

Anti-abortion movement put weapon in slayer's hand

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The news that Dr. David Gunn's assassin is going to jail for a long time is welcome. But we who provide abortion services would rather have Dr. Gunn back than see Michael Griffin go to jail.

And we are not comforted. We know that many people in the anti-abortion movement see Griffin as a political hero, and that his act inspires others, as it did the woman who shot Dr. George Tiller last August. No sooner had Griffin's verdict been announced than the fanatics who support him declared that he did the right thing. To them, killing a doctor who does abortions is "justifiable homicide." It isn't. Why is it necessary to say that?

We are beginning to emerge from the long night of terror under the Reagan and Bush administrations, when we knew we had no tribunal at the highest levels of government. We now have a president and administration that supports the right to choose and that upholds the Constitution in these matters, we have legislation passed by both houses of Congress that will help protect us, and even the Supreme Court has ruled that we may seek redress against those who would use force to close and obstruct abortion clinics.

But we ask: How many more Michael Griffins are out there who believe they have such a monopoly on the truth that they may use deadly force to kill those who disagree? A lot, we think.

Michael Griffin tried to kill a thought - freedom.

While I am encouraged by the jury's verdict and grateful that justice has been done, and while I am confident that the vast majority of Americans reject the ruthless violence of the anti-abortion movement, I have just finished installing a high fence with electric controls around my office to protect us from people like Griffin. It cost nearly \$20,000. That is not a normal cost of medical practice, but it is a normal cost of providing abortion services. And that doesn't include all the other tens of thousands of dollars we are forced to spend to protect ourselves and our patients from a political terrorist movement.

One federal judge stated to me recently that the problem is now solved with the passage of federal legislation and court rulings that are beginning to open the way for legal attacks on the anti-abortion movement.

Some people may think the problem is solved. We do not, and we may not dare assume that in our daily lives. We watch, we take precautions, and we live our lives more carefully, because now everyone knows what we have known for years: The anti-abortion movement will stop at nothing to achieve its ends and to gain power. Part of the reason is that it is linked to other forces of extremism and reaction in this country that threaten democratic society.

Why must we work behind bullet-proof windows, high steel fences, and wear bullet-proof vests? Because what we do gives freedom to women, and that helps secure freedom for all of us. The anti-abortion movement hates freedom in any form.

That's why it is so dangerous.

How ironic it was that Griffin's defense team tried to get him off by claiming that his mind had been warped by anti-abortion propaganda films. It had been, of course. And they claimed that he should not be held responsible for the results of letting his mind be warped. He should be, of course. But it illustrates that the consequence of their propaganda and hate literature had exactly the effect intended. Their delusion was fulfilled.

It is a dangerous delusion, America, and you had better listen and understand that it hates all you stand for: individual freedom as distinguished from state control of human lives; free thought instead of ignorance; and personal responsibility for one's own actions instead of mindless totalitarianism.

Michael Griffin tried to kill a thought – freedom. He did not succeed.

(Dr. Warren Hern is director of the Boulder Abortion Clinic)