

# CUOMO      ENDANGERS      MINORITY WOMEN

**By Bill Donohue**

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In his March 19th blog post from Rome, Cardinal Timothy Dolan made it clear that although he could not be with his brother bishops in Albany to address key public policy issues, he wanted everyone to know of his support for laws that promote a culture of life.

Weighing heavily on him and the other bishops is the proposed abortion legislation by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo.

There was a time when it was the Republicans, not the Democrats, who were the champions of abortion rights. Until the late 1970s, it was the Rockefeller Republicans who were enthusiastic about the politics of population control.

Democrats, led by stalwarts such as Rev. Jesse Jackson and Sen. Ted Kennedy, were fierce opponents of abortion (the former dubbed it a form of genocide against blacks). By the time Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980, the parties had flipped: the conversion of Republican Southern Baptists to the pro-life cause, and the inroads made by radical feminists in the Democratic Party, accounted for most of the changes.

For the better part of the 20th century, the Democrats were top heavy with Catholics, but by the 1980s their influence had slipped badly. So did their loyalty to Church teachings; many Catholic Democrats shifted positions and became “pro-choice.”

Leading the way was New York Governor Mario Cuomo. In 1984, he delivered an impassioned speech at the University of Notre Dame explaining why it was legitimate for Catholics to support

abortion rights. His address, which proved to be pivotal, was the beginning of the “I’m personally opposed but” argument that has become the staple position of pro-abortion Catholic Democrats.

If Mario Cuomo’s goal was to make the “choice” option respectable for Catholic Democrats, his son, Andrew, wants to make the absolutist position respectable for the entire Democratic Party. Indeed, his full-throated advocacy of abortion-without-limits is the most radical proposal ever entertained at the state level. It is also the most dangerous, especially for poor minority women.

Governor Cuomo has yet to unveil the details of his abortion bill, but from what we know there will be no restrictions on this life-ending procedure. Abortion would be removed from the penal code, and would instead be regulated through public health law. Practically speaking, this would mean that an unborn child would not be regarded as a victim in a crime where he is intentionally killed. Perhaps most ominous, at least for poor African-American and Hispanic women, it would mean that non-physicians could abort their babies.

In other words, Park Avenue white girls will have their abortions attended to by licensed physicians, while poor women of color will be serviced by non doctors. Guess who will be most at risk when complications arise? Yet it is the so-called champions of the poor and non whites, e.g., Planned Parenthood and The New York Times, who are the strongest proponents of this two-class, racially divisive, system.

Most states are reforming their abortion laws by making them more restrictive. In the last two years, state lawmakers enacted 135 abortion restrictions. Indeed, states like Pennsylvania, Kansas and Virginia have gone the opposite way of New York by mandating abortion clinics doing surgery to meet the same standards as other outpatient surgery centers.

Only California can match New York in ramping up abortion rights.

California also has a Catholic pro-abortion Democrat as governor, Jerry Brown. Even though his state has seen a 23 percent increase in abortion providers (in most parts of the nation it is getting harder and harder to find someone who will perform an abortion), he can't get enough of them. That's why California has a pilot program that allows non-physicians, midwives, nurses, et al., to do abortions. With good reason, the California Nurses Association is opposed to this initiative.

As always, no one suffers more from liberalized abortion laws than minorities. The California pilot program was targeted at them, the result being that 42 percent of black children were aborted. This is nothing new. In 2008, a chain of abortion clinics in Southern California had at least six doctors on staff with histories of medical malpractice, and most of their clients were low-income Latinas. In New York State the abortion rate is double the national average, and in New York City the rate for black women exceeds 60 percent. This phenomenon is not by accident—it is the result of public policy: in February 2013, it was reported that the “morning-after pill” in New York City was being distributed without parental consent, in schools that served mostly African Americans and Latinos.

If it were the Ku Klux Klan that was pushing to lower medical standards in abortion clinics with a high population of poor non-white women, it would make sense. But it's not the Klan who is pushing this agenda – it's mostly white, well-educated “friends of the poor.” While it may not be their intent, the outcome is one in which large numbers of women and children of color are being treated like guinea pigs. What is even more troubling is the failure on the part of the Cuomo administration to learn from the Pennsylvania experience: when abortion standards are relaxed, it opens the door to abuse.

Robert "Bob" Casey, Sr. was the Governor of Pennsylvania from 1987 to 1995. A Democrat of the "old school," he was liberal on public policy issues like a safety net for the poor, education and healthcare. But he was also a practicing Catholic and a strong pro-life activist. During his tenure, abortion clinics were held to rigid standards, but once he left office a more "abortion-friendly" milieu took root. In fact, authorities have admitted that inspections of abortion clinics stopped completely in some locales. Enter Dr. Kermit Gosnell.

On March 18, Gosnell was put on trial for killing one woman and seven babies born alive. His clinic is now known as "a house of horrors," a place where his untrained staff helped deliver babies who were then killed with scissors. Gosnell would plunge scissors into their necks, cutting their spinal cords. He did this at least 16,000 times, with the assistance of his rookie staff. His clients were all poor women who lived in the inner-city neighborhoods that comprise West Philadelphia. He himself never received obstetrics or gynecology certification.

Importantly, Gosnell was not apprehended by state abortion inspectors. No, his "house of horrors" was discovered accidentally in 2010 by FBI agents looking for drugs. What they found were fetal remains stored in jars and freezers, and dirty medical equipment. After speaking with the authorities, Gosnell reportedly ate dinner, never removing his bloody latex gloves.

To make matters even more sickening, Gosnell's lawyer told the court that his client is a victim of "an elitist, racist prosecution." He even went so far as to accuse Philadelphia officials of conducting a "prosecutorial lynching." He added that "This black man is being taken because of who he is and where he works." That Gosnell intentionally chose to murder poor non whites, many of whom were immigrants, means nothing to his lawyer, Jack J. McMahon.

Once Pennsylvania lawmakers learned of Gosnell's monstrous acts, they moved to stop these abuses. In 2011, a bill was passed that outlined new criteria for facilities that perform surgical abortions: Class A facilities perform surgeries that require local anesthesia only and must be accredited by a nationally recognized accreditation agency; Class B facilities perform surgeries that require anesthesia where the patient is not fully conscious, and must be licensed and able to meet ambulatory surgical requirements.

In 2012, 92 abortion restrictions were passed. The results are in the numbers. To wit: There are only 17 abortion providers left in Pennsylvania, down from 22 a year ago; in 2011, abortions declined by 44.8 percent (it was the third year in a row that abortions declined). Though there is still work to be done – there has been a spike in abortion complications – medical standards have increased, and poorly trained staff have been eliminated.

Sadly, instead of raising the qualifications for those in the abortion industry, Governor Cuomo wants to dumb them down. To be sure, how Gosnell and his staff operated would not be legal under Cuomo's plan, but it cannot be denied that by lowering standards we are likely to learn of more horror stories, not less. Moreover, it is not just a change in credentials that is at stake; when expectations decline (as happened in Pennsylvania once Casey left office), it sends a message that is picked up by everyone.

That the message is not one that will result in safer conditions for black and Hispanic women is beyond debate.

When Cuomo announced his proposal in January, he did so to great fanfare, screaming, "it is her body, it is her choice." It does not exaggerate to say he sounded delirious: he kept bellowing to his supporters, "Because it's her body, it's her choice. Because it's her body, it's her choice."

The fact is no one is denying any woman from aborting her baby in New York, and Cuomo knows it. What he is selling – in the name of women's rights – is a policy that would lower standards in abortion clinics, at least for the most vulnerable.

Planned Parenthood is predictably singing Cuomo's praises. Why not? It loved the California legislation that was designed to allow non-physicians to perform abortions, so what's not to like about Cuomo's initiative? If minority women bear the brunt of this women's "right," so be it. After all, it's not a secret that eight in 10 Planned Parenthood clinics operate in non-white communities. This outcome, it needs to be said, was divined by its founder, Margaret Sanger.

Sanger laid the groundwork when she announced how she would weed out "undesirables," meaning African Americans. "Many of the colored citizens are fine specimens of humanity," she boasted in 1932. "A good share of them, however, constitute a large percentage of Kalamazoos's human scrap pile."

Currently, New York State law says only a "duly licensed physician" may perform abortion, but Cuomo wants to change that so any "licensed healthcare practitioner" can do the job. Even honest champions of abortion know how irresponsible this idea is. Minnesota abortionist Jane Hodgson is the recipient of Planned Parenthood's coveted Margaret Sanger award. In 1990, she told the truth about the level of training her work takes.

*"When I first started doing abortions, I took my boards in Obstetrics and Gynecology, and therefore I knew I was competent to do it. After I had done my first hundred I realized how silly I had been. At this point, having done somewhere around 12,000 procedures, I'm beginning to think I am reasonably competent."*

At one time, even the ACLU admitted that allowing non-

physicians to do abortions put women's lives in jeopardy. In 1994, the Pennsylvania affiliate bemoaned the shortage of physicians trained and willing to do abortions, but it nonetheless cautioned against lowering standards.

*"Although changes have been proposed, the current objectives on abortion required by the Council on Residency Education and Obstetrics and Gynecology do not require that physicians be able to carry out the procedure as long as they can 'arrange contact with a facility or personnel' who can do so, perpetuating the idea that individual competency in abortion procedures is not important for doctors concerned with women's reproductive health. This endangers the lives of women who may need abortions in emergency settings, and limits access to therapeutic abortion."*

Governor Cuomo's intention is not to punish poor black and Hispanic women, but his proposal would do just that. It would allow abortionists who are not trained as physicians to attend to these women, putting them at greater risk than their more affluent white cohorts. This consideration alone should be enough to convince him not to go down this road. But don't bet on it: Andrew is Mario's son, and when it comes to defending abortion and defying the Catholic Church, the apple didn't fall far from the tree.

**Dr. William Donohue is the president of and CEO of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. The publisher of the Catholic League journal, Catalyst, Bill is a former Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation and served for two decades on the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars. The author of five books, two on the ACLU, and the winner of several teaching awards and many awards from the Catholic community, Donohue has appeared on thousands of television and radio shows speaking on civil liberties and social issues.**