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## Rep. Todd Akin's Illegitimate Views

I felt the spirit of Dr. Aaronette White guiding my fingers for this column. A couple of weeks ago, Aaronette died suddenly at the premature age of 51 years. A rape survivor and a respected psychology professor, she was a fierce warrior for the reproductive rights of women, particularly African-American women.

During her brief stint in St. Louis during the 1980s, she organized black women (and some black men) to take out a full page ad in *The St. Louis American* condemning rape in the black community. It was a bold move that pulled the covers off an issue that had rarely received public scrutiny.

Recently Congressman Todd Akin (R) caused a firestorm when asked about his staunch opposition to abortion in the case of women getting pregnant after a rape. He gave this stunning explanation: “If it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down.”

GOP leaders ran as fast and far away from Akin as they could. Karl Rove snatched back the money his American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS PAC gave the Akin campaign. The Republican National Committee chair, along with other party officials, demanded that Akin – who won the Republican primary for U.S. Senate on Aug. 7 – step down.

VP contender Paul Ryan called the remarks “outrageous” and “indefensible.” I found this retort



**ST. LOUIS AMERICAN**

Jamala Thomas

to be quite hypocritical as Ryan shares the same viewpoint. Ryan

The laws prohibit federal funding of abortion or birth control services resulting in defunding of groups like Planned Parenthood. Abortion clinics have been bombed, and doctors who performed abortions have been assaulted or killed.

The detrimental bills passed by Republicans also have attempted to redefine rape. They have coined new and confusing terms like

sisted in conservative circles for a couple of decades. They have emanated from Dr. John Wilke, a butthead who must have bought his medical degree online at [www.degreesforstupidpeople.com](http://www.degreesforstupidpeople.com). All the other right-wing nuts defer to Dr. Wilke’s demented medical explanation: that women have some biological semen blocker that is released during rape.

I decided to consult a real ob-gyn doctor about the validity of these unscientific ideas; maybe I had missed some new research on the subject. I called up my niece, Dr. Rene Turner, who graduated Summa Cum Laude from real medical schools (Xavier and Tulane) and now works with real women patients. She totally debunked the pre-historic thinking about rape and pregnancies and expressed surprised that any sane person would promote such harmful myths.

This brings me all the way back to Dr. White and countless others who have worked tirelessly to educate the general society on the issue of rape, to end the attacks on women’s reproductive rights and to bring about the personal and psychological security of women. We who believe in freedom and women’s rights should not rest until the lives, choices and dignity of all women are fully restored and protected.

Last year, nearly 1,000 anti-abortion bills were introduced across the country. The laws have teetered on the absurd, such as forcing women to endure vaginal ultrasounds before abortions, or redefining the moment of conception

and Akin have co-sponsored bills that are tearing away at the right to a safe and accessible abortion.

Last year, nearly 1,000 anti-abortion bills were introduced across the country. The laws have teetered on the absurd, such as forcing women to endure vaginal ultrasounds before abortions, or redefining the moment of conception. An Arizona law passed this year declared that pregnancy begins two weeks before conception!

“forcible rape” and “consensual rape.”

Akin’s comments amplified the voices of some of the 32,000 women who are raped each year but who make a conscious choice to keep their babies. Women like Shauna Prewitt. Did you know that the rapist fathers can sue for parental rights? Prewitt knows all too well.

The attack on rape victims is unconscionable even though these draconian views on rape have per-

## Republicans on Parade: Who Built What?

The Republican National Convention’s theme was, “We Built This.” One of the speakers was Sher Valenzuela, a Delaware businesswoman who happens to be Latina. She touted the success of her upholstery business and implied it thrived because of her hard work.

That’s only partly true. She also thrived because she started out with \$2 million loan from the Small Business Administration, and got another \$15 million in non-competitive government contracts. Would her company, First State Manufacturing, have made it without government help? Your guess is as good as mine. But the notion that “we built this” is extremely shortsighted.

What exactly did these Republicans build without government help? They don’t even go to work every day in our nation’s Capitol without the help of unpaid enslaved people who toiled rock and worked in hot sun to build our nation’s Capitol. It took until 2010 for our nation’s leaders to erect a plaque commemorating this effort. We built the Capitol? And it’s isn’t the same “we” the Republicans are talking about.

It reminds me of a book written by Pulitzer Prize-winner Annette Gordon Reed, “The Hemmings of Monticello (2008).” As she reprises some of former President Thomas Jefferson’s diaries, he writes about all the cotton and tobacco “we” planted. I had an amazing visual of Jefferson with a hoe picking and planting. He did-



**BENNETT COLLEGE**

Julianne Malveaux

n’t. He appropriated the effort of other people’s work, initiative, and infrastructure. He didn’t plant a thing. Enslaved people did the work. Based on his diaries, though, the man who died nearly

interconnected and the many ways that the government role stimulates business. Federal, state, and local government engage in practices that subsidize businesses because they hope for a return, or because they believe that there are benefits to the community that may come because of government investment. Still, the Republican stance seems to be a purposeful amnesia, an attempt to ignore the many ways government facilitates the building that they claim they do.

Congressman Paul Ryan, Mitt

What exactly did these Republicans build without government help?

bankrupt, expropriates the work of others in his use of the term “we.”

Republicans held their convention last week at the Tampa Bay Times Forum. This is a convention center that was partly built with government money, to the tune of \$86 million. As the arena was renovated to accommodate Republican attendees to the convention, no doubt government funds were also used for some of this. This is one of the tax subsidies that Republicans often decry. And how does government justify this? The infusion of all those big spenders might bring money to local vendors and tax dollars to the community. I’d like to see the accounting.

President Obama is right to talk about the way all enterprise is

Romney’s running mate, peppered his speech with slams on President Obama. In his Wednesday night speech, he said “None of us have to settle for the best this administration offers, a dull, adventureless journey from one entitlement to the next, a government-planned life.”

What entitlements is he talking about? Subsidies to Head Start, proven to make a difference in early childhood education? Unemployment benefits, which many in his Janesville, Wisc., hometown community used when a General Motors plant closed under President George Bush not, as he suggested, President Obama? Would he remove Pell grant subsidies to college students? Would he eliminate Social

Security? Does he visit national parks? Government subsidies built that. Does he ride on any of our nation’s government subsidized roads and highways? Ryan has told us what he feels about Medicare, but his slam on government entitlements ignores the work government has done. Who built the roads? “We” didn’t. Government did, with the help of well-paid contractors.

If Republicans want to know what “we” built, they need to look back to the record of former President George W. Bush. That president built a banking crisis, and gave banks nearly \$800 billion to bail themselves out. Bush built an unemployment rate that continued to soar under the leadership of his successor, President Barack Obama. President Built built a couple of wars, leaving the splash back to President Obama. Romney and Ryan; Do you own the house your party built, the house President Obama is trying to repair? Will you claim the “we” on this?

Republicans need to be reminded of who built what when they walk into our nation’s Capitol. Some folks eagerly claim credit for their quasi-accomplishments. Others toil, and it takes more than 200 years for our nation to grudgingly acknowledge them. As a descendent of enslaved people, that “we built it” rhetoric repels me.

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