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Solid New Research Challenges Detractors

The Guttmacher Institute determined in 2011 that only 9% of abortion facilities are located in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Some would consider this a definitive answer to the question, but it most certainly is not. Protecting Black Life's research on Planned Parenthood's targeting of minorities shows that Guttmacher's research does not tell the whole story, especially when it comes to Planned Parenthood's targeting activities.

First of all, Guttmacher looked at all abortion facilities performing more than 400 abortions per year, curiously excluding a subset of data in their analysis. Secondly, their 9% result only included neighborhoods where Blacks are a majority (at least 50%) of the population or more. This is a very high bar, considering Blacks are only 12.6% of the nationwide population, and some states have Black populations that are only 2-3%. There is no question that Blacks can have a fairly noticeable population density well below the 50% level, especially for targeting purposes.

Guttmacher's analysis is based on zip code populations, which would not necessarily include all of the neighborhoods within walking distance of the abortion facilities. A zip code district is a very non-uniform geographical area, and the facility could be located near the edge of it, excluding Black neighborhoods right across the street that are in a different zip code.

Most importantly, even if their data provided a perfect accounting of the minority neighborhoods surrounding abortion facilities, unlikely at best, it doesn't tell us anything specifically about Planned Parenthood, hidden in the forest of abortion facilities and hoping that the light doesn't reach them.

Protecting Black Life's research provides clear data showing that 62% of the 165 Planned Parenthood surgical abortion facilities (operating in 2010) are located within walking distance of relatively high Black populations, 64% are within walking distance of Hispanic/Latino neighborhoods, and 79% are within walking distance of one or both.

Instead of using zip codes, Protecting Black Life's research collected population data by Census tracts, which are smaller Census areas that resemble neighborhoods because they are homogeneous by some measure, such as housing stock or income level. This Census tract approach provided a very consistent, close-up and detailed look at the population landscape within walking distance (a 2-mile radius) of each of the abortion facilities.



Populations were considered relatively high, or “targeted neighborhoods,” if the Black or Hispanic/Latino percentages were at least 50%, or if they were 1.5 times the Black or Hispanic/Latino percentage, respectively, of the surrounding county. Not included were any census tracts with Black percentages less than 12.6% or Hispanic/Latino percentages less than 16.3%, their national percentage of population.

In addition, this research showed that 29% of Planned Parenthood surgical abortion facilities are located within walking distance of neighborhoods that are at least 50% Black, compared to the 9% result claimed by Guttmacher. It is clear that Guttmacher’s analysis does not tell the whole story about the demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods, nor does it reveal much about Planned Parenthood in particular.

The other interesting detail that jumped out of this research is that Planned Parenthood clearly prefers to locate in a Census tract that is near a minority neighborhood but not actually in the middle of one. There are several likely reasons for this. Visibility, bus lines and an impression of medical respectability are easier to find in a less residential area. Locating only close enough to be in the daily traveling vicinity of a minority neighborhood allows for a familiar but “professional” distance that would be appropriate for a community “medical” center, a façade that Planned Parenthood would prefer to maintain. This slight but intentional separation from their minority targets could have provided cover to the abortion industry in Guttmacher’s analysis, but Planned Parenthood’s deliberate placement was obvious when examined using the Protecting Black Life approach.

More chillingly, it was apparent from examining these detailed results that Planned Parenthood’s location was often strategically placed to “split the difference” between separate but distinct Black and Hispanic/Latino neighborhoods, with the abortion facility placed in between the two. Again, this separation might have hidden the truth in Guttmacher’s results, but not in the Protecting Black Life research.

While no actual data was provided by Guttmacher to support their conclusions, Protecting Black Life’s results can be seen in living color on their webpage, where every facility with targeted neighborhoods is shown with its Census tract map and minority and county percentages:

http://www.protectingblacklife.org/pp_targets/index.html

If you are really interested in knowing if Planned Parenthood is targeting minority neighborhoods, this is a must-see.