

Boston Massacre - 1994

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THE BODY POLITIC

There are two women dead on Beacon Street

*There are two women dead on Beacon Street
because of men, drunk on self-righteousness,
who seek to own our souls,
who seek to make us guilty of their sins,
who, breeding self-contempt,
hide in a cloak of hypocrisy,
daring to die if only they can control our bodies.*

*There are two women dead on Beacon Street.
Bleeding blood no moon commanded,
they withered into fame no woman wanted.
They still own their souls, slight consolation that,
when owning strength and love and courage
is what's lost.*

*There are two women dead on Beacon Street.
Does conscience not demand a just reply?
Must women bleed and die to serve men's whims?
Must honest women hide and lie?*

*There are two women dead on Beacon Street.
Like fallen soldiers in a war,
we hardly pause to mourn,
and onward push the struggle for our rights.
There are two women dead on Beacon Street.
Pray there will be no more.*

— Roberta Sampere.

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They found him on the edge of the crowd of about 300 demonstrators in front of Planned Parenthood on Beacon St. The video tape showed John Salvi III watching the building, looking around, not praying. Instead he was planning the new Boston Massacre which resulted in the shooting of seven people, two of whom died.

Leanne Nichols and Shannon Lowney, receptionists, were killed at point blank range by John Salvi, who fled the scene and the state. The next day, Mr. Salvi was arrested in Norfolk, Virginia after shooting at another clinic, one of the few in the nation open on New Year's Eve. In his truck was found anti-abortion literature, ammunition, targets, and over \$1,200 in cash.

The following report on this incident is filed by Jonathan McDowell, member of the Greater Boston NOW. For those unfamiliar with the Boston area, Mr. McDowell starts with a brief overview of Boston clinics and the history of protests.

Brookline Clinic Attacks: Report from Beacon Street

HISTORY LESSON

There are a fair number of abortion providers in the Greater Boston area--we are much better off than many parts of the country in this respect. The most visible providers are the four clinic's on the Green Line subway/trolley car route which starts at Boston Common (with the Gynecare clinic) and continues underground until just after

Kenmore square where it goes above ground at the Planned Parenthood clinic on Beacon Street in Brookline. An RU 486 trial is currently underway at Planned Parenthood.

The next major intersection on Beacon is Coolidge Corner, where the third clinic, Repro Associates, is located. Continuing westward we pass through Washington Square until, a block before Cleveland Circle, we reach PreTerm clinic. These four clinics have seen the bulk of anti-choice (anti-abortion, anti-woman, pro-theocracy, take your pick) protests.

Intense activity began in October 1988 with Operation Rescue's first blockade, and pro-choice activists rapidly mobilized to confront the terrorists. (Editor's note: See *Caught in the Crossfire* by Carol Hertz) Thousands of women and men joined the pro-choice phone tree and hundreds underwent facilitator/escort/clinic defense training. We slowly learned how to respond to the blockades both by keeping a path to the clinics open with our bodies and by gaining a statewide injunction against the attacks.

Boston's clinic defense team also helped out at defenses in DC (Nov. '89) and Buffalo (Apr. '92) among others. Around mid 1990, OR's numbers dropped, the blockades subsided and the weekly pro-choice presence was reduced to a few clinic escorts, although as late as 1992, we did get 1,000 people out to prevent an OR blockade attempt.

In 1994, OR's numbers dropped further, with only a few protesters on typical weeks. Their biggest showing was at two monthly prayer vigils, one at Planned Parenthood with typically 100-200 protestors and the other at PreTerm, where the numbers were only 20-40 demonstrators. It is at these monthly vigils that new protesters would attend, and I suspect, this may be



Top: the Planned Parenthood clinic (and demonstrators) a few days after the murders.

Bottom: PreTerm, the morning after. Flowers have already begun to arrive.



why Mr. Salvi was familiar with these two clinics.

John Salvi joined the anti-choice protests on Beacon Street in early 1994 (no later than May 14 when he got a parking ticket outside Planned Parenthood). At some point it appears, he made contact with the movement to commit murders in the name of "pro-life"; the phone number of Donald ("it's justifiable homicide") Spitz was later found in his apartment.

Mr. Salvi probably wasn't too regular at the clinics at first, as most of the local Saturday clinic escorts don't seem to recognize him. However, the PreTerm security guard, Richard Seron, is quoted in the papers as saying he'd seen Mr. Salvi a number of times in November and December.

This makes the local OR's denial of any responsibility all the more laughable - John Salvi's been standing there listening to (sorry, listening to) their murderous rhetoric, and just took it to its illogical conclusion.

Now, I can't shake the thought from my mind - have I ever looked into this guy's eyes? I've certainly seen some creepy people at the clinic over the past year, and it's hard to remember them all ...

MASSACRE

On December 30, John Salvi walked into Planned Parenthood around 10AM and shot and killed Shannon Lowney, a pro-choice activist who worked as a receptionist. He also seriously wounded the medical technician, Anu Agrawal, and two partners of patients who were in the waiting room. He then, drove along Beacon Street to PreTerm (this takes about 7-10 minutes). There appears to have been no police attempt to block either of the Beacon Street intersections or to warn the other clinics.

Mr. Salvi entered the building, which also contains a pharmacy, a dentist's office, and other offices, walked into PreTerm reception on the ground floor and asked Leanne Nichols,

the receptionist, "Is this PreTerm?". He then shot and killed Ms. Nichols, and wounded Jane Sauer, a PreTerm staff member.

Richard Seron had just left guard duty and removed his bulletproof vest while working with supplies in the stockroom. He rushed in and gave chase to Mr. Salvi, who dropped his duffel bag with the crucial evidence in it. Mr. Seron fired at Mr. Salvi who fired back and hit him in the hand and arm. Mr. Salvi ran up the street still firing and disappeared.



OR blockade
May, 1989

SHOCK AND PRAYER

Many of us heard about the attacks in the early afternoon of Friday, Dec 30th. The phone tree was activated right away to alert people and call a vigil that evening. I got to PreTerm at around 3 PM; lots of media were already there, a lot of police, and the entrance was cordoned off. There was a car parked outside with a bullet hole in the windshield.

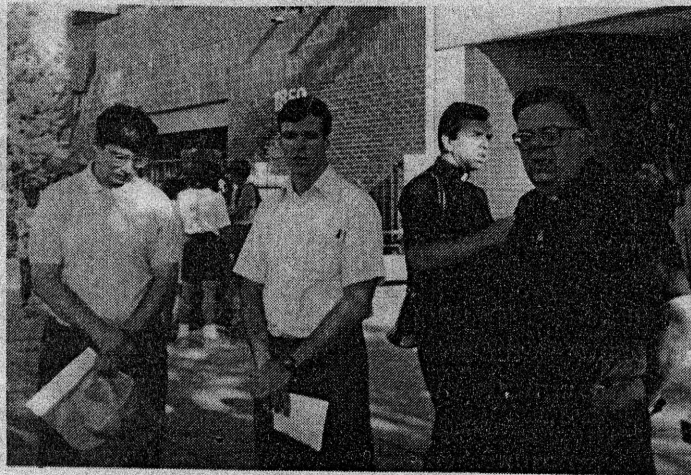
A candlelight vigil that evening saw perhaps 1,000 people gather outside Planned Parenthood. We lit our candles and walked the two blocks to the synagogue, which has a woman rabbi who seems really wonderful. There were many emotional speeches. Everyone was very much in shock, supporting and hugging each other.

The next morning, with Mr. Salvi still at large, I 'orbited', checking the four Green Line clinics. PreTerm and Planned Parenthood were closed; Gynecare and Repro appeared open. The city cop outside Gynecare paid no attention as my car slowed to a 10 mph crawl and I peered in. He seemed more interested in his coffee and newspaper. The state cops outside Repro seemed a bit more alert, and the Repro security guard (a sweet guy as long as you don't mess with him) was on the ball (and very tense).

Despite Cardinal Law's plea for protesters to stay home, about 5 Operation Rescue members, including local leader, Bill

Cotter (who spent 2 1/2 years in jail for clinic blockades), were protesting outside Repro. By 9.30 AM, five volunteer pro-choice clinic escorts were standing by the door and making sure patients were getting in OK. I think it's important that people know that clinics were open in Brookline the day after and patients did turn up for their appointments. Cotter was fairly grudging in his condemnation of the murders; he equated them with the abortions in the clinic and as much as implied that we had it coming.

Saturday evening, New Year's Eve, NOW organized a rally outside the state house. About 2,000 people attended, with shock turning to anger and demands for action. By this time we knew Mr. Salvi had turned up in Virginia and been caught. For a lot of us this rally brought up memories of another one on



Bill Cotter, center

July 4, 1989, after the *Webster* decision - about the same size and in the same location.

On Sunday a small group (about 50) of anti-choice activists held a prayer service against the violence. There was a pro-choice counter-demonstration which reportedly included contingents from Refuse and Resist and the Lesbian Avengers, among others.

Tuesday night was the memorial service for Shannon Lowney at Arlington St. Church on Boston Common. (Leanne's family has requested that the service for her be delayed for a while). Twelve hundred

people attended--many couldn't get in. There were familiar faces from the Boston pro-choice activist community in the crowd--a moving tribute to Shannon. Many people, myself including, were in tears. Shannon's fiance David gave a heart wrenching statement. Actress Kathleen Turner read a poem, and the national director of Planned Parenthood made some remarks, as did some of the young women (Kate, Amy and Shona) who work at the clinic. Rev. Kim Crawford Harvie made opening and closing remarks.

After the service, the Repro and PreTerm clinic escorts met to discuss the situation; one had already bought a bulletproof vest and others are considering it.

AFTERMATH

Wednesday night, a community response meeting in Brookline was organized by NOW and R2N2 (the Reproductive Rights Network). This was something we hadn't had in the Boston area in far too long - an open mike where everyone got to have their say for two minutes. There was an astonishing (to me) and encouraging degree of harmony, with speakers offering very divergent views. Mass Choice's agenda is certainly not the same as the Spartacist League's, but no one was shouted down or personally attacked. (Anyone involved in progressive coalitions knows that this is not always the case!)

All the local pro-choice organizations described their activities and planned responses, and then individuals suggested strategies. The younger members of the PreTerm staff were there, and called for donations and for volunteers to help put PreTerm back on its feet. Finally, concern was expressed about the lack of doctors trained to do abortions, with R2N2

mentioning its involvement in the Abortion Access Project which is trying to get more doctors trained. Some called for the formation of Jane collectives in which women who are not licensed physicians train themselves to perform the abortion procedure as was done by the original Jane collective in Chicago before *Roe*.

JANUARY 22nd

On Sunday Jan 22, several thousand pro-choice activists braved the gray, damp Boston weather to rally for choice and express their outrage at the Brookline killings. We gathered on the edge of Boston Common, coincidentally within sight of the Gynecare clinic which has been the site of many local clinic defense actions. NOW's facilitator had no idea whether we would get a few dozen or a few thousand marchers, but Margo, our lead trainer for many years, made sure we were ready for anything.

The rally proper began a little after 12:30 when Miriam warmed up the crowd with her pro-choice guitar. By this time the marchers were arriving in the hundreds; my team of crowd marshals, which included activists visiting from New York and Montreal, was deployed around the stage to keep a secure space around the invited speakers and the sound system. We heard from a local ANC representative, from Chinese community leader Meizhu Lui, and from local NOW leaders Ellen Convisser, Toni Troop, and Ellen Zucker.

Meanwhile other groups were vying for attention of their own; one group encouraged people to divert to the location of a small anti-abortion rally being held at the same time (a small group did go to protest this, and reportedly two activists were arrested for disrupting it), and the Lesbian Avengers entertained the crowd with

their fire-eating demonstrations.

Finally it was time to step off, with my team responsible for bringing up the rear. We had a great view as the march snaked around the Common by Park Street and the State House. This is a part of Boston where tourist trolley buses run, and since our 1992 month-long defense of Gynecare, we've always greeted these with an enthusiastic cheer of "Welcome to Boston, we're pro-choice!" which often gets a positive reaction. The tourists outside the "Cheers" bar looked as if they really didn't know what to make of us as we trooped past.

Only about 1,500 of us could fit into the Arlington Street church, so those of us at the rear remained outside (we set up a sound system so that those outside could hear the speakers). We filled the entire street.

Patricia Ireland, NOW's national president, spoke forthrightly about the need to organize in the face of anti-woman terrorism, and the hypocrisy of the anti-choice forces in their failure to acknowledge responsibility for creating and encouraging Salvi, Paul Hill and their ilk.

After the service we went to a local cafe to chat with Ms. Ireland and the other NOW leaders. It is my hope we can keep the momentum going and build on the coalitions we've pulled together this month.

These murders were not committed by just a lone nut, but part and parcel of the broad anti-choice terrorist movement and part of the broader war by the extreme right against women and women's rights.

What can you do to help?

* Organize your own communities to prepare for terrorist attacks against clinics: don't think that "it can't happen here."

* Make sure you monitor who the local

protesters are and which ones you feel are a particular risk. Make sure the clinics and the local police coordinate so that if one clinic is attacked the others will be warned.

* Look into obtaining Type II Kevlar bulletproof vests (available for about \$400 from police supply stores or by mail order from some of the more revolting gun lobby magazines) for those most exposed.

* Share your strategies with the rest of us and--

* **Rally in Washington, DC on April 9** to protest the epidemic of violence against women in all its manifestations.

Peace,
Jonathan

Donations can be sent to:

PreTerm Fund For Safe Passage

PreTerm Health Services,
1842 Beacon St.
Brookline MA 02146

Friends of Shannon

Box 348, 238 Harvard St
Brookline MA 02146

(to raise money for clinic security measures)

Planned Parenthood

1031 Beacon St.
Brookline, MA 02146

Greater Boston NOW

971 Commonwealth Ave,
Boston MA 02215

**Abortion Access Project,
Reproductive Rights Network,**

Box 686,
Boston MA 02130