

Anti-choicers hold clinic hostage

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BY ANNDEE HOCHMAN

Since the Supreme Court in July opened the gateway for state-based restrictions on abortion, anti-choice demonstrators have rushed into the fray with aggressive protests at local clinics.

At the same time, clinic administrators and pro-choice activists have stepped up their side of the struggle, seeking court orders to limit clinic protests and holding a march on November 12 that drew thousands of people, making the event Portland's largest pro-choice demonstration to date.

In October, a day-long "Operation Rescue" protest at the Portland Feminist Women's Health Center kept some health workers and patients trapped inside the building at 6510 SE Foster Road while anti-abortion picketers blockaded the doors.

Jude Hanzo, executive director of the health center, said the October 28 protest seemed to mark a new, aggressive turn in local anti-abortion strategy.

When clinic staff arrived for work at 7:15 am, the front and side doors were already blocked by more than 75 protesters. Hanzo said she and other workers informed protesters of a federal injunction that restricts protests at the clinic, then drove clients to a safe place nearby.

Police arrived after 9 am, cordoned off a path leading to the side door on 65th Avenue

and helped four staff and nine clients enter the clinic. A few hours later, police returned and made another temporary path so more people could enter.

In between, no one went in or out. "It was a lot rougher [than previous protests]," said Hanzo. "They surrounded cars, pushed patients. There were women crying. It was really violent. It was frightening. It felt like anything could go out of control at any time."

After police left the second time, patients and staff were virtually held hostage in the building until the protesters disbanded about 4:15. From inside, they could hear the protesters shouting "Please don't murder your baby" and "There's a place reserved in hell for you."

"A lot of people were denied access to the building," said Hanzo. "They were told by the antis that the clinic was closed."

The Feminist Women's Health Center has been the site of weekly demonstrations since 1984. A federal injunction prohibits protests there in a 25-foot zone surrounding the front door; it also limits protesters from screaming or chanting in a way that interferes with clinic services, trespassing on clinic property or blocking access to the building.

The October 28 demonstration was the second time the clinic was the target of the nationally-organized Operation Rescue. Typically, anti-abortion protesters attempt to sit in, block doors and shut down clinic

operations for the day.

In a demonstration just two weeks after the Supreme Court's July 3 decision, about 60 picketers blocked all the clinic doors. When police pulled them away from the doors and formed a line on the sidewalk, protesters rushed in and swarmed the doors again, a tactic known as "capping the chute."

After that demonstration, 28 individuals as well as the Advocates for Life organization were found in contempt of court for violating terms of the injunction. Typically, violators are not fined until their second breach of the injunction; then they must pay \$500.

At the most recent demonstration, police did not make any arrests. Generally, police policy on clinic demonstrations is to work as

quickly and efficiently as possible to pull protesters from the doors and get patients inside.

"The police have said that if protesters don't rush the doors or break the police line, they won't make arrests," Hanzo said.

The health center plans to meet with Mayor Bud Clark in an effort to change that policy. Also, clinic administrators are pursuing contempt-of-court charges on the October 28 demonstrators.

"I think once they have to pay fines and are held accountable, they'll stop," said Hanzo. "We're also planning to meet with the mayor to talk about why we think they need to make arrests. It's important not to rely on one thing as the whole solution." ▼

GLAAD confronts NBC Nightly News

Board members of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) recently met with NBC Nightly News executive producer William Wheatley to discuss the "sensationalistic" presentations of stories with "homosexual angles." At issue was NBC's coverage of the United States Navy's investigation into the explosion on the *USS Iowa* last April, which killed 47 sailors.

In May "unnamed sources" within the Naval Investigative Services (NIS) leaked to NBC correspondent Fred Francis claims that there was evidence of a murder/suicide involving a "homosexual relationship" between Gunner's Mate Clayton Hartwig (who was killed in the blast) and Gunner's Mate Kendall Truitt (who survived). In June, Francis reported that Navy investigators were "convinced" that Hartwig was a "troubled homosexual" who was suicidal because other sailors had rejected his advances. In both cases the national media picked up the story, with attribution to NBC.

GLAAD members told Wheatley that "if you're going to put up a graphic during an early story on the investigation that says 'Troubled Homosexual,' you have an obligation to state that the final report contained no finding of homosexuality. And if you are going to do a lead story saying that David Smith told NIS interrogators that Hartwig had made sexual advances toward him, you have a responsibility to report that Smith later recanted his testimony, saying that he had been threatened into telling the NIS what it wanted to hear."

NBC reported the story without questioning the motives of the "unnamed sources," and ignored the Navy's vested interest in suggesting that a "troubled homosexual" was behind the blast. GLAAD's complaint against NBC's coverage was buttressed by the large amount of mail NBC received after its coverage of the investigation.

"The community's response underscored the seriousness of the situation," said GLAAD board member Michael Allen. "We made it clear that the views of gay and lesbian spokespeople must be included in stories that impact the lives of gays and lesbians. To many in the media, this is still a novel idea."

In a breakthrough for the major mainstream press, the San Francisco Examiner observed this year's celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Stonewall by publishing a 16-part series called "Gay In America" (GIA).

GIA includes an account of the growth of the gay and lesbian community, a nationwide survey of gay and straight attitudes towards gay life in America, and news stories and personal accounts on such topics as gays and religion, gays and politics, gay culture, gays in the arts, and the impact of AIDS on the gay community.

By arrangement with the San Francisco Examiner, GLAAD is making a 64-page reprint of GIA available to students, activists and others who might be interested in the series. Prices are \$4.50 each (including postage), or \$3 each for bulk orders of 25 or more. For more information, or to order reprints, write to GLAAD, 80 Varick Street #3E, New York, NY 10013. ▼

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