

Press Backgrounder: Lila Rose, Live Action and the Disingenuous Attacks on Women's Health Care and Planned Parenthood



Caption: Lila Rose and James O'Keefe, the widely discredited conservative activist who was arrested for attempting to wiretap the office of a U.S. senator. Rose and O'Keefe started collaborating in 2006 and began infiltrating health centers together. In a 2009 *Los Angeles Times* article, O'Keefe admitted that he and Rose were criticized by some of their associates for using deception (source: "Anti-abortion movement gets new media twist," *Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 2009)

Brief Background

Live Action is an organization dedicated to making abortion illegal in the United States. Its leader, Lila Rose, a self-described “extremist,” has said that American women should have abortions in the public square. Rose believes that no exceptions justify abortion, not even rape, incest or a life-threatening pregnancy. Rose has agitated for “taking down” Planned Parenthood and she says that Live Action’s goal is to “end” Planned Parenthood.

Live Action, a 501c(3) organization, is participating in a highly political, coordinated legislative lobbying effort to defund Planned Parenthood. To achieve its goals, Live Action utilizes deceptive tactics, lies, alters videos, espouses an extreme ideological agenda, and works with extreme right wing groups and the discredited activist James O’Keefe, who was arrested for attempting to wiretap the office of Senator Mary Landrieu. Live Action is out of the mainstream, lacks credibility, and its videos cannot be trusted.

- **Deceptive Tactics.** In 2006, Lila Rose and James O’Keefe, the discredited conservative activist who is guilty of federal criminal charges, cooked up the strategy of infiltrating Planned Parenthood health centers using “hoax” patients and secret video cameras. Since then, Lila Rose and her collaborators have crisscrossed the country with hidden cameras to make video recordings of Planned Parenthood health center staff.
- **Doctored Footage and False Claims.** As news organizations have reported, Live Action has a lengthy history of releasing doctored or altered video footage during media blitzes against Planned Parenthood. Mainstream news organizations — including the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and the *Los Angeles Times* — have reviewed Live Action videos and found evidence of omitted footage, re-ordered conversations, and subtitles that create misimpressions by failing to correspond with the audio. Moreover, during publicity campaigns for the videos, Live Action has often overstated and even fabricated involvement of authorities in an attempt to confuse the public and discredit Planned Parenthood.
- **Another Smear Campaign.** In addition to their ties with James O’Keefe, the conservative activist with a federal criminal record, Lila Rose and Live Action are aided by the same Washington, D.C. public relations firm used by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to smear the reputation of Senator John F. Kerry during his 2004 presidential campaign. Lila Rose is a featured speaker at meetings of extreme groups, including the Family Research Council summit.
- **Planned Parenthood Action.** Planned Parenthood is fully committed to delivering high-quality reproductive health care to the women of America’s communities, complying with all laws, and upholding the highest ethical and medical standards. Over a five-day period in January 2011, at least 11 Planned Parenthood health centers in six states were visited by a man who sometimes claimed to be in the sex trade, involving minors. At that time, Planned Parenthood officials alerted local and federal authorities, including sending a [letter](#) dated January 18th to Attorney General Eric Holder. As a result, the FBI began an investigation. Live Action later claimed responsibility for the hoax visits.

Live Action: Doctored Footage and False Claims

Live Action uses heavily edited videos that fall far below the journalistic standards of serious news organizations. These videos, pieced together from secretly obtained video footage, are intended to create misimpressions about Planned Parenthood. James O'Keefe, the discredited conservative activist, used similarly deceptive tactics in other political efforts and campaigns.

Several news organizations have analyzed Live Action videos and found significant and pervasive evidence of selective editing to create a false impression.

2011: Roanoke Times Editorial: Scam video. An editorial in the Roanoke Times rebutted Live Action's edited video, saying: "Live Action's scurrilous attempts to portray Virginia Planned Parenthood clinics, including the one in Roanoke, as willing facilitators of the sexual exploitation of girls must be denounced for what they are: lies.... What Live Action's surreptitious taping does not — indeed, could not possibly — show is the clinic staff's real response to their strange, disturbing visitor." (*Roanoke Times* editorial, 2/8/11) <http://www.roanoke.com/editorials/wb/276293>

2010: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Rebuts Live Action's edited video in Wisconsin. An editorial in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel exposed Live Action's edited video, saying: "Live Action says there were conflicting statements in the video about fetal viability, when it's a baby and heart tones vs. heartbeats. But a viewing of the fullest tape available reveals that the clinician and doctor go to lengths to tell the woman about embryonic and fetal development. She leaves before she can be examined." (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 8/2/2010) <http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/99791324.html>

2009: Los Angeles Times Rebuts Live Action's edited tape in Indianapolis. The Los Angeles Times analyzed a video Live Action made inside an Indianapolis Planned Parenthood health center and said, "The conversation in the uncut version is more nuanced than the edited five-minute version, and includes a staffer stating emphatically, 'We have to follow the laws,' and another urging Rose to tell her mother about the pregnancy." (*Los Angeles Times*, 4/26/09) <http://articles.latimes.com/print/2009/apr/26/nation/na-abortion26>

CNN: Live Action videos reminiscent of edited O'Keefe videos. CNN reports, "the Live Action videos are reminiscent of those by right-wing videographer James O'Keefe.... O'Keefe's videos were found in at least two investigations to be so heavily edited as to be an unreliable record of what happened, showing no evidence of any wrongdoing by ACORN staff members.... The Live Action videos also appear to be heavily edited." (CNN, 2/08/11) <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/02/08/abortion.video.retraining/>

Analysis on other Live Action videos (when longer footage can be compared to the initial propoganda video) has found numerous examples of dubious editing, including:

- omitting footage from a conversation that casts Planned Parenthood in a favorable way. There are dozens of cases where footage is missing but conversations on the video appear to be seamless
- taking pieces of conversation out of context

- re-ordering conversations while creating the appearance of a seamless conversation
- providing only heavily edited and dubious tapes for public inspection during media blitzes
- including footage of real patients in the waiting room, violating their privacy
- using subtitles to create misimpressions

Examples of Misleading, Exaggerated or False Statements

MISTATEMENT BY LILA ROSE

“A year ago I stood before this audience at the Values Voters summit and warned Planned Parenthood, ‘You will be de-funded.’ Well, after we released the video in the state of Tennessee, for the first time in over two dozen years, Tennessee legislators voted to redirect more than 1.1 million dollars in taxpayer money from Planned Parenthood to other health providers.”

THE FACTS

The Tennessee state legislature created a new competitive bidding process for Title X funds (a move that had been debated politically well before Live Action publicized videos from a Memphis Planned Parenthood health center), and both Planned Parenthood health centers in that state received the same level of funding as in previous years under these new guidelines.

MISTATEMENT BY LILA ROSE

“A grand jury trial is open and investigating.”

THE FACTS

Indiana’s anti-choice attorney general asked the grand jury to investigate Planned Parenthood as a result of Live Action’s video. The grand jury asked for full footage for its internal review. No “trial” occurred. The grand jury never took action as a result of reviewing the Live Action content.

MISTATEMENT BY LILA ROSE

Lila Rose has admitted on a radio talk show that the Memphis video did not show legal violations in Memphis, but rather she claimed that the health center violated “moral law.”

THE FACTS

No legal violations were shown in Memphis.

MISTATEMENT BY LILA ROSE

“...This isn’t well known, but birth control causes a lot of physical health problems for women. And this information is being suppressed by the very organizations that pretend to help women. Susan B. Komen, this pro-women, anti-breast cancer organization, gives some of its money to Planned Parenthood which is making more breast cancer by pushing more abortions and birth control — hormonal birth control, on to women.”

THE FACTS

According to the National Cancer Institute, studies of a possible link between oral contraceptives and breast cancer have yielded mixed results. A 1998 study by the Women’s Contraceptive and Reproductive Experiences (Women’s CARE) found that the use of oral contraceptives did not significantly increase a woman’s risk for breast cancer.

Importantly, oral contraceptives have been proven to decrease the risk of ovarian and endometrial cancers in women who use oral contraceptives; women also continue to receive this cancer-fighting benefit for years after they stop taking the pill. [Source: [National Cancer Institute](#)]

Another Political Smear Campaign: Quotes from Live Action and Lila Rose

Goal of Live Action: “End Planned Parenthood”

“And so, the mission of our organization, of Live Action, is ultimately to build the culture of life, to create leaders to lead in the culture of life but also to literally end Planned Parenthood, we are an organization built in part to end another organization. We will plan and we will work to defund them in every state wherever it is possible, to de-license them and to expose them.” (Lila Rose, 2010 Values Voters speech)

Instilling “fear” and using “espionage” in a “time of war”.

Speaking of Planned Parenthood: “That fear, we need to help them feel that fear. We want them to not feel safe to abuse children in our country. Not feel safe to continue to operate clinics in our cities. But instead we want to be the ones to help shut them down.” (2010 Values Voters speech)

“During times of war, espionage does take place,” Rose pointed out. “Is it time, in our country, for us to use undercover work as a tactic to fight? I would say, and I think many Catholics would say, ‘absolutely’.” (Catholic News Agency, “Pro-life group’s video stings spark ethical debate,” February 11, 2011.)

Punitive Medieval Worldview: “Abortions would be done in the public square”

Lila Rose repeatedly uses the phrase “secret abortions.” She says, “If I could insist — and this might sound a little strange — but if I could insist that as long as they are legal in our nation, abortions would be done in the public square. Until we were so sick and tired of seeing them that we would do away with the injustice altogether.”

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Piny4Ur1EEA&feature=player_embedded#)

Opposed to Abortion Even If the Woman Has Been Raped.

“What would you say to someone who says I’m pro-life but not if there’s rape or incest or something, well I would ask them why are you pro-life? ...It comes back to what do you believe that unborn child is? If you believe it is an unborn child then nothing justifies killing it, even if its father’s a rapist. ...And I also say if you’re having or if you’re encouraging an abortion after rape you’re not healing the memory of the rape, you’re not taking away from the violence of the rape. You’re adding to the violence another violence — and you’re making another victim. ...You’re never going to hear a woman who was raped say I wish I could go back in time and abort that baby, that’s only going to help them heal and help them bring some redemption to that process, there’s a lot of great testimonies about that.” (Lila Rose, 2010 Value Voters Summit speech)

Collaborated with James O’Keefe, a “great activist”

“I went in with my friend James O’Keefe at the time, you might be familiar with him, with the ACORN investigation, with the crazy costume (applause), great activist.” (Values Voters speech, 2010, in reference to a Planned Parenthood visit)

Planned Parenthood: Patients First

Planned Parenthood is fully committed to delivering high-quality reproductive health care to the women of America's communities, complying with all laws, and upholding the highest ethical standards.

Over a five-day period in January 2011, at least 11 Planned Parenthood health centers in six states were visited by a man claiming to be in the sex trade, involving minors. At that time, Planned Parenthood officials alerted local and federal authorities. Planned Parenthood sent a [letter](#) dated January 18th to Attorney General Eric Holder. As a result, the FBI began an investigation.

On January 24th, the AP published a [story](#) about Planned Parenthood contacting the FBI regarding these suspicious visits, indicating they may have been part of an elaborate hoax intended to trick Planned Parenthood staff and record them secretly with hidden video cameras.

One week later, Live Action publicized the first video, taken at a New Jersey health center. This video showed a Planned Parenthood staff member engaging in behavior that is both repugnant and inconsistent with Planned Parenthood's practices and violates our high standards. Planned Parenthood has a zero tolerance policy for this behavior and took swift action. The employee was immediately terminated for violating Planned Parenthood's high standards of health care and ethical conduct.

The four videos that were publicized later in the week were shot at four different health centers in Virginia. They followed a similar pattern, showing a man posing as a sex trafficker. The videos all show Planned Parenthood staff reacting professionally to a highly unusual person posing as a patient.

As [ABC News.com](#) put it:

"But unlike the first video, the Richmond clinic worker appears to act professionally and appropriately, informing the couple of their legal rights to privacy under the law, regardless of their backgrounds. [...] Legal experts reached by ABC News also said the clinic worker's advice on how a minor could obtain an abortion without her parents' consent is consistent with state law."

In early February, Live Action released a video from a Planned Parenthood health center in New York City. Planned Parenthood of New York City has reviewed this video carefully, and it is clear that it was altered. In an interview with the FBI, the two health center workers featured in the video said that they did not hear the words "sex work" or "sex worker," uttered by the actors on camera.

In addition, it is clear from the edited video that there are two or more video sources, as well as an additional audio source, increasing the likelihood for manipulation and selective editing. Unlike in other publicized videos, the hoax "patients" in the video recorded in the New York health center were not able to get beyond the reception desk for a private consultation. Like other encounters that have been recently publicized in Virginia, Planned Parenthood staff responded professionally to questions, discussed these encounters with management, and provided a report to the FBI.

To assure its patients and others that they can continue to trust the care they receive, Planned Parenthood has reiterated its zero tolerance policy, ordered an additional mandatory retraining of all health center staff on its rules for reporting possible dangers to minors, and made clear that it will immediately fire anyone who violates them.