

# Column misrepresented group's purpose in protest

The hearts and minds of our young people are at stake. Our society exalts power over peace, moral relativism over objective truth. Thus many parents choose to send their teenagers to a Catholic high school so these young people may be exposed to enduring Christian values.

But when Mercy High School permitted "Lunch with Jennifer Granholm" as an auction item in its recent fund-raiser it paid honor to the chief spokesperson for abortion in Michigan. The Catholic witness owed to these young women leaders of tomorrow was compromised. The Stop Granholm Church and Truth Project protested Mercy's decision. *Farmington Observer* editor Joni Hubred misrepresented the goals of our group and made false accusations about our methods of protest.

Our group has severely criticized Gov. Granholm for supporting legal abortion in contradiction to the Catholic faith that she publicly professes. We have held several demonstrations to educate the public, particularly the Catholic faithful. We have also distributed thousands of pieces of literature explaining how Granholm's position cannot be reconciling with her faith and how her opposition is a scandal to the church and to society. We have not engaged in name-calling or remarks or name-calling. We have always sought to express our concerns with reasoned argument.

The flier Ms. Hubred referred to in her article was never authorized by our group. If whoever distributed it had asked our permission it would have not been granted. Our steering committee did not even know of this flier until it came to light in Ms. Hubred's article. Ms. Hubred should have checked with us before accusing us of un-Christian behavior.

We are not a political group. We are not at all interested in promoting one political party over another. Our organization is focused on Catholic spiritual issues and social justice. Our essential purpose is to raise awareness of a serious problem within the church and to encourage our bishops to recognize and deal with that problem, specifically, that Catholic public officials who advocate for laws permitting a whole people-group to be annihilated cannot be recognized as Catholics in good standing and are in need of discipline.

We believe the failure of Catholic bishops to speak out against pro-abortion politicians who claim to be Catholic is strongly related to the failure of those in authority regarding the sexual abuse scandal plaguing this country.

Our group has been focused on Granholm because, as a Catholic public figure, she has been the most vocally defiant of the bishops and church teachings in defense of life. This fact alone made "Lunch with Governor Granholm" unsuitable as an auction item at a Catholic school.

Hubred defends Granholm as "having the temerity to uphold the law of the land." If Granholm has this nerve, it's the same nerve someone might have had to uphold the Supreme Court's ruling in support of slavery or the law that sent innocent people to concentration camps.



Monica Migliorini Miller

Just because something is the law of the land doesn't make it right or moral.

Mercy High School - a Catholic school - failed to consider what Granholm represents within the context of Catholic social justice teaching. Granholm uses her civil power to deny the unborn their right to life. She promotes the atrocity of legalized abortion. By allowing the Granholm auction items, school administrators sent the distinct message that the torture and slaughter of the unborn is of little or no consequence. This is the real problem behind the whole Mercy High School debacle.

I am confident that if Granholm were known as a racist and held segregationist views, Agnes Mansour, who is committed to legalizing abortion, and the rest of Mercy's administrators would never have auctioned off a lunch with her in the name of providing an educational opportunity for its students. Tolerance would have been completely out the window, and rightly so! The real Catholic educational opportunity was missed, the educational opportunity to stand up for the oppressed - to appreciate the spiritual principle that the distinct message that the torture and slaughter of the unborn is of little or no consequence. The girls at Mercy could have learned a lot from such an authentically Catholic witness.

The Stop Granholm Church and Truth Project is really part of a much larger national movement within the Catholic church to end a scandal. Hubred's defense of the governor and of Mercy High School fails to appreciate the spiritual principle of our issue. Can a Catholic who promotes such an atrociously unjust law as Roe vs. Wade be permitted to eat the most sacred Body of Christ? A spiritual contradiction exists here and needs to be directly addressed by the bishops.

We have every right to shed light on this problem - to demonstrate, picket, distribute materials to help educate Catholics and even the general public about this contradiction. We have been vilified for having the temerity to make much out of Granholm's support for abortion and to beg the bishops to shepherd the church in the face of Granholm's defiance and obstinacy.

Contrary to Hubred's belief, our protest of the auction item has borne much fruit. Many people expressed support for our witness and have been personally edified in their own faith commitment. A number of alumnae even attended our prayer vigil and demonstration at Mercy on the night of the auction. Some have made very personally difficult decisions to not send their own daughters to Mercy because the school preferred honoring a woman in leadership rather than showing concern for the unwanted unborn.

Members of the Stop Granholm Church and Truth Project pray daily for Jennifer Granholm. We do not wish her ill, we wish her well. We wish her the fullness of the faith and joy that the Catholic church offers to her. But as long as she, and other Catholic politicians, support the law of abortion we will stand up and call them to the church to responsibility.

Dr. Monica Migliorini Miller, associate professor of theology at St. Mary's College of St. Maria University in Orchard Lake, teaches Systematic Theology at St. Mary's College and holds a Ph.D. from Marquette University. She is director of the Stop Granholm Church and Truth Project.

# Weeklong event calls attention to needs of the uninsured

March 10-16 is "Cover the Uninsured Week." Events are planned each day that week throughout the United States and the metro Detroit area to bring attention to the plight of the more than one million individuals in Michigan who are uninsured. Having health care coverage - whether through an employer, an individually purchased plan, or a publicly-subsidized program - is essential to each individual's well-being.

Additionally, health care coverage is a vital element for assuring that our state's economy is productive and able to compete with other states and nations in attracting job-creating investments. As such, it is of concern that about two-thirds of those who are uninsured are those who are working, or who are members of families in which one or more of the adults in the family are employed.

Who is most likely to be uninsured? The vast majority of uninsured Americans are gainfully employed, and the type of job a person holds is the key factor in determining insurance status. Most likely to be uninsured are:



Nancy Baerwaldt

- People earning low incomes - More than half of low-income, full-time workers were uninsured in 2001, most likely because they work in businesses that don't provide health coverage, or they can't afford coverage when it is offered. The likelihood of having health insurance rises with income. Nearly a quarter of families with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 lack health coverage, compared to fewer than 8 percent of households with incomes of \$75,000 or more.
- People with less education - Having a college degree leads to higher-wage jobs that are more likely to include health benefits. About 30 percent of all uninsured adults have not earned a high school diploma. These people often end up in low-paying jobs that either don't offer health coverage or make it hard to afford.
- Minorities - Because a higher percentage of minorities are in lower-paying jobs, a greater percentage of Hispanics and blacks are more likely to lack health coverage than non-Hispanic whites. The fact that they earn lower wages on average makes it more difficult for them to take advantage of coverage when offered by an employer. More than a third of the nation's 37 million Hispanics are uninsured; nearly 7 million or close to 20 percent of the nation's 36 million blacks lack health coverage.
- 18- to 24-year-olds - Twenty-eight percent of young adults in the U.S. do not have health insurance. This group is less likely to hold a job that offers health benefits. They

typically work in part-time jobs or earn low wages that make it difficult to afford coverage. They often work for smaller employers that don't offer coverage. This group also may have "aged" out of a family policy or opted to go without health coverage because they can't afford it.

Trinity Health and its member hospitals in southeast Michigan support assuring that all health care coverage is widened so that all individuals have access to needed health care services on a routine basis.

As such, St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, Saint Joseph Mercy Health System in Ann Arbor, St. Joseph Mercy Oakland in Pontiac, St. Joseph's Mercy of Macomb in Clinton Township, and Mercy Hospital in Fort Huron actively support "Cover the Uninsured Week." The week provides a focused means for bringing attention to the issue, which is especially important in Michigan, where the numbers are growing.

Each year, about 270,000 individuals visit our emergency rooms in southeast Michigan, a service to our communities where demand continues to outstrip capacity. Our hospitals are not unique. Throughout Michigan, the number of emergency room visits has climbed substantially in the past several years as the number of uninsured residents has risen by more than 40 percent.

A large majority of individuals who visit our emergency rooms have true emergencies. However, many of the working poor - especially those who are not eligible for Medicaid or whose employers do not offer or underwrite health care coverage - come to the emergency room because they have no other place to receive health care services. They do not have a physician from whom to receive preventive services or care needed to manage a chronic disease.

As part of our mission to the community, our hospitals collaborate with other community-based organizations to understand the specific needs of the uninsured in our community. In addition, we are involved in programs that have as their aim the improvement of health care status in our community. All of these efforts are desirable and part of the mission of Trinity Health and its member hospitals.

However, to truly maximize the health status of the residents of our communities and to provide health and medical care efficiently and effectively, we need to assure that all individuals have health care coverage.

One final note: Being poor doesn't necessarily mean a person will be covered by Medicaid. Nearly a third of the nation's poor, about 10.1 million people living at or below the federal poverty level, had no health insurance in 2001. People with incomes at or below poverty make up nearly a quarter of the uninsured.

Nancy Baerwaldt is vice president of Advocacy for Trinity Health Medical Systems based in Novi.

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