

membership in society simply because of their sex."

Equally critical insights are achieved in Janice Haaken's similar broadening of the dominant theoretical approach to domestic violence in "Stories of Survival: Class, Race, and Domestic Violence."

Haaken offers a useful characterization of "socialist feminists" as "emphasiz[ing] the cross cultural variability in women's oppression and the historically shifting nature of gender equality," while radical feminists "tend to stress universals," an emphasis that has produced the dominant model of domestic violence, the "power and control model of battering."

Haaken argues that "what is problematic about this model is that power and control motives take on the character of a prime mover, represented as a deeply ingrained male trait that operates independently of contexts or contingencies such as unemployment, poverty, addiction and other material conditions."

Angela Davis, in "Public Imprisonment and Private Violence: Reflections on the Hidden Punishment of Women," also broadens the "anti-violence movement" by exploring "connections between domestic violence and imprisonment as two modes of gendered violence."

### Wide Range of Issues

This review fails to do justice to the articles merely listed above, and because of the limitations of space, even authors and titles of some articles—on environmental issues, democratization, women's history, the militarization of women's lives, Chicana reproductive rights activism, and more—haven't been mentioned here.

These wide-ranging contributions not only provide helpful overviews, making them suitable for introductory readers, but also will be provocative and practical for those who already consider themselves socialist feminists—but whose reading has not been as broad and systematic as is this anthology.

For example, Nancy Hartssock's "The Feminist Standpoint Revisited" argues for the continuing need for standpoint epistemologies and responds to critics of her important and controversial article "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism."

"Salt of the Earth," with which I began this reflection, pairs well with Hartssock's original article as the film exemplifies her characterization of the feminist

standpoint: "Like the lives of the proletariat . . . women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy, a vantage point which can ground a powerful critique of the phallographic institutions and ideology which constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy."<sup>4</sup>

The writers in this outstanding collection powerfully articulate a feminist standpoint that both exposes the inhumanity and exploitation of our male-dominated capitalist system and provides a framework by which it may be transformed. □

### Notes

1. Paul Jarrico and Herbert J. Biberman, "Breaking Ground: The Making of 'Salt of the Earth,'" *Celluloid Power: Social Film Criticism from "The Birth of a Nation" to "Judgement at Nuremberg"* (Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow Press), 1992, 478.
2. For anyone who hasn't seen this film, I highly recommend it. It is widely available on both video and DVD.
3. Adrienne Rich, "Credo of a Passionate Skeptic," *Monthly Review* 53.2 (June 2001) 28.
4. Nancy Hartssock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge), 1997, 217.

## Winning and Losing the Right to Choose: Chronicles of A Long War

*Bearing Right. How Conservatives Won the Abortion War* by William Saletan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 327 pages, \$29.95 hardcover.

by Dianne Feeley

BEARING RIGHT IS a provocative account of how the mainstream women's organizations and abortion rights groups battled to maintain legal abortion since the *Roe v. Wade* decision thirty years ago. The author concentrates on their work in lobbying state legislators and Congress, endorsing candidates for public office and campaigning around various state referendums.

As someone who has participated in the struggle for reproductive rights from the pre-*Roe* days through clinic defense in the 1980s, I found *Bearing Right* a fascinating tale as it mainly recounts the pro-choice strategy as defined by the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), the most central and mainstream abortion rights organization.

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Much of the book helped me to track the change in strategy I encountered in the movement and with which I profoundly disagreed.

In the early 1970s many of us who opposed state bans on abortion didn't consider ourselves abortion activists, but supporters of a broad range of reproductive rights. This included the right to sex education in the schools, access to birth control, opposition to state laws restricting abortion or forcing certain categories of women to undergo sterilization while other women couldn't obtain the procedure, and support to building structures that would help women bear and raise children.

The movement included women who organized clinics, educated women about our bodies, or opposed specific laws. Organizing included "speak outs" in which women testified about having "illegal" abortions or seeing their friends or family members mutilated or dead from bad ones, or forced to raise children they had borne in humiliating circumstances.

Prominent women signed public ads stating that they had broken the law by having abortions, and a number of class action suits opposing state laws were

initiated. In my recollection, among the most significant were in New York, California and Michigan.

### Lobbying Strategies

All this organizing in the heady days of the second wave of feminism had an impact on changing public opinion, which tended to support a relaxation of the ban on abortion. But William Saletan begins his book in the fall of 1986, when four state referenda restricting abortion were coming up for a vote.

The most difficult of the four was in Arkansas, where since 1977 the use of state funds for abortion had been banned. (Governor William Clinton might indicate in private that he hoped the referendum would be defeated, but—perceiving it as popular—would not speak out against it.)

Saletan recounts the pro-choice strategy that led to the successful defeat of Amendment 65. It restated the restriction against state funding for abortion and additionally declared that it was public policy "to promote the health, safety and welfare of every unborn child from conception to birth." (13)

(Note the irony in the right's limiting the guarantee to this time frame!)

The pro-choice coalition began thinking out its strategy by observing gender-segregated "focus groups" of voters who didn't think all abortions should be banned, but were inclined to support the amendment.

The question that disturbed the women was "What would you do if your own daughter became pregnant because of rape?" The question that caused an equivalent pause for the men was around the general idea of government interference in family life.

The pro-choice coalition against Amendment 65 then tailored ads for the last two weeks before the election. The first was designed to neutralize the strongest argument for the amendment—that it would save taxpayers money—and informed viewers that the state didn't subsidize abortions, implying the policy might change if the referendum passed.

The second ad delivered the strongest arguments against the amendment. It showed a chastely dressed 14-year-old walking home from school, ending up raped and pregnant. Her parents, her physician and the family minister couldn't help end the pregnancy.

The anti-choice group was unable to do more than claim the ads were lies. National Right to Life Committee President Jack Wilkie flew into Little Rock to state, "This campaign has nothing to do with a 14-year-old rape victim." (29)

Amendment 65 went down to defeat by 623 votes. The state's top political columnist called the victory "downright phenomenal" while the head of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights labeled the win a "miracle."

Saletan concludes that the ads were about "protecting families from big government, protecting good girls from criminals, and protecting the state's ban on abortion funding from clumsy do-gooders." (30)

This pro-choice strategy was countered by one that had been presented to Arkansas abortion rights activists earlier that spring when Lynn Paltrow, then New York ACLU attorney, stated:

... that the movement should stand for a society 'that respects privacy but also one that takes public responsibility for all its citizens—including women.' Government noninterference wasn't enough. 'You need to make it a requirement to talk now about how we can do more than maintain the status quo,' she demanded. 'Here the status quo is that poor women—the poorest of the poor in this state—are denied funding for abortions. We need to win public funding so that ALL women have the right to choose to have an abortion.'

Paltrow conceded what Harris-

on's poll and the defeat in Colorado had shown: To win public funding, pro-choice activists would have to challenge an array of conservative beliefs. So be it, she concluded. (15)

### Redefining Pro-Choice

In Chapter 1 Saletan lays out how pro-choice coalitions moved from defining abortion as a woman's right to control her body, to one where the focus shifted to women as victims, where abortion is a "family" matter—not a woman's decision, and where abortions are only for those who can pay for them. Of course, if abortion is a family decision then parental and spousal consent laws go with the territory.

The chapter begins in the Reagan era, where the pro-choice movement was no longer able to hold the line on restrictions on abortions by appeals to the courts or to a governor's veto.

The following chapters recount the campaigns to defeat Robert Bork's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court, and NARAL's "Who Decides?" campaign around the *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* case that came before the Court in 1989.

Saletan makes the point that NARAL and NOW each "brought out its ground troops," but his discussion of the NOW-organized pro-choice march and rally in Washington, D.C. on April 9 is primarily to show how NARAL's "Who Decides?" signs swamped NOW's "Keep Abortion Legal" posters. He does mention that at least 300,000 people attended, and comments in passing that the demonstration was three times the size of the one that occurred three years earlier. (69-70)

Just as in the case of the defeat of Arkansas' Amendment 65, the lesson differed, depending on which side of the spectrum one came. For the liberals, the decision accepted a range of restrictions on abortion (no abortions in public hospitals, no funding for counseling if abortion were to be raised as an option, testing for fetal viability, etc.) meant "a rollback of civil rights," for conservatives it represented "a coup against tradition and families by a meddling elite."

With this amalgam NARAL promised to wage a "wholesale political war. 'Who decides? You decide. With your vote.'" (83)

Chapter 4 outlines the ensuing mainstream campaign, using the election for governor of Virginia, to highlight the emergence of the "pro-choice" politician—in this case Doug Wilder. Wilder, an African-American Democrat, ran and won on a platform of support to the state's right-to-work laws, opposition to raising taxes, and a pledge to keep abortion legal although restricted by parental consent

laws and state funded only in cases of medical emergency, rape or incest.

In defending abortions for rape victims, Wilder made clear "I don't think that abortion for the purposes of birth control should be available." (90)

NARAL's Political Action Committee discussed the possibility of endorsing Wilder, who was running against a politician who supported banning abortions.

The standing NARAL PAC policy was to endorse only candidates who opposed parental notice and consent laws, but a debate opened up within the organization and a pragmatic two-fold strategy prevailed: First, legislative efforts would be dictated by political and electoral objectives, and not the reverse. This meant that

NARAL might support bills crafted to 'give our friends "cover" on issues such as parental consent.' Better to pass a diluted parental involvement bill than to jeopardize the careers of pro-choice lawmakers by forcing them to oppose the idea altogether. (96)

Second, "NARAL would judge candidates not in absolute but in relative terms." (96) That is, candidates who previously would not have been seen as supporters—such as Wilder—became defined as pro-choice in that they were not as bad as the other candidate.

NARAL endorsed Wilder and when he won Ted Koppel, of ABC's Nightline, remarked to Wilder, "You turned it, in effect, into kind of a libertarian issue . . . . And therefore you found yourself with a considerable number of conservative Republicans voting for you . . . [who] don't want the government interfering . . . ." (106)

### The Clinton "New Day"

With this new strategy NARAL found many "pro-choice" politicians, including Bill Clinton. With his election to the presidency, NARAL's Kate Michelman felt that there was "a new day for choice in America."

Speaker of the House Tom Foley declared Clinton's election as "the most important victory in the last twenty years" for abortion rights; the *New York Times* announced, "The Abortion Tide Turns." (218)

Clinton, on the twentieth anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, reversed the ban on abortion counseling at federally funded clinics along with four other restrictions. At that point national pro-choice organizations outlined a three-part campaign to reclaim the ground that had been lost: repeal the Hyde Amendment, which banned federal funding for abortions, pass the Freedom of Choice Act and secure coverage of abortions under Clin-

ton's national health insurance proposal.

On several occasions Saletan takes the time to show differences between NARAL and the National Organization for Women. NOW wanted to endorse only candidates who opposed restrictions on a woman's right to choose and called for national pro-choice demonstrations from time to time. The leadership and staff of NARAL drove the lobbying and endorsements toward accepting restrictions on abortion in order to preserve what they could in a bad climate.

Despite all the wheeling and dealing, the mainstream abortion rights organizations chafed over these restrictions. What happened, however, was that the long-awaited new day never came—partly because they had accepted the conservative framework. Under Clinton's administration none of their proposals went anywhere.

Meanwhile Clinton moved to "end welfare as we have known it." Saletan summarizes the "Parental Rights and Responsibilities Act as:

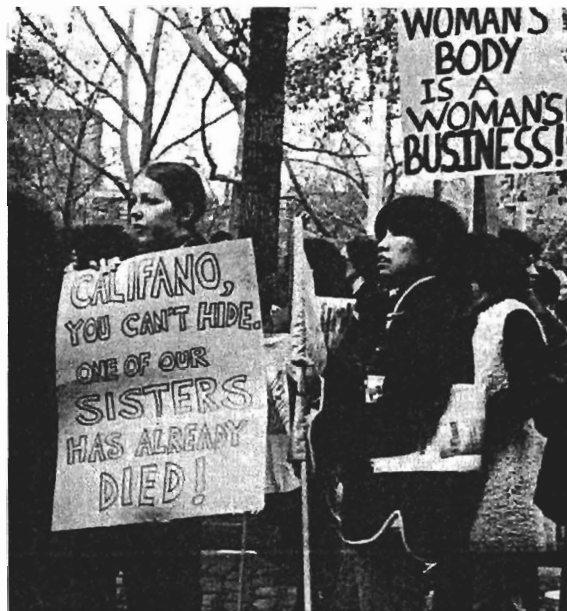
States would deny welfare to any child whose unmarried teenage mother failed to stay in school and live with an adult. States would also compete for the illegitimacy bonus, but any increase of abortions would count against them. The family cap would remain optional. No family would be permitted to receive welfare for more than two years at a time, or five years over a lifetime. States could shorten these time limits as they saw fit. (232)

Clinton's 1996 reelection ads pointed out that he had ended welfare as an entitlement, signed a bill against gay marriage, favored "curfews and school uniforms to teach our children discipline," and "required teen mothers on welfare to stay in school or lose benefits." (232)

The right wing, for its part, was forced to accept the legality of abortion (at least for now). As Saletan points out, their aggressive propaganda campaigns moved the debate out of the woman's body through focusing on one late-term abortion procedure, dilation and extraction, which they renamed "partial-birth abortion."

Throughout *Bearing Right* the author points to the unprincipled strategies and support to politicians the mainstream abortion rights and women's organizations utilized, and concludes "They had saved *Roe*, but in the streets and in their souls they had lost the struggle to define it." (278)

Saletan indicates that there was an alternative, although minority, strategy



*Demonstrating opposition to the Carter administration's blocking of funds for poor women's abortions. (Rosie Jimenez died from a botched abortion after the cutoff of funding.)*

to this mainstream, conservative one. Even before NARAL altered its definition of what pro-choice meant it was obsessively focused on "winning" legislative battles. But that alternative strategic "voice" is really only present in his account when he describes Lynn Paltrow's visit to Alabama.

#### What Bearing Right Leaves Out

Since Saletan's account is primarily focused on NARAL and begins in the fifth year of the Reagan era—thirteen years after the Supreme Court struck down laws that defined abortion as an illegal procedure—that truncated narrative reinforces the power of his conclusion.

By 1986 the reproductive rights and women's movement lost its biggest battle—the struggle to overturn the Hyde Amendment. It lost that battle because it could not win within the context of a privatized medical system.

To quickly summarize the climate of the country around the time of *Roe v. Wade*, I'll start with the class action suit in New York State as it was ready for trial in 1970. It looked pretty certain that the anti-abortion law would be overturned.

Suddenly the legislature faced the possibility that there would be no law—and decided to come up with a very liberal abortion law. Once this passed, abortions began to be performed and the incidence of women suffering and dying from botched abortions dropped. New York State became an example for the rest of the country. In the first six months 69,000 abortions were performed, half on women from other states.

Frankly, I did not expect that the U.S. Supreme Court would overturn state laws in the dramatic way it did in early 1973. I do not remember any activist thinking we were going to win the sweeping ruling laid out in *Roe v. Wade*. But public opinion was changing rapidly. While in 1968 less than 15% of the population supported changing the laws outlawing abortion by 1972 polls revealed 68% favored change.

To be sure, the court did not adopt the course of action we advocated—based on a woman's right to control her own body, that there be no laws restricting abortion, just as there is no legislation governing most other medical procedures—but it erased in one single decision most of the laws on the books.

At a National Organization for Women convention I attended in Houston shortly afterward, Sara Weddington, one of the two lead lawyers in *Roe v. Wade*, outlined the strategy she felt the right wing would use to hamstring the decision. Although I no longer have my notes from her presentation, she raised half a dozen issues, including public funding, residency requirements and waiting periods as well as spousal and parental consent legislation.

It was clear to most activists that there would be a battle over the implementation of the ruling and restrictions that could be placed on it. Once questions were raised about whether the woman's reason justified a specific procedure, people would judge some reasons to be frivolous.

Given a culture where sex is used to sell merchandise but where sex, particularly outside marriage, is considered inappropriate and irresponsible, women are viewed as the ones who are "to pay" for cultural transgression.

Parental consent laws were the most difficult to oppose because teenagers are viewed as "belonging" to their parents. (The reality is that in most cases young women who become pregnant do talk to at least one parent about the pregnancy. But why should there be a law? What happens when the teenager and her parent(s) draw opposite conclusions? Should she be forced to have an abortion or bear a child because that's what her parents decide?)

While some have criticized the mainstream organizations for failing to stop the Hyde Amendment, originally passed in October 1976, I don't believe that is primarily the reason poor women were successfully restricted from state-funded abortions.

Pro-choice lawyers immediately

went into court and got a restraining order. As a member of NOW I initiated the first picket against the Hyde Amendment in New York City before the restraining order was to expire and helped to form a coalition (that eventually became known as CARASA) to build opposition to what was then a yearly amendment to the federal budget.

The high point of our activism was a coalition demonstration at New York University's Law School when Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano spoke. Our march of 3,000-5,000 completely circled the city block!

Law students and faculty organized themselves inside to confront Califano, who had previously announced "We [Califano and President Carter] believe strongly that federal funds should not be used for abortion."

Activists supported the legal challenge to the Hyde Amendment and, for those of us living in New York City, attended the hearings that resulted in an impressive decision, later overturned.

We held speak outs, marches, pickets, rallies, conferences, commemorative meetings to honor Rosie Jimenez, the first woman known to have died of an illegal abortion after the Hyde Amendment was implemented in 1977, and January 22nd events to mark the anniversary of *Roe*.

While before Hyde forty-seven states and the District of Columbia paid for most Medicaid abortions, by the late 1970s only seven states still did.

I'm sure more could have been done, particularly by the well staffed and mainstream organizations, but as long as we have a tiered medical system I think it's easy to play off one section of the population against another: "Why should a woman on welfare be able to obtain an abortion when I am stuck in a low-wage job and can't really afford one either, yet I can't get public assistance?"

We have seen the same backward thinking in the debate over welfare, in which women on public assistance are demonized as "lazy" while the rest of "us" are hard working.

### The Activist Picture

Even given the time frame the author chooses (1986 through the early days of the Bush administration) I believe the book leaves out much of the actual reproductive rights and women's rights struggles in order to come to his conclusion.

Most obviously missing is an account of the right-wing mobilization at clinics and the pro-choice counter mobilization. The late 1980s was also the time in which the right expanded their network of anti-abortion clinics. (I remember what a wonderfully spirited demon-

stration we had in front of one of their East Detroit clinics, exposing their strategy of luring in unsuspecting women with the offer of free pregnancy testing.)

This period was a resurgence of defending abortion rights through physically protecting clinics, where most abortions are performed. By and large this did not occur through the mainstream organizations but through local organizations and coalitions. Despite the uneasy alliances that organized clinic defense, the fact is that these energetic and combative confrontations made a difference.

"Operation Rescue" and other anti-abortion groups were determined to drive all of the clinics, where most abortions are performed, out of business. Stalking clinic personnel, confronting and tracking anyone coming to the clinic, and swamping clinics through mass demonstrations created a violent climate that resulted in the killing of clinic personnel and the destruction of some clinics.

Clinic defense challenged the right wing and put the spotlight on the violence they were perpetrating. Pro-choice coalitions and mainstream abortion rights organizations launched a number of legal actions; in the end Congress was forced to enact legislation, which the courts have enforced, protecting the clinics.

While that resurgence of abortion rights activity would require a whole book in itself, clinic defense does not merit an entry in *Bearing Right*.

William Saletan, however, does not claim to have been an activist in the events he describes. Rather, he is a journalist, a chief political correspondent for *Slate*. His brief biography indicates he has written for *The New Republic*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Village Voice*, *Mother Jones* and *The Washingtonian*.

In the notes explaining his research, the author outlines his reliance on public records and interviews with public spokespeople and paid staff (including pollsters) of NARAL and various mainstream abortion rights coalitions. He accepts the strategy that maintaining legal abortion occurs primarily through lobbying and supporting candidates, not through campaigns to change public opinion.

Most telling is his summary of the political situation in 1990, with Republicans setting up a PAC called Republicans for Choice and conservative activist Ann Stone advocating that conservatives "compromise and win reasonable restrictions on abortion." (121)

Saletan asked what feminists could do within this context, and outlines Feminist Majority President Eleanor Smeal's pledge to rally one million young women to fight parental consent and NOW Presi-

dent Molly Yard's "Campus Caravan" to fight the rollback of their reproductive rights. He ridicules their campaign:

This was the army that stood ready to battle pro-choice conservatism: the moral authority of the young, armed with the voting strength of the disenfranchised, backed by the money of the financially dependent. Not a sleeping giant but a herd of besieged, defenseless, doomed Lilliputians. (122)

I would draw a different conclusion: If NOW and the Feminist Majority had carried out those projections, we'd be better off now.

Saletan's account is an extremely interesting investigation of how the aggressive campaign by the right wing, confronted by NARAL's determination to maintain legal abortion, even if truncated, has resulted in a middle-road access to abortion. It's the lesson we were taught in high school about how U.S. politics works: take the two extremes and work out a middle position.

While I highly recommend reading *Bearing Right* to all who want to learn more about the abortion wars, I would caution the reader to read it with a critical eye. It is primarily a history of NARAL and mainstream coalitions.

Leslie J. Reagan's *When Abortion Was A Crime* (University of California Press, 1977) is the fullest account I've seen of the long hidden history of abortion in the hundred years before *Roe v. Wade*.

For a broader history of the feminist and reproductive rights activism of recent decades, readers may want to consult *Moving the Mountain*, by Flora Davis, and Linda Gordon's *Women's Bodies, Women's Right*. (Thanks to Angela Hubler for these suggestions.)

These works contribute to understanding much of the history, missing from *Bearing Right*, of the movement that activists built, whether in the heady days of feminism or in the dog days of Carter, Reagan, Clinton and Bush. And it is a fight that is inseparable from the larger social issues we face, from universal health care to sex education, racial discrimination and poverty. □

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