

# WE MUST HEAR FROM BLOOMBERG'S "KILL IT" VICTIM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Michael Bloomberg's treatment of female employees:

In the South Carolina presidential debate, Senator Elizabeth Warren commented that when she was a special-education teacher she was happy not to have a boss like Michael Bloomberg. She recounted how he allegedly said to one of his pregnant employees, "Kill It!" Bloomberg denied the accusation.

In 1997, Bloomberg was sued by Sekiko Sakai Garrison. He settled with the Japanese woman, but neither the amount nor any other information about the non-disclosure agreement (NDA) has been made public.

Bloomberg must not be allowed to get away with this. Succumbing to public pressure, he said last week that he will release Garrison from the NDA. But neither he nor his company has reached out to her. Bloomberg should contact her immediately.

In the Catholic Church, NDA's are not tolerated (they once were). While there are legitimate reasons for having NDA's, such as protecting the privacy rights of victims, those who are in public office, or are in pursuit of it, must be held to a higher standard. This is doubly true of presidential candidates.

There are other reasons why Bloomberg must come clean. Last year a Bloomberg L.P. spokesman told ABC News that the company rarely settles disputes, preferring to take their case to the courts. What was different about this case? Why didn't Bloomberg take his chances in the courts? Why did he find it necessary to settle?

Garrison's lawyer told ABC News that she may be willing to speak if the NDA were to be voided. Justice demands that this be done. Consider what we know already.

According to Garrison's lawsuit, on April 11, 1995, at approximately 11:20 a.m., Bloomberg posed for a picture with two female workers and a group of students from New York University in the company snack area. He noticed Garrison standing nearby and struck up a conversation with her. "How's married life? You *still* married?" She said everything was going along just great, and that she was pregnant. Bloomberg responded, "Kill it!" Stunned, she asked him to repeat what he said. "Kill it!" He then muttered, "Great! Number 16!" He was expressing his unhappiness with the sixteen women who were out on maternity leave.

Who is telling the truth? Bloomberg or Garrison? We can't be certain but it sure looks like she is. There are several reasons for drawing this conclusion.

Garrison understood Bloomberg's remark as suggesting she abort her baby in order to keep her job. She was visibly upset with him and told several managers in the company what happened.

In August 1995, four months after this incident, Garrison filed a complaint with the New York Division of Human Rights. According to ABC News, she spoke to "ten people within the firm, five of whom were managers."

What did they do for her? According to her lawsuit, filed two years later, nothing. It's actually worse than nothing. "The managers told her to ignore the comment, forget it ever happened and not to act on her complaint. These managers reiterated threats of termination if plaintiff pressed the complaint."

The day after the "Kill It" episode, Garrison went to work but was so distraught and ill that she had to leave. She called in sick the next day. She was subsequently fired.

Some in the media are portraying this as a he said/she said type of dispute: Bloomberg says he never said "Kill It!" and she says he did. But this account is false. There is at least one witness.

David Zielenzinger, a former Bloomberg technology worker, told the *Washington Post* he heard the conversation. "I remember she had been telling some of her girlfriends that she was pregnant. And Mike came out and I remember he said, 'Are you going to kill it?' And that stopped everything. And I couldn't believe it." Zielenzinger said this was vintage Bloomberg. "He talked kind of crudely about women all the time."

Bloomberg learned from some employees that Garrison was upset with him after their exchange. His remarks are telling. [She made handwritten notes of the call, which were obtained by the *Post*.]

Bloomberg called her at home and left a lengthy voice mail. He asked her to give him a call, saying he learned from another employee that "you were upset." He said that "whatever you heard wasn't what I said and whatever I said had nothing to do with pregnancies."

Why, then, did Bloomberg apologize? Here is how he ended the call. "I apologize if there was something you heard but I didn't say it, didn't mean it, didn't say it." A spokesman for the company did not deny this account.

Why would anyone apologize for something he never said? More important, why, if he never said it, would he say he "didn't mean it"? This indicates that he did say it, objecting only to her interpretation of what he meant when he advised her to "Kill It!" What should she have thought? That he was joking about his suggestion that she kill her baby? Did he think she would burst out laughing? What kind of man speaks this way?

Bloomberg had a thing about Garrison. Did he see her as an easy mark? She was the only Japanese woman working in sales in

the New York headquarters at the time. Here are some things he allegedly said about her before his infamous "Kill It!" remark.

In front of male employees who knew her boyfriend, he asked her, "Are you still dating your boyfriend? You giving him good [he used a slang term for oral sex]?" On another occasion, after pointing to a newly-hired older female who was conversing with an overweight male salesperson, he asked Garrison, "If you had to, would you rather do THAT or THAT?"

When Bloomberg spotted Garrison wearing an engagement ring, he said, "What, is the guy dumb and blind? What the hell is he marrying you for?" A week later, he said to her, "Still engaged? What, is he THAT GOOD in bed, or did your father pay him off to get rid of you?"

Bloomberg once broke up a conversation between Garrison and a male employee at a business convention so he could make a crude comment about the male employee's girlfriend (she was also an employee). As she entered the elevator, he said, "That is one great piece of ass. You must be a great f\*\*\*." On another occasion, when Bloomberg saw Garrison wearing a dress he didn't like, he told her, "Don't like the dress. Your ass looks huge in it." He made this comment to her on several occasions whenever she wore a new outfit.

One day Bloomberg saw Garrison return from lunch with a Tiffany shopping bag. "You ARE a real Jap" he said. He was either referring to her Japanese heritage, or, more likely, commenting on her acting like a "Jewish American Princess." Either way he was denigrating her and making an ethnic slur.

Bloomberg looks even more guilty when we consider that his contempt for pregnant workers is not confined to Garrison.

Less than two years before his alleged "Kill it!" comment, Bloomberg learned that one of his employees, who had just given birth, was having a hard time finding a nanny. He yelled

at her in front of a large group of employees. "It's a f\*\*\*\*\*g baby! All it does is eat and s\*\*\*. It doesn't know the difference between you and anyone else!"

Bloomberg then made a racist comment. "All you need is some black who doesn't even have to speak English to rescue it from a burning building!" The woman burst into tears in front of her co-workers.

If the CEO speaks this way in front of his employees about pregnant women, it should come as no surprise that he tolerates—indeed promotes—an environment where sexual comments and behavior are not uncommon. This explains why Garrison's lawyer, Bonnie Josephs, said, "The atmosphere was toxic and harassing."

It wasn't just Garrison whom he spoke to this way. In court filings, women employees of Bloomberg allege he said such things as, "I'd like to do that piece of meat"; "I would DO you in a second"; "I'd like to f\*\*\* that in a second"; "That's a great piece of ass."

He did not hide his sexism. In September 1996, in front of employees and news reporters at a conference in Toronto, he allegedly said, "I would like nothing more in my life than to have Sharon Stone sit on my face."

Bloomberg set the tone for his entire company. Garrison's immediate boss routinely displayed wind-up toys in the shapes of a penis and a vagina on his desk. He also placed them on her desk, and when she complained, he did it over and over again. This same man bragged to her about a male employee who performed oral sex on his secretary while she sat on his shoulders in their office.

It is hardly a surprise to learn that when Bloomberg was mayor of New York City, his company continued to foster a morally corrupt workplace.

In 2007, a lawsuit of discrimination against pregnant women and new mothers was filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. It was conveniently dismissed in 2011, but not before 67 women said they were prepared to join the case. Bloomberg, they said, took aim at women after they became pregnant and after they took maternity leave.

Bloomberg's disdain for pregnant women is of a piece with his politics. His passion for abortion is so strong that as soon as he became mayor of New York City, he issued an executive order that forced medical students training to become an obstetrician or a gynecologist in a city hospital to learn how to abort a baby. "Kill it!" is something this man can't seem to get enough of.

We need to see the NDA. If Bloomberg gets away with this, it will be a huge setback for the rights of all women, especially pregnant women and their babies. He should initiate the contact and she needs to go public with her account.

*Contact Jason Schechter, communications director for the Bloomberg campaign: [jschechter12@bloomberg.net](mailto:jschechter12@bloomberg.net)*