

A Missed Opportunity

How Susan G. Komen For the Cure and Planned Parenthood Really Blew It

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Susan G. Komen For the Cure and Planned Parenthood really blew it. The two respectable organizations could have gone their separate ways. It's their right to choose separate paths if they want to. But someone decided it's more important to serve the interests of some women rather than the interests of all women, people backing one organization started a cyber bullying campaign, and the other organization backed down under peer pressure.

I understand most people don't see it that way. They long ago fell under the influence of the notion that anything the least bit inconvenient for someone providing or seeking abortion services is also a major threat to all health services for women. Propaganda wars have the effect of making people blind to facts. They make people blind to opportunities too.

Think about the plight of poor women in areas where the only place to get a free mammogram or pap smear is also an abortion shop. Some women don't have a problem going to such a place. Women who are against abortion have a dilemma. They can go there and be uneasy about it because of what else goes on there. Or they can avoid going there at all.

Is it right to insist that a woman who's uncomfortable going to a particular clinic go there anyway? Is it right to make a woman who might die of a curable cancer feel too uncomfortable to get the checkup that would find it in time? By all appearances, those who participated in the online petitions against the Komen foundation this past week think so. I hope their lack of consideration isn't a reflection of the way they really feel.

As soon as Susan G. Komen For the Cure decided not to continue a partnership for providing mammograms through Planned Parenthood clinics, donations to each organization flooded in. Planned Parenthood received more than enough money to continue the mammogram services. And there was an opportunity for the Komen foundation to set up more mammogram programs for low-income women in the same neighborhoods.

No one in their right mind claims the health services available to low-income women, especially black and Latina women in inner cities, are adequate. Only a fool would think women repulsed by abortion don't get breast cancer. The effect of badgering Susan G. Komen For the Cure into reversing its decision will be to continue denying women's health services to some women. Of course, the Komen organization could have chosen a new partner that also provides abortions. But that's moot now.

In some circles, when it comes to some topics, being anti-choice is a bad thing. If you prefer a situation in which there's only one place in town offering mammograms to poor women and you feel that one place must also be an abortion clinic, you are denying women health care options. That makes you anti-choice. If, this past week, you enjoyed standing up for preserving health care options for some women, you should consider taking a stand that would expand health care services to more women. You missed the opportunity this time.

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