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Patricia Irvin
Graphic Designer

Monica J. Foster
Seattle Office Coordinator

Susan Fried
Photographer



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415 N. Killingsworth St.
P.O. Box 5455
Portland, OR 97228

Telephone (503) 285-5555
Fax: (503) 285-2900

info@theskanner.com

www.TheSkanner.com

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Opinion

Gag Rule Threatens the Health of People of Color

Donald Trump’s new gag rule is disastrous policy that will disproportionately impact communities of color, making existing barriers to health care for people of color even worse. It “gags” doctors and prevents them from telling patients about all of their options, including abortion. It also threatens to block access to basic care at reproductive health centers.

The idea of doctors withholding information or knowingly not offering patients access to available services is the antithesis of patient-centered care and, in this case, disproportionately impacts women who would not otherwise be able to identify and access those services on their own. The gag rule is unethical, illegal and harmful to public health.

Planned Parenthood health centers provide access to crucial preventive healthcare services to underserved communities in Oregon through Title X, the nation’s program for affordable birth control and other reproductive health care. Services provided through Title X are so essential — including wellness exams; STI testing, education



Sirius Bonner

Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette

and counseling; and breast and cervical cancer screenings.

Almost 50,000 Oregonians receive care through Title X. For many of our patients, we are their only source of care.

There is already a massive divide between who does and

“The gag rule is unethical, illegal and harmful to public health

doesn’t have health care in Oregon, and the gag rule will only worsen these racial, socioeconomic and geographical health disparities. Due to discriminatory public policy and systemic racism, women of color and women with low incomes already face barriers in accessing health care and, under this gag rule, they’re going to bear the brunt of the

harm.

Of Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette’s Title X patients in Oregon, 5 percent identify as Black or African American and 22 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. Research shows that the barriers to health care that many women of color face often result in delayed diagnoses, higher rates of breast and cervical cancer, and increased mortality rates for breast cancer.

Families that are struggling to make ends meet and people who live in rural areas must have the same access to full, unbiased information from their doctor as everyone else. Planned Parenthood will never force our clinicians to withhold medical information from our patients, and we will fight the Trump administration in the courts to protect everyone’s fundamental right to health care.

Last month, a federal district court judge in Oregon issued a preliminary injunction to block the gag rule. However, this is still a temporary reprieve.

The gag rule is just the latest step in Trump’s efforts to ban abortion, restrict reproductive rights and block care

at Planned Parenthood. If Roe vs. Wade is overturned, more than one in three women of reproductive age in this country could be left without access to abortion in their home state. This includes nearly 3.5 million Black or African American women, more than 4.3 million Hispanic or Latino women, more than 800,000 Asian women and nearly 300,000 American Indian or Alaska Native women of reproductive age.

It’s clear that this administration is punishing community members who are the most impacted by health, education and economic inequities — the communities who continue to be targeted by racist, homophobic, xenophobia and ableist policies and laws. Meanwhile, the government continues to cut social service programs such as child care, education, housing support and other integral services that our families rely on, making its agenda clear.

At a time of rising maternal mortality and escalating STI infections, politicians need to stop attacking women’s rights and instead work with doctors and public health leaders to increase access to health care.

Trump, Media Assaults on Omar a New Low for US Politics

American politics appears to have hit a new low.

According to reports, Congresswoman Ilhan Omar has beefed up security following the vicious attacks she’s received and even news reports that paint her as un-American.

What’s worse, the attacks stem from tweets made against her by President Donald Trump.

“The criticisms of Congresswoman Omar, what Trump has been saying about her, is reprehensible,” said New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, a Democratic presidential candidate.

“It is trafficking in Islamophobia, and should be condemned by everyone,” Booker said.

One of the first Muslim women to serve in Congress, Omar has come under repeated attack from the president and others, including Fox News as a result of her questioning America’s relationship with Israel.

“We will never forget,” Trump tweeted in all-capital letters recently, attaching a video that spliced together comments Omar made with footage of the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks.

Some media favorable to the president have also attacked Omar and despite death threats made against her, Trump has continued his assault by calling her — without any supporting evidence



Stacy M. Brown

NNPA Columnist

and against her denials — “anti-Semitic,” and “anti-Israel.”

Booker noted that Trump has also attacked other African American women leaders like California Rep. Maxine Waters.

“It is trafficking in Islamophobia, and should be condemned by everyone

“The kind of language this president uses, especially about black women in power, is toxic,” Booker said.

That Trump claims he’s not racist isn’t satisfactory, Booker said.

“It’s not enough to say, I’m not a racist. We must all be anti-racist,” he said.

The rhetoric by Trump and his allies against Omar have resulted in the Senator ramping up security, particularly as she’s received death threats.

Recently, a Rhode Island man allegedly threatened to “kill every Democrat in the

world,” federal officials said.

Matthew Haviland, 30, of North Kingstown was charged after sending approximately 28 threatening emails on March 10 to a college professor, whose name and affiliation was withheld by federal officials. Haviland is facing federal threat charges and cyberstalking.

In an affidavit, FBI task force officer Richard Laft, Jr. wrote that the professor told authorities Haviland’s “views regarding abortion and politics have become more extreme” within the last year.

The professor, who had been friends with Haviland for about 11 years, believed Haviland’s views changed because “of the way the news media portrays” President Donald Trump, Laft wrote.

Authorities said Omar was among the Democrats whom Haviland threatened to kill.

Latagia Copeland-Tyronce, a writer and journalist out of Detroit, said as a black woman and social justice advocate, she knows “all too well what it feels like to be attacked for speaking up and out.”

“And, as such, I believe that there should be a zero-tolerance policy in regards to our black representatives in Congress,” Copeland-Tyronce said.

“We, as a people, cannot allow our black leaders to be attacked for their advocacy. I am a proponent of freedom of speech and freedom of the

press, however, abuse and racism crosses the line and should be called out when and where it rears its ugly head,” she said.

Dr. Omekongo Dibinga, an American University professor and director of Upstander International, said it’s imperative that all stand up to bigotry.

“We need to fight fire with facts. I know that President Trump has ushered in the era of fake news and alternative facts, but I believe at the end of the day, the reality of his policies of lies and dissension will do him in, even with his followers as the effects of [Former President] Barack Obama’s positive economy begin to dwindle and they realized he never cared about them in the first place,” Dibinga said.

Shiwon Oh of Sogang University in Seoul, South Korea, said Trump’s presidency exposes a racist underbelly of America that has always been there from the beginning.

“He just gave validation to their opinions and beliefs that its influence is now seeping into mainstream media channels like Fox News,” Oh said.

“All people can do is continue countering the lies with facts, voicing their opposition to racial oppression, and urging their communities to be on the right side of history, even if it means being ridiculed by some,” she said.