

FATHER GORDON J. MACRAE ON SNAP'S DECEPTION

This article was originally written by Fr. Gordon J. MacRae on [Beyond These Stone Walls](#) in May 2018

If there exists a Catholic priest still in denial about the agenda of SNAP, it's because he has lived with his head in the sand blind to the threat lying in wait for him.

In 2009, at the same time I began writing for *Beyond These Stone Walls*, Catholic League President Bill Donohue invited me to write a feature article for the Catholic League Journal, *Catalyst*. My article, "[Due Process for Accused Priests](#)," began by describing an important phenomenon.

In 2002, just as the national story of Catholic priests and sexual abuse emerged out of Boston to sweep the country, psychologist Daniel Kahneman was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for his work on a phenomenon called "availability bias." It revealed the power of the media to not just report the news, but to reshape it to fit media bias, to cultivate it, to take a story's small microphone and turn it into a megaphone.

Activist organizations have trained people to harness this force to sway what others adopt as a bias. It is not new, just newly analyzed. One of the most potent deployments of "availability bias" is one I have quoted before in these pages. It comes from *Mein Kampf*, the 1926 book by Adolf Hitler that gave rise to the Nazi party in Germany:

"The great mass of people will more easily fall prey to a big

lie than to a small one."

After my 2009 *Catalyst* article was published, I was subjected to an open assault by David Clohessy, Executive Director of the activist organization, SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. Matt Abbott at Renew America forwarded my article to Mr. Clohessy and invited a response posted at Renew America entitled, "[Imprisoned Priest, Sex Abuse Victim Clash](#)."

David Clohessy was obviously perturbed by what I exposed about the lawsuit settlement process and how it is advanced and cultivated by "self-serving contingency lawyers and various agenda driven groups using scandal for their own ends." Mr. Clohessy had long derided Church officials for entering into secrecy agreements to keep settlement amounts from public view.

On January 17, 2017, former SNAP employee Gretchen Rachel Hammond filed a lawsuit against SNAP in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois. Ms. Hammond had been SNAP's Director of Development before leaving the organization and filing her lawsuit. The named parties in the suit included David Clohessy, SNAP's Executive Director, and Barbara Blaine, SNAP's founder and president, and a member of SNAP's board of directors.

Ms. Hammond's lawsuit alleged that she was a victim of retaliatory discharge for questioning the allegedly corrupt practices of this organization. These included claims that SNAP and its leaders received substantial kickbacks in the form of "donations" from attorneys to whom SNAP officials referred clients or potential clients.

The lawsuit exposed that lawyers in California, Chicago, Seattle, and Delaware made major "donations," some of them in six-figure amounts, and that SNAP leaders "concocted a scheme to have other attorneys make donations to a front foundation"

to mask “attorneys’ kickbacks” to the organization.

The lawsuit also alleged a pattern of collusion between SNAP officials and plaintiff lawyers to maximize publicity for the purpose of fueling bigger payouts. It accused SNAP officials of callous disregard for the real interests of real sexual abuse survivors. Among the lawsuit’s other allegations were these:

- SNAP engaged in a commercial enterprise motivated by its directors’ and officers’ personal and ideological animus against the Catholic Church.
- SNAP conducted business premised on farming out abuse survivors as clients for specific attorneys who file lawsuits and collect settlements from the Catholic Church.
- Attorneys routinely gave SNAP confidential plaintiff claims and other privileged information in order for SNAP to maximize payouts with sensational press releases.
- SNAP claimed that it existed to provide support for survivors of clergy sexual abuse, however at all relevant times, SNAP did not have a single grief counselor or rape counselor on its payroll. SNAP would ignore survivors who reached out to SNAP for legitimate counseling.
- Ms. Hammond alleged that she was told by SNAP official Barbara Dorris to ignore calls from survivors who were seeking only counseling.
- Despite accepting funds for counseling and aiding survivors of sexual abuse, SNAP squandered those funds to advance its own interests and those of its leadership.

- SNAP set out to deliberately jeopardize the ability of accused priests to receive due process and fair trials.
- In 2011, SNAP oversaw fundraising for a charge brought against Pope Benedict XVI at the International Court at The Hague; however SNAP used the funds to pay for lavish hotels and other extravagant travel expenses for its leadership.

The Fallout

When the lawsuit became public, David Clohessy resigned as Executive Director, and SNAP founder and president, Barbara Blaine also resigned. They have since settled the lawsuit by a secrecy clause just like the ones for which Mr. Clohessy had railed against Catholic bishops over the last two decades.

After the settlement, others among SNAP's more notorious leaders also resigned as reported by David F. Pierre, Jr. at *The Media Report* in "[SNAP R.I.P.](#)" Barbara Dorris, who replaced David Clohessy as Executive Director, and Regional Director Joelle Casteix both resigned. Among the revelations uncovered by David Pierre was that SNAP published the email addresses and personal phone numbers of accused priests to generate harassment.

Ms. Hammond's lawsuit was only one of several brought against SNAP, but it was the one that appeared to finally expose what had long been suspected of SNAP and its leaders. Simultaneously in 2017, Father Joseph Jiang, a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, filed a defamation lawsuit against SNAP.

Charges brought against Father Jiang were heavily promoted by SNAP leaders who, as they do whenever a priest is accused, issued a public call for anyone else who wants to accuse the priest. When Father Jiang passed a polygraph test [I did, too, by the way, twice] the charges were dismissed in 2015.

In 2016 a federal judge ruled that SNAP made false statements against Father Jiang “negligently and with reckless disregard for the truth.” SNAP and the parents of the minor who had falsely accused him settled the lawsuit.

As part of its settlement, SNAP issued a public apology, but the ever complicit news media failed to mention that SNAP was forced to do so in the wake of a false claim and lawsuit. SNAP’s apology, written by its legal counsel, included this statement:

“The SNAP defendants never want to see anyone falsely accused of a crime. Admittedly, false reports of clergy sexual abuse do occur. SNAP apologizes for false or inaccurate statements... its representatives made which in any way disparaged Father Joseph Jiang.”

In reporting this story, some Catholic media outlets continued to refer to SNAP as “a victims’ support group” or “a victim advocacy group.” It’s a bad habit that blindly gives legitimacy of purpose to SNAP which it does not have, and has never had.

Pope Benedict’s “Crimes Against Humanity”

The most important and visible source exposing SNAP’s corruption and reckless disregard for truth is a document by Catholic League President Bill Donohue entitled, “[SNAP Implodes](#).” It provides a comprehensive and compelling account of the path of destruction SNAP and its leaders have left in the Church and priesthood under the false guise of advocating for real victims.

Among the most manipulative of David Clohessy’s “advocacy” was an instruction to accusers to attend SNAP press conferences. To play on the emotions of reporters, Clohessy urged those awaiting settlements to “display holy childhood photos” before the news cameras, and... “If you don’t have compelling holy

childhood photos we can provide you with photos of other kids that can be held up for the cameras.”

If that doesn't infuriate Catholics who have any regard left for truth, then what would? SNAP had a much worse perversion of justice than was first hyped, and then covered up, by the news media. It was the most destructive publicity stunt SNAP and its leaders have devised or condoned to date.

Both Bill Donohue and the Hammond lawsuit cited this one (see the final bullet point in Ms. Hammond's lawsuit above). What they do not reveal is that SNAP used the false case against me to help bring it about.

I first wrote of this story in October 2011 in “[SNAP'S Last Gasp! The Pope's Crimes Against Humanity](#).” That was before I even knew that I was a part of this story. In 2011, SNAP and the Center for Constitutional Rights – located at 666 Broadway in Manhattan – jointly filed a “crimes against humanity” charge against Pope Benedict XVI at the International Criminal Court.

The ICC is an independent judicial institution with the power to hold trials and impose sentences for the most serious crimes of international concern: genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The ICC was approved by international treaty in 1998 and officially came into being on July 1, 2002, after 60 countries ratified the treaty.

The court is headquartered in The Hague, The Netherlands. Of interest, in May of 2002, President George Bush declined to sign the treaty and refused to allow the ICC to have jurisdiction over United States cases. So SNAP's target was not U.S. Catholic priests and bishops, but the Pope himself.

SNAP duped the left-leaning Center for Constitutional Rights to compose and file the briefs with information provided by SNAP in collaboration with plaintiff lawyers hoping for a precedent to tap Vatican assets in their never-ending quest

for big bucks. I first learned of my involvement in this story from an article by journalist JoAnn Wypijewski, in "[Spotlight Oscar Hangover: Why 'Spotlight' Is a Terrible Film](#)." Here is an excerpt:

"The Center for Constitutional Rights [CCR] . . . joined with SNAP to file a grotesque brief to the International Criminal Court demanding 'investigation and prosecution' of the Vatican for crimes against humanity... To CCR's shame, Father [Gordon] MacRae is specifically mentioned in that brief with respect to allegations... which prosecutors threw in at sentencing but for which there is no evidence according to the lead detective in the case [as] cited by [Dorothy] Rabinowitz."

SNAP, apparently in retaliation for my *Catalyst* articles calling for independent investigation of dubious claims, fed information to the Center for Constitutional Rights that would fuel a case against the Vatican. They made no attempt to contact me or my defense, nor did they contact [Dorothy Rabinowitz at The Wall Street Journal](#) who researched and published extensively on the same story, but with a polar opposite conclusion.

And SNAP did this without attempting to contact James Abbott, the former FBI Special Agent who spent three years investigating this case before dismissing it as a fraud. ([Agent Abbott's affidavit](#) is cited at the end of Ryan MacDonald's recent post, "[#MeToo & #HimToo: Jonathan Grover & Father Gordon MacRae](#)" which also lays out the fraud behind this story).

In the end, to its great credit, the International Criminal Court declined to accept jurisdiction or the crimes against humanity charge against Pope Benedict XVI, but that was no surprise. Everyone involved knew that this fiasco would go nowhere, and it was never really SNAP's goal. It was merely a publicity stunt for David Clohessy and SNAP to heighten pressure for quick and lucrative financial settlements.

The people who terrorized American Catholic priests for the last quarter century are gone now. Their fraud is exposed. Their coffers are empty. Their leaders have fled. In "[SNAP Implodes](#)," Catholic League President Bill Donohue summed up what I had come to know at a very personal level in this moral panic that SNAP promoted and extorted for profit over the last 25 years:

"SNAP officials function as borderline gangsters out to destroy innocent persons. It is motivated by hate and exploits the very people it claims to serve. Justice demands that it be shut down by the authorities before it does any more harm."

Note from Father Gordon MacRae: Once again, you would serve the cause of truth and justice if you share this post and ask your contacts to do the same.