

Florida doctor's death resulted from 20 years of inciting violence

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The murder of Dr. David Gunn in front of his Florida abortion clinic was not the isolated act of a deranged loner. It was the inevitable consequence of 20 years of violent and inflammatory rhetoric from the radical Christian right that paints abortion as a "Holocaust" and doctors who perform abortions as "baby killer," "murderers," "Nazi doctors," and other hateful epithets.

Dr. Gunn's assassination culminated 20 years of violent terrorist acts that included stalking and harassment of patients and staff members and the bombing of clinics. The idea that a six-week embryo is equal to or more important than the life of a cantankerous adult doctor is no longer a sick private delusion. It is a collective psychosis masquerading as religion that has become a political force threatening democratic society.

The Republican Party, George Bush, and Ronald Reagan all have some of Dr. Gunn's blood on their hands because they made performing an abortion a political act. Reagan and Bush cynically manipulated the abortion issue to gain power, and the radical right of the Republican Party threatened to make abortion a political crime against the state. The Republican Party's 1992 national convention showed the depth of its capitulation to this totalitarian movement.

Pat Buchanan was right. There is a cultural war. It is a war of those who hate freedom and individual dignity against the rest of us who believe in democracy, enlightened self-determination, and individual freedom.

What did Dr. Gunn represent to the anti-abortion fanatic who killed him? He represented freedom. He represented individual dignity. He represented opportunity for women to become full citizens and participants in our society. He represented social change. He represented the value of the individual adult human being as opposed to state control of individual lives. He represented a thought. The man who killed Dr. Gunn tried to kill a thought.

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Dr. Gunn's crime was not that he killed children, which he did not, but that he brought liberty and health to women. He saved their lives and futures. That's why every doctor in America who does abortions lives under a death threat. Those of us who have been eyeball-to-eyeball with the anti-abortion movement and dodging bullets in our clinics for 20 years have known these things for a long time.

There is no good in Dr. Gunn's death, but we can only hope that his tragic and senseless murder will wake up the American people to the radical Christian right's determination to take absolute power in our society and to control its vital institutions.

The main difference between the American anti-abortion movement and the Islamic Jihad is about 8,000 miles. The main difference between the American anti-abortion movement and the Salem Witch hunts is 300 years. The similarity between the American anti-abortion movement and these other social convulsions is that they are all about power.

Fanatical opposition to abortion – and now, homosexuality – are simply tools of gaining power for this movement. Terrorism against abortion clinics has been one of their tools for nearly 20 years, and now political assassination is also a tool.

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