

August 2012

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## Off With His Head!

*When rape results in pregnancy, the baby has the same right to life as any child born by mutually loving parents. Only the Nazis would punish a child for the crimes of his or her father. --Judge Andrew Napolitano*

**E**stablishment Republicans and Democrats have found something to which they can both agree. Missouri congressman Todd Akin, the GOP candidate for a vacant U.S. Senate seat, must go. Akin has embarrassed his party leaders by advocating for pre-born children—even those conceived as a result of rape. During a recent interview, he “stepped in it” when he referred to “*legitimate*” rape. He should have said “forcible” rape. Yes, it was a big gaffe. Off with his head!

Howling like a pack of hyenas circling a wounded animal, Republican leaders assuaged CNN and abortion rights advocates by immediately calling for Rep. Akin to get out of the race. The first to make the appeal was freshman Sen. Scott Brown of Massachusetts, who Tony Perkins of Family Research Council says is “off the reservation” on many conservative issues. Brown, who is proud that a Congressional Quarterly analysis shows he only votes with his Republican caucus 54% of the time, has consistently called for a more inclusive party platform to reflect support for abortion rights.

Although many conservative claptraps from Rush Limbaugh to Michael Medved think Akin should abandon his race, we vigorously disagree—and so do most national pro-life leaders. Judge Andrew Napolitano notes that “in the cacophony of condemnation by Republicans and Democrats, is the implication in Akin’s comments that rape is not a moral justification for abortion. In that, he is correct: It is not.”

“Abortion,” says Napolitano, “takes the life of innocent human beings who are the most vulnerable in our society. Abortion is...the most frequently performed medical procedure in the United States. American physicians perform about two abortions every minute of every hour of every day—about one million a year since 1973. In my home state of New Jersey, abortion is permitted up to the moment of birth, and the state will even pay for it if the mother meets certain financial criteria. How low have we sunk? What are the consequences of this mass slaughter? How did we get here?”<sup>1</sup>

Also inclined to Akin’s thoughts and intentions is Jane Orient, M.D., Executive Director of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons. She says:

“All decent people, including U.S. Senate candidate Todd Akin, agree that forcible rape is a heinous crime. Almost all would agree that illegitimate (false) accusations of rape occur – there’s the case of the Duke lacrosse players, for example.

All reasonable people, including Todd Akin, agree that pregnancy can result from forcible rape—but there is scientific disagreement on how likely it is.

A 1988 textbook, the second edition of “Human Sex and Sexuality” by Edwin B. Steen and James H. Price, estimates a 2 percent pregnancy rate. A 2012 textbook, “Comprehensive Gynecology,” 6th edition, gives an estimate of between 2 percent and 5 percent and states that “in the experience of most sexual assault centers, the chance of pregnancy occurring is quite low.” Estimates depend on flawed methods, with inevitable biases. An experiment to give an accurate figure is, of course, impossible. And does the estimate really matter to the woman who has been raped? Either she gets pregnant, or she doesn’t.

(Jane Orient, cont'd)... “Is the risk of pregnancy lower with forcible rape, and if so, why? Off the cuff, Todd Akin gave a layman’s restatement of the point made by some pro-life physicians that the female body has some defense mechanisms against pregnancy in cases of rape. The process of fertilization, implantation and maintenance of pregnancy is an intricate one, highly dependent on hormonal signals. Stress is conceded to make miscarriage more likely by disrupting the hormonal milieu. What could be more stressful than a forcible rape?”

The intensity of the media outrage against Akin’s remark shows that this is not a scientific dispute about numbers, or the definition of “really rare.” Medical science is being replaced by political demagoguery about...rape.

Rape clearly involves a forcible penetration of a woman’s body, without her consent, almost always by a man. It is painful and causes harm—not just physical injury but often life-long, serious emotional distress [including] flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety, depression, difficulty forming normal relationships and even guilt.

Starting from one extreme, some radical feminists appear to believe that most if not all sex involving a man and a woman is a rape. The man is always the perpetrator, and the woman, a victim. Clearly, there are activities that are not forcible rape and do not involve the same emotional reaction, but are still not legitimate. These would include statutory rape, “date rape” and seduction. To suggest that a woman’s dress or behavior might in some cases have contributed is, of course, unacceptable. At the other extreme, radical Muslims appear to believe that rape rarely if ever occurs, and that all non-marital contact between a man and a woman is illegitimate and the fault of the temptress. From the fury directed at Akin, you’d think he had advocated Shariah law and “honor” killings.

...What happens in an abortion? A woman’s body is penetrated by instruments, usually in the hands of a man. The woman will have signed a consent form – but all too often because she felt she had “no choice.” The procedure is painful and bloody. Occasionally, serious physical injury occurs, sometimes even causing death of the mother. Judging from the million or so postings on the nonjudgmental website *afterabortion.com*, long-term emotional consequences are not uncommon, whatever official medical publications might say.

This procedure is almost always “legitimate” (legal) in the U.S. by order of the U.S. Supreme Court. It is the most common elective surgical procedure. We have lost as much as one-third of our younger generation because of it. The vast majority of Americans have been touched by it in some way. Of course it is emotional and divisive. Politicians who claim to be pro-life are often adamant about preserving an exception for rape or incest. This exception is a fig leaf over the reality of what an abortion is. Coming too close to The Question is feared to jeopardize the chance to gain political power.

Akin’s phrasing became a convenient pretext for raising a disproportionate clamor as a diversion from the real problem. Those politicians and commentators who are calling for Akin’s head have signaled where their priorities lie.”<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the pro-life community including *Missouri Right to Life* and the powerful *Susan B. Anthony List* is not standing by while gullible conservatives foolishly drink the *Kool-Aid*. Neither is Mike Huckabee and a score of former congressmen who have served with Todd Akin. Last week Huckabee took part in a conference call with hundreds of Missouri pastors to seek support for Akin. Other notables included Texas Pastor David Barton, former Oklahoma Rep. J.C. Watts, and John Yeats, Executive Director of the Missouri Baptist Convention. *Politico* quoted Yeats as telling the group, “One of the things we have to remind ourselves...is that Congressman Akin represents the mainstream of our values.”

If we have a personal bias—and we do—perhaps it is rooted in a memorable evening with Todd Akin in the basement of the U.S. Capitol building in 2003 as part of an East Coast Christian legacy tour. Mr. Akin agreed to stay late that night after the building was closed to the public, to show us places in the historic structure few others ever see. Afterwards, none in our group would have questioned his calling and equipping for “missions” in the U.S. Capital.

So, do we stick with Todd Akin, a seminary grad with a “Daniel’s calling,” or do we follow Scott Brown, a celebrity senator and one-time naked centerfold in *Cosmopolitan* magazine? Tough call.

*Rick Forcier*

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Napolitano, “Is Rape a Moral Justification for Abortion?,” *Reason.com*, 8/23/2012

<sup>2</sup> Jane M. Orient, “Akin Not Far off Base In Rape Comment,” 8/26/2012