. Wade. We displayed a 30 X 40 black and white picture of Gerri Santoro who died in 1984 at age 28 from a self-induced abortion, the way most women died pre-Roe. The picture is

a New York County Coroner's picture. Gerri is lying nude on her stomach, her knees underneath her and blood soaked towels around her. When the illegal abortion went wrong her boyfriend left her there to die, alone and scared, and no baby was saved. She left behind two young daughters.

Two men from the group approached, asking us to cover our picture when they exited the building with their children to march downtown. That unbelievable display of hypocrisy and audacity was shameless. We declined, saying parents could steer their children away from the picture or explain it to them. Not twenty minutes later, one of their elderly men left the building and crossed the street with one of their graphic pictures.

Finally, for Hanks' edification, illegal abortion was "relegated to the ash heap of history" 29 years ago "as another failed enlightened notion" in favor of Roe vs. Wade. My advise to Hanks, face the reality of illegal abortion, sell her glass house before she throws anymore stones, and don't be a whiner.

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